

**Kinaunira Qulliq Isumagillugu:
Identifying through the Qulliq**

by

Miali-Elise Irralik Coley-Sudlovenick
B.Ed., University of Regina, 2013

A Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

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In the Department of Indigenous Education

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We acknowledge and respect the Ləkʷəŋən (Songhees and Xʷsepsəm/Esquimalt) Peoples on
whose territory the university stands, and the Ləkʷəŋən and ƳSÁNEĆ Peoples whose
historical relationships with the land continue to this day.

I also acknowledge the Land of Inuit and am thankful for all it provides.

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Abstract

Over the years, I have felt connected to who I am through my first language, Inuktitut. I am proud to speak, read, write, understand and express myself wholeheartedly in the language I knew before any other. I was exposed to some English, but mainly once I was in elementary school that I started to understand it better. When I consider the connection to who I am through Inuktitut, I feel connected to a lineage of people who survived and continue to thrive, even in the harshest obstacles. When I consider the connection to who I am, I am also forced to consider the disconnection to who I could have been. I consider the disconnection my mom lived through during, removed from a time that a qulliq kept her family warm, while reflecting on what was lost to be where we are today. The focus of my project is on the qulliq, a traditional oil lamp. I attempt to highlight how the qulliq is an important source and tool to connect me to the land, to Inuktitut and to our Inuit culture and identity. When I think of the qulliq, I consider the elements that are required to come together to light it and keep it going. I think about my own life and what has had to be, in nature and in survival, to get me to this point. I reflect on the times that I get to walk on the nuna (tundra) and collect for the qulliq. I think about the hunters who face the elements to hunt and harvest the animals that have uqsuq (fat/oil), all to keep the qulliq going. I share about the bond to people in relation to tending and learning about the qulliq and my experiences in through this paper and a video story including photos and a voice-over.

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Dedication

I celebrate the women in my life when tending the qulliq. I think of each of my aunts, my caregivers, the lineage I have lived through my mother. I think of the unique experiences I have had over the qulliq, a gift I have been given to deepen my ancestral connection. The deep need for the qulliq, knowing it sustained my mother Elisapi and her family line to allow me to be here today. I dedicate this to my father Audley George, who has been a source of support. I also dedicate this work to both sets of my grandparents, Davidee and Mary (Miali), as well as Doreen and Lester.

The true inspiration and the reason I continue this work is for my children Anika Nangat and Nuka Aggiuq. Thank you also to my husband, Jason. This journey is for us, and your support means so much. I especially thank God, everything I am and do, I am thankful.

Acknowledgements

I want to remember **Susan Avingaq**, who gifted me my first qulliq, **Oolootee Peter**, who brought the knowledge of the qulliq to life for me, Elders who shared their joy in lighting the qulliq and often included me and my mom, **Elisapi Davidee-Aningmiuq**, who lit a qulliq at my wedding and encouraged me to light my qulliq for warmth. I remember my family, who continue to support me in my learning and provide space and encouragement to pursue my passions. I am thankful to my Instructors at the **University of Victoria**, all of whom supported my time as a graduate student in unique and important ways. I felt like my experiences and stories were considered, and I felt the care within and for our cohort. I also want to acknowledge the importance of community through my MLR cohort. It was, honest, the best group I could have imagined. You all made me see my own light and potential.

Kinaunira

Mialiujunga, Iqalunni Inuulauqsimallunga, suli maanna tamanimiutaujunga ilakkalu.

Paniikka atsualuk nalligijaakka Anika Ainiaq Nangat ammalu Nuka Aggiuq

Qaummaqtaq. Qujagijara uiga Jason Sudlovenick, inuuqatiapikka ilakka.

I was born in the Frobisher Bay hospital to my mother Elisapi Davidee-Aningmiuq, an amazing Inuk, who was born in an outpost camp called Qavarusiqtuulaaq. She grew up with just her immediate family before they relocated to Frobisher Bay. My father, Audley George Coley, was born in Mandeville, Manchester, Jamaica, to Doreen Dwyer and Lester Coley (both deceased). Traditionally, an Inuk mother would often have a midwife to support the birthing; my dad says he was proud to support my mom during my birth.

As Inuit, many believe that we carry on the traits of those we are named after.

My given names include:

- Miali, *Mary* in English (my maternal grandmother, named by my grandfather)
- Elise (my paternal grandmother's middle name)
- Irralik (maternal great-aunt)
- Ilataaq (respected community elder)
- Ooleepika (beloved sister to a respected family)
- Ooloota (respected elderly woman)
- Aqqilaajjai (young hunter, loved by his family)
- Coley (speculated to be a British slave trader in Jamaica)
- Sudlovenick (married to Jason Sudlovenick, second son of Hagar and David)

I was often referred to through kinship, rarely hearing my own name. Even today my mom still calls me Anaana (mother), many of my maternal cousins call me Anaanatsiaq (grandma), and people around town refer to me as how they were related to my namesakes.

My dad stayed in the north for a total of three years, from the time that he arrived to the time that he left to attend University in Montreal. My mom remained my primary caretaker for my older brother and I, but we were also raised among unilingual Inuktitut speaking relatives. My memories of childhood were mainly outdoors, biking, playing games in our neighbourhood, looking for bird nests and collecting berries or arctic sorrel. I played pretend a lot and learned most of my formal educational skills, such as reading and writing, in public school. I grew up when Inuit culture was still not seen as the preferred choice in schools and somehow felt second-class. I felt that Inuit were looked down on, and many had a negative self-image, and I saw that in myself for years. I grew up around my mom's siblings, who had known life on the land, like my grandparents' generation. When I think of my grandfather, who passed away when I was nearly three years old, I think of him through his recorded stories that were often played on the local radio and through our cassette tapes. He was known in Frobisher Bay as an oil burner mechanic and carver, but before that, he was a camp leader, prolific hunter and navigator for the Government vessels *Nascopie* and *CD Howe*. When my mom's family, with my grandparents, Davidee Uluakallak and Mary Murray Davidee (both deceased), moved to Iqaluit, also previously called Frobisher Bay, the change was very dramatic. I have much to share about what I have heard, but I will leave that for now. I grew up curious about my culture but couldn't quite understand why

I could not fully access it. I did not know how much I had to learn about being Inuk, and it took me until I was 21 years old to finally get to read about Inuit through Knud Rasmussen's journals. The journals include a collection of stories from Inuit in the 1920's, the earliest accounts of Inuit traditions documented in real time. As my curiosity grew, the historical journals led me to Igloolik, where I connected with Elders such as Rachel Uyarasuk and Susan Avingaq. Through interviews and interactions with Elders, I felt that the permission to learn to be more Inuk had been granted. Prior to that, I still felt intimidated by my upbringing, not realizing that the fear was passed down by those influenced negatively in Federal Day schools. It has felt overwhelming to be Inuk with the pressure to live up to expectations: even though I am considered fluent in Inuktitut, I felt like I had to be perfect in Inuktitut and English or would be openly criticized.

As a young Inuk growing up, Inuit teachers were my inspiration. Their strong language skills and their ability to teach were both fun and inspiring. I chose to become a teacher after working as a youth coordinator and in administration for several years. In 2013, I completed a teaching degree from the University of Regina and returned home to teach. I worked with elementary school students. After finishing my degree, I would hire Elders to help teach in my classroom. That was when I felt I could keep up and learn effectively. I realized that the child in me needed very basic information and terminology that I could understand and connect with real materials. This is why I want my project to focus on the qulliq, the traditional Inuit oil lamp. Eventually, my passion for teaching and learning led me to work at Pirurvik Centre. I realized how much I needed to learn about Inuktitut and felt the depth of Inuit knowledge once again, but through a curated space created by Leena Evic. Everything about Pirurvik made me want to

ensure that the knowledge they share becomes more accessible to Inuit. They have a program called “Bringing the Qulliq Home”¹. I have always wanted to take part, but the timing hasn’t worked out yet. I believe in their mission. I am inspired by those who make what feels distant more accessible.

As an Educator with the deep need to learn what my family lived so naturally, just one generation ago, I focus this work to reclaim even an ounce of what I did not have access to growing up. What should have been the upbringing of my mom, learning from her mom continually, was taken from her too soon. Now, as a daughter, a mother, a sister, an aunt, a married woman, raising two incredible daughters with the support of my husband, I am blessed to know that I can regain the knowledge that was meant to be given to my mom through life experience. I am a community member, living in the town where I was born and raised. I identify as an Inuk Jamaican, educator, person of faith, writer, and keen learner, with a love for travel and my family. I am also now in the position of being aware of the importance of the knowledge that my mother’s family knew and will continue to be passed down through me and potentially by others.

¹ *Bringing the Qulliq Home*. (2023). The Reclaiming the Whole Woman Program. Pirurviup Uqalimagalirivinga. www.pirurvik.ca

Summat titiraqqunga: Qulliq awareness and connection

To begin this paper, I started with *Kinaunira*, my self-location and how I introduce myself to those who are reading. The first chapter is then: *Summat titiraqqunga: Qulliq awareness and connection*, where I explore how my research question came to be and my personal connection to the qulliq. In the next section, *Qulliup aturninga - Importance of the qulliq*, which serves as my literature review, I demonstrate the cultural importance of the qulliq both historically and in the present day. In the third chapter, I discuss my methodology, *Titiraqtausimajut atuqtausimajullu ilinniaqtakka*, and how I was inspired by Mary Hermes' concept of "Story Walking." In that section, I write through the steps I took to complete this project. My timeline is a way to help others to learn about when to collect for the qulliq. Before my conclusion, I will share about my ongoing goals to demonstrate that this project is part of my ongoing learning, and how I see myself continuing and expanding on this project, before concluding with all that I have learned and how I will share my learnings from this process.

Methodological perspectives or methodologies that have influenced my work:

- Pirurvik Centre has been a wonderful source of inspiration and resource when it comes to my research on the qulliq. They have a program "Bringing the Qulliq home" which is geared towards Inuit women who learn about the qulliq and have the opportunity to take home a qulliq and make a marnguti.
- Inuktitut Resources - I have found the reference to the qulliq over and over again
- Opening Ceremonies led by qulliq lighting and Elders who are generous with their knowledge and experiences.

- Experiences with my Inuit family and opportunities that allow me to learn about my culture, which includes the qulliq.

The Indigenous Research Methodologies that influenced me as someone who has lived my life as an Inuk, among Inuit, not always reading or writing, but sitting together, visiting, storytelling. When I think of that type of learning, it reminds me of the Indigenous Research Methodologies shared by Jo-ann Archibald's in *Indigenous Storywork* (2008), when she says,

[t]he Elders taught me about seven principles related to using First Nations stories and storytelling for educational purposes, what I term storywork: respect, responsibility, reciprocity, reverence, holism, interrelatedness, and synergy. [...] I learned that stories can “take on their own life” and “become the teacher” if these principles are used (p. ix).

When I think about what I have learned and read about the qulliq, they have become my teacher; learning about the qulliq has taken on a life of its own. One of the community-specific protocols that is important for me to consider is Elders being considered respectfully and served first when people eat together. The knowledge that I am experiencing and learning specifically around Inuit has a reverence, I take the responsibility each time I sit with Elders to respect, reciprocate and aim to remain respectful to their teachings.

In an Inuktitut-language interview by Letia Qiatsuk (2006), she asked Uqsuralik Ottookie a question, which I translate to, “I want to ask you about the qulliq and the maniq (wick), please share about the qulliq.” Uqsuralik responds in Inuktitut, and according to the transcribed words by Letia, says, “Yes, of course, the qulliq was the only way I grew up, I did not grow up with anything else, I was born when stoves were uncommon, I was raised with the qulliq”. Letia later asks: “Was this qulliq really about

survival?” Uqsuralik responds in Inuktitut, “Yes, this was the only way to dry up, make tea, only way to cook, only way to boil our meat” (p. 1). Uqsuralik also believed the true value of a qulliq: for those on the land, stoves could stop working, but a qulliq meant survival.

Reading the interview slowly in Inuktitut challenges me to think and imagine the times that Uqsuralik experienced. Uqsuralik was my mother’s aunt. My mom's grandfather Nuvualia and Uqsuralik’s father, Parr, were brothers. When I read Uqsuralik’s words, I am drawn to picture my own mother, living with her immediate family in a time when the qulliq was the main source of heat and light in their homes.

How does the importance of Inuktitut and my use of the qulliq help me to connect as an Inuk? Through this project, I have been able to reflect deeply on the way that the qulliq connects me to who I am. Reading an interview that is only available in Inuktitut helps me to slow down and think about when my mom and family were living a time when they only spoke and heard Inuktitut. As part of language reclamation, this project is to collect experiential information about the qulliq and demonstrate how it was always important and will connect us to the land, our language and our culture.

The qulliq has words to it that are specific to its use. Uqsuralik shares the term “uunittuq.” She explains it to Letia as cooking over a qulliq and eating from the pot before the meat is properly cooked. It was discouraged to do this as the cooking would be interrupted and the meat would not turn out as intended. The qulliq has words that we do not often hear anymore; something in me mourns for those words. I get choked up; tears stream down my face. I wanted to know these words so bad and did not even know I yearned for them. Continuously being exposed to the Inuktitut words builds a

connection to our Inuit identity. In today's changing society, we need to connect. The qulliq helps me to connect.

When it comes to the qulliq, my hope is to better understand its value and sustaining source in our Inuit society. The qulliq has been a necessary light source providing heat, cooked meals and allowing Inuit to survive, as shared by Uqsuralik in the interview carried out by Letia Qiatsuk in 2006. Like my late sakialuk, Uqsuralik, my mom grew up in her formative years with a qulliq in their qarmaq (sodhouse). To me, the qulliq has given me a sense of connection to my culture knowing what my family line, through my mom, lived and experienced. I have lived in various aspects of our culture and using the qulliq along with my language gives me a sense of place within the community I live in. Using a qulliq has become a starting point in spaces, sometimes with prayer and other times with just the qulliq, some words and possibly a song. Though a qulliq has not replaced prayers, it has added to the time of reflection and remembrance for Inuit who allowed us to survive. The qulliq being a source of survival as identified by Uqsuralik, and later by Leena Evic, it has become something I too understand as a source that precedes my mother's time and goes deep into her family line. I can continue to connect to my culture, knowing I am here because my family survived. They survived from the time of only relying on a qulliq, so now I will continue to show my appreciation for their perseverance. My master's degree is a small example of this celebration as I continue to connect. I am thankful for the qulliq.

To speak directly about Reclamation – I understand my work as a contribution to the importance of having continued access to our Inuktitut words that are not regularly used anymore. As stated by Leonard (2011): “No longer do we accept the “e-word”

(extinct) to describe myaamia; we instead use the term sleeping to refer to its status during its period of dormancy, noting that this term is not only more socially appropriate but also more accurate in that our language was never irretrievably lost” (p. 141-142).

The words around the qulliq are not lost; I image them as resting, waiting to be woken up and used. I want to normalize the words I use in conversations to bring up words that are only associated with the qulliq and relate them to everyday life, somehow. I believe that knowing the foundation words of Inuit daily life helps me as an Inuk to become better rooted to who I am and what I am saying in Inuktitut.

Qulliup aturninga - Importance of the qulliq

Many of the words of the qulliq in the video are used through an intentionally slow demonstration. The extended showing of images, slow pronunciations and a moment to connect has been considered. Someone who watches the images must be prepared to know that it is intended to create a pace that is calm, patient and kind towards a new learner. I try to capture the moments I have learned from Elders, who have shown me immense patience and opportunities to repeat my questions to build a sense of safety and steady confidence.

I have a list of short stories that live in the many moments related to the qulliq, from being on the land, gathering the materials, learning from others and feeling connected. My time through this project is limited, but sharing a small piece of this with others, even if it's just one small focus area, for now, is an important place to start. Part of my work and goal is to create easier access to hearing the terms around the qulliq: Being vulnerable enough to demonstrate my own state of learning and allowing my growth to be visible to create trust for others.

I appreciate all the types of information available to us learners. I am merely adding to the ongoing resources for learners to connect to our culture by sharing more about the qulliq. I hope that by watching the video, viewers will gain more knowledge of the words and feel the guidance and experience to practice. There are no written words in the video, just images and my voice, building towards when I have the chance to light a qulliq in an Iglu. I share what I can with the photos and short videos captured from my phone. In the end, I worked with my husband, who helped me to show my skills in an

iglu that was made for Qaggiavut. After the Qaggiavut events, the snow structures were left intact, so I used the opportunity to demonstrate my learning.

In the video, I focus on the oral aspect of our language and think about the times that Uqsuralik lived, when all she had was a qulliq and was possibly still limited in using the written word. My work will feel worth it when I know that I have provided an opportunity for others to learn and feel more connected through the qulliq. I am going through a time in my life where I am questioning my place, identity, qualifications, interests and what I do because there's a level of expectation. I have just been moving forward, and building the confidence to share has been part of this experience.

Qulliup Uqausingit atuutiliit – Words from the qulliq have purpose

As part of my literature review, many of my references are based on videos, because I look to capture my project in a video for you to view. Yet, there were many wonderful connections to literature that I will also mention. I looked at the work of Stelómethet Ethel B. Gardner (2012). I found it meaningful because I can see the natural processes where individuals become involved in a variety of ways; some because of interest, others tasked, and those who have the knowledge to share. There's an interesting space between having the knowledge and knowing how, when, and who to share it with. My question is, how does the qulliq connect me to my identity, through Inuktitut and being Inuk? Gardner shared that her influence from her dad was what gave her the passion to do the work to “become a language revivalist”. Hearing her parents share words was a driving force:

He was proud to be Xwélmexw, to be First Nations, and proud of the few words he could speak in our Stó:lō language, Halq'eméylem. At the dinner table, he

would say “Ewéta seplil” to my mom, which means “There is no bread.” Mom, born Bertha Prest, was also Stó:lō and understood what Dad was saying. He called us “re-e-e-al Xwélmexw,” which he said meant “re-e-e-al Indian” (Gardner, 2012).

These interactions helped Gardner to get some exposure to some words. Learning more about her language helped her to see how the language, people and the land are intertwined. I don't know if I have the depth to understand Inuktitut in this way. My examples feel less poetic or romantic. My connections are based around my mom, who was a Federal Day School survivor. She was not allowed to speak Inuktitut at school. She missed daily connections to learn from her mother. My mom felt betrayed, because she missed many things about her culture. As a parent, she made a choice that we were not going to speak English in our home. She was not going to lose another part of herself, Inuktitut. Her way of keeping us connected to our identity was something I thought was unique to us. I didn't meet or know anyone like us until I grew up, then realizing others grew up that way too, but in other cultures and languages.

Eetuk launched a communal ritual of lighting qulliq as a gesture of solidarity, encouragement, and hope for those affected by COVID-19 across Nunavut, embracing tradition to foster unity in a tough time (Deuling, 2020). This is symbolic because the qulliq represents warmth, light, resilience, and the continuation of life in Inuit culture. Traditionally used by Inuit women to provide heat and light during the darkest, coldest times, the qulliq is a powerful symbol of care, survival, and community. Lighting it during a time of crisis—like the COVID-19 outbreak—serves as a spiritual and cultural act of solidarity, connecting people across distances and honoring those who are suffering or in isolation. It's a way of saying, *"We see you, we stand with you, and our light reaches*

you." The qulliq helped Inuit survive, but the importance of its use and way of connecting is still vital.

A new video produced in Cambridge Bay highlights the cultural and spiritual importance of the qulliq, the traditional Inuit oil lamp (Pigalak, 2020). Created in the community's newly opened Red Fish Art Studio, the video was a collaborative effort involving Elders, youth, and community members. Sparked by Elder women seeking comfort during COVID-19 isolation and in the wake of the Nova Scotia tragedy, the project centers on the qulliq as a symbol of life, hope, and resilience. The video shows the intergenerational passing of tradition, with the lighting of the qulliq moving from Elders to middle-aged women to youth. Deanna Ekvana Taylor, one youth participant, said the experience made her feel proud and more connected to her Inuit identity: "It was my first time lighting a qulliq and I definitely felt more connected to our tradition." She went on to say: "Knowing how the qulliq has been a source of connection for me to my identity gives me greater validation that others experience what I have been trying to express, about connecting through the qulliq."

A video I watched of Susan Avingaq (Isuma TV, 2025) produced by Arnait Video Collective brings me closer to the spaces that I imagine. It feels like a cultural time capsule. Susan so confidently reenacts the use of the qulliq. The video itself captures part of the goal of what I hope to experience through this project. One of my goals is to take my qulliq into a traditional dwelling space and use my qulliq comfortably, as close to the way that my grandparents would have used it. The video of Susan Avingaq shares and preserves the traditional knowledge and values tied to the qulliq. It bridges

generations, highlighting how daily survival tools are deeply woven into identity, storytelling, and our heritage.

I wanted to share about this video of Susan Avingaq preparing to light and lighting a qulliq in an Iglu. She pounds the frozen seal fat (kaugaq) - just like the term mentioned by Uqsuralik, about how the fat was prepared for the qulliq. Susan was the first person to ever give me a qulliq, one that she made from an old frying pan, that she shaped and hammered into a very nice useful qulliq, that I treasure still. Susan was a generous teacher to many and I acknowledge her work as part of my project to highlight that my learning connects to someone amazing. At the end of her video, the singing of a traditional ajaijaa song about the qulliq light is a true definition of language reclamation. The teaching through the video is reemphasized through a sort of celebration with the singing.

This short film by the Arnait Video Collective offers a powerful visual and oral portrayal of the qulliq—an Inuit seal-oil lamp. Set in an igloo, the video follows a group of Inuit women as they prepare and light the qulliq, explaining its vital role in providing heat, light, and the means to cook in the harsh Arctic environment. Spoken in Inuktitut with English subtitles, the film blends storytelling and highlighting the qulliq's deep cultural and spiritual importance. More than a survival tool, the qulliq represents continuity, care, and the transmission of traditional knowledge between generations. I wanted to highlight this video to bring people to a time where someone who grew up with a qulliq, shared what she knew.

Another film I chose to share about is a 10-minute NFB short (Innuksuk, 2015), directed by Nyla Innuksuk, “follows her emotional journey back to Nunavut to reconnect

with her Inuit father and ancestral roots in Igloolik.” The film is about her personal search for more identity, understanding and connecting with her Inuk father towards her own cultural reclamation. At the end of her time in the north, Nyla, sits with Leena Evic, in a powerful scene learning “the ancient ritual of lighting the **qulliq**, the traditional Inuit oil lamp.” The moment with the tending of the qulliq gives off a warm feeling of belonging. Nyla’s vulnerability reminds me about the importance and willingness of being a learner.

The lighting of the qulliq in the short video shows a sense of healing and cultural connection. Nyla traveled to Igloolik to connect with her father who her mother left when she was 2 years old. Raised in Southern Ontario, Nyla’s white mother is nervous for her daughter to be filming something so personal. Nyla is glad when she does connect with her father, Pakak and ends her time in the North by lighting a qulliq and stating: “every member of the family had an important role to play for survival and the lighting of the qulliq was essential” (Innuksuk, 2015, 8:52-8:59). Leena Evic, who is also someone I greatly admire and respect, shares that the qulliq has an unspoken importance “it says to the children, this is the culture you come from, these are your ancestors, and this is what made your ancestors survive. Your parents are here because of it” (2015, 8:59-9:19) the video finishes off as Nyla continues to tend the qulliq. I choose to share this video because there is a population of Inuit, like Nyla, who are looking to connect to who we are as Inuit. We are looking to connect in various ways, some like Nyla, who left the north when they were young, or someone like me who wanted to know more about our culture. The qulliq helps us to connect, to take a moment to reflect, to understand one of the important ways that Inuit survived.

Burnham (2018) is a short article related to a book, *Life Among the Qallunaat (2015)*, about Mini Aodla Freeman, who experiences and shares about leaving Northern Quebec and then living in Montreal. The idea of a qulliq is used more as a metaphor with regards to an Inuk who is from the north living in the city. The qulliq is a distant reality to Mini, who is far from home but observes the white people and her interactions compared to her memories with her family in James Bay, Quebec. As I think about my identity through the qulliq, I consider the time that I had little to no knowledge of the qulliq and yearned so badly to connect. Even though I was home in the north, there was a thick layer of disconnection that I could not understand. I felt for Mini, yearning for that place through her comparison and sharing the knowledge she knew:

I learned that electricity is dangerous but also very wonderful, and useful, and I compared it to the qullik—the seal oil lamp, which was also wonderful, useful and a comfort to us. Every evening, women would sit down on the floor or ground, catching the last speck of daylight, to clean and fix the wick of the qullik. Watching my grandmother, it never occurred to me that there was another such light, brighter than what I thought was so bright. To my thinking, that is what the qallunaat woman has as a source of comfort. If she could have seen Inuit women, what they have to go through. Here in the South, she has light merely by flicking a most innocent-looking gadget on the wall. The Inuit woman has first of all to make sure there is seal oil ready to be poured into a pot, the oil having been rendered by a slow process to liquify the fats of the seal. The wick has to be cut neat and even so it will not give smoke or cause any odour. The burned part of the wick has to be trimmed off so it will give an even flame. The oil has to be poured into another pan from the original processing pan in order to get out the saturated parts of cooked fat. That was the comfort of an Inuk woman. (Freeman, 2015, p. 29)

As you have read, the expressions and stories from Mini, Nyla, Deanna, Susan, Eetuk, and Stelómethet are woven in together in this part of my work to help me demonstrate the importance of connection through our culture and how our language continues to live through the memories and experiences. I am honoured to feel their presence and

thankful for their sharing. I want to continue to draw on their knowledge and words as I work to build the connections to my ongoing work and learning. Knowing more about others who feel so deeply makes the feelings I hold feel validated and important. Their voices move through my work and will continue to be found as I, too, have found them to include in my paper.

Titiraqtausimajut atuqtausimajullu ilinniaqtakka

I am influenced by the methodologies of Mary Hermes on story walking. Drawing from Hermes et al. (2012), the idea of walking through a forest while wearing recording devices is how I learned so much from the style of documentation by the Inuit Broadcasting Corporation. Story walking is a land-based methodology that brings together Elders and youth in intergenerational walks to foster Indigenous language learning through place-based storytelling. As participants move through the land, stories emerge organically from interactions with the environment, allowing language to be experienced as a living, relational practice rather than a static object of study. This approach frames language reclamation as deeply embedded in the ecology of land, memory, and embodied knowledge. Through shared walking, observing, and speaking, participants engage in “storying the land,” where stories are not only told but lived and re-lived in relationship with place, strengthening cultural continuity and relational responsibility.

Story walking offers a powerful methodology for Indigenous language reclamation by positioning language learning within lived, land-based, and relational contexts. As youth and Elders walk together, they engage in “storying the land,” where meaning is co-constructed through language, place, memory, and interaction. This practice emphasizes that stories—and language itself—are alive, embodied, and situated in place. Similarly, the qulliq, a traditional Inuit oil lamp, can serve as a culturally grounded methodology, symbolizing warmth, care, and intergenerational knowledge transfer. Just as story walking brings learners into relationship with the land and with stories carried across generations, the act of lighting and tending the qulliq can

become a pedagogical practice—an embodied reminder of the responsibilities that women carried, the knowledge they passed down, and the spiritual and relational teachings embedded in everyday life. Both methodologies root learning in Indigenous epistemologies, where language, land, and life are intimately connected, and where stories and ceremonies are not abstract concepts but lived practices of continuity and care.

I have carried out my research by notetaking in Google Docs as much as possible. I have also recorded myself on my phone during plant collecting and captured moments by video. Through the documenting of this progress between moments of journaling, what seems most natural is that I will use storytelling in a narrated photo journal. The photo journal will help to capture my voice in Inuktitut and challenge myself to share deeply in my mother tongue. I express my most heartfelt self in Inuktitut, and making sure that was part of this project is important.

Beyond this project, I have a plan in mind to share my work by inviting a few Inuit to a learning session; the budget for the materials and space has been considered. The limits are based on my own learning and lack of full-time use and experience of the qulliq. I am also on a learning curve with using 'Canva' and need better sound equipment to upload the recorded Inuktitut words. I have also ordered the qulliit (plural of qulliq, 3 or more oil lamps), but waiting for them to be made currently feels like a constraint, even though it is happening. I also need to revive my editing skills and will work to develop those again through this project.

When it comes to what I want to see, it is about others having access to more information about the qulliq. I picture someone who has little to no access to lighting a

qulliq and being able to find my resources and building their confidence to light their own qulliq. Here are some notes about the timing of when I collected material for my qulliq. I believe knowing more about the timing will help others to look around their environments during these months to collect what they need. The fat from sea mammals can be collected year-round, especially from avid hunters. It does regularly become seemingly more available in the summer months, as people are more out and about and readily sharing their catch.

July/August

- Collecting qulliq materials, as this is the season that many of the plants are exposed and growing.
- I have slowly started to collect the materials that will be used to light the qulliq. The materials used for the maniq (wick) have names that depend on the dialect. Here we refer to the Arctic Cotton plant as pualunnguaq. We also use the Arctic Willow, which we call suputi, for the wick.
- We mix the pualunnguaq or suputi with ijju (moss). The two are mixed into a fine material to be used as the burning materials in the qulliq. I have started to collect the ijju and the pualunnguat.

August/September

- Collect seal fat for the oil of the qulliq. I am fortunate to be in a community and among people who hunt. My fridge has been filled with seal meat and fat as well as whale skin and blubber.
- I focused on using seal fat, even though other types of mammal fat are used both today and traditionally, as well as bottled oils like canola oil, seal fat is something I can access easily in my community. I also enjoy eating seal and would enjoy the meat and maybe even clean the skin if that were an option.

October

- Listened to storytelling moments captured while sitting with Inuit Knowledge Keepers.
- For now, I will continue to collect materials from the land, learn about proper storage and be reminded of the times I collected for my qulliq last year.
- Collected natural pieces of plants that are used to tend the qulliq – uppigaaq.
- recorded a voice note. I need to figure out how I will use my recordings and/or if I should transcribe them or also be making them available as a CD or USB. This is something I am trying to figure out when it comes to the final product of this project.

February/March

- Collected photos and images for voice-over.
- Reached out the artist and Mayor Solomon Awa to order qulliit
- Ordering qulliit from Solomon Awa was timely. I purchased 3 qulliit.

In preparing for creating the project video, I also did the following:

- Watched ‘Qulliq’ on VHS from the library and borrowed a VCR². In this film, members of the Arnait Ikkajurtigiit utilize the “new” technology of video to joyfully re-enact an older technology: the ritual of Qulliq or lighting of the seal oil lamp. They tell the story in song.
- Decided not to email Leena Evic to see if I can interview someone from Pirurvik about the importance of the qulliq in their program. Interviewing people would have required an additional ethics process, so I decided to focus on written material and experiences on this project. Regarding my curiosity around Pirurvik, what really intrigues me is one of their programs called “Bringing the Qulliq Home”. I often wonder when or if the timing would allow me to take part. I hope to take part eventually. Until then, my independent work in this project will prepare me for that time.

² Reference from VHS cover: *Arnait Video Production (Women’s Video Workshop)*. 12:00. 1992. V Tape 401 Richmond St. W., #452, Toronto, Canada, M5V 3A8 tel 416-351-1317.

Tusaqattarsimajakka qulliq uqausirijautillugu – Thoughts in preparation for my video

Inuktitut is the first language I learned to speak while growing up in my hometown amongst my Inuit family. As an Inuk Jamaican, I often surprise people when I speak Inuktitut and always feel good about teaching someone even a little bit of Inuktitut. I put together a short video in which I speak Inuktitut over images I captured over the years related to my work around the qulliq. The video is intended to be a visual learning experience. I hope that someone who watches it learns even things, feels more connected to know more about the qulliq and watches it again to consider the words. The video is intended to be slow, relaxing, and visual. There are no words attached to the pictures or the voice-over. The following list is an example of Inuktitut words and sentences related to the video, but not necessarily said in the same way I have them written. Inuktitut is fluid and the video's lack of structure is intended to allow the viewer to think creatively, speak freely and know that learning is not always linear. I have still so much to learn, but what I can share is part of this list based on what I have learned, heard and experienced over the course of this program. I am using the word list as a guide to reclaim words that I do not regularly hear or use and recording myself saying them.

The collection of words are Inuktitut words, thoughts and sentences to consider for my video presentation.

When I light a qulliq - Qullirmik ikkitsitillunga

When I search for the moss - manitsarmik qiniqtillunga

When I pick the Arctic Cotton – kanguujarmik nuatsitillunga

Materials for the qulliq - qulliup ikumautitsangit

Seal fat for the qulliq - qulliup uqsutsanga, natsiup uqsunga

Some words above are used in my video and collected from the interview with Uqsuralik and confirmed with resources, including “Qulliq” by IUT, “Bringing the Qulliq home” by Pirurvik and “Common Plants in Nunavut” by Carolyn Mallory and Susan Aiken.

Qulliq - "a shallow, flat bottomed, semi-circular lamp in which blubber or tallow or (in Chantrey Inlet) fish oil is burned for light and heat. The term is also applied sometimes to other oil burning lamps and to concave rocks that occasionally substitute for real qulliqs [sic]" qulliit (Briggs, 1970, p. 373).

Taqqut - ikummatsautaq ilangit qijut, uppigat, akiruat - ukkusissait

Uqsuq - blubber, caribou fat (tunnuq), fish fat. Favoured was whale blubber.

Maniq lju - tundra moss ; Maniq - wick, suputiit - arctic willow, kanguujat - arctic cotton

Ikitsi - way to light the flame, i.e., matches, lighter, flint. ; Ukkusiksaq - soap stone

Savirajak – metal ; Ujarak - rock; Irngaut - drip bowl; Pitsivik – the stand to cook

Ikuma - flame, tunnujait - flint rock, marnguti; Kaugaqsijuq uqsumik – pounding frozen

blubber; Atsalittugu - mixing the suputiit and maniq; Siqulluijait - tin poked with holes or a rough surface to shred and crumble the moss; Marngut - wick storage pouch.

Puqtuniqsait - Whale and seal blubber produce higher flame, according to Uqsuralik.

Pukkiniqsait - Lower flame produced from Aiviq (walrus) and bearded seals

The voice-over script below is part of the storytelling that you will hear in the video for this project:

Uqausivut kisiani atuqattaruttigu qaujimalangajavut, tamakkualu Inuttitullarik uqausiit amisut tusarajuillisimajavut ilaatigut, tusariuqtugit quviagillugit aturiuqpalliagumajakka. Mialiujunga Iqalunni inuusimajunga 1981ngutillugu tamaanilu pirulauqtunga. Anaanama ilangit 1958mi tamaunngaluaqsimajut Ukiallivilluumingaqsutik. Anaanaga Elisapi Davidee-Aningmiuq, ataataga Audley George Coley.

Qulliq kinaunirnut atuutiqarninga titirausirisimagakku tavnuna unikkaagalanniaqtunga.

Qullirmik ikitsigiurumamut Inummut sanajausimajurmik illuvigarmi isiqsimajunga.

Aijaijaap ilanganik qulliup mitsaanut tusaaniarmijugut Susan Avingaq ammalu Madeline Ivalu inngiqtuminiutillugik tusaagatsaq iluunnani ajjiliugavininganik atilik “Qulliq”.

Illuvigaq Qaggiavukkunnut sanajaukkaqtaminiq. Isiqsimajuguk uigalu ajjiliuritillugi.

Paniikka pinnguaqtillogik isirjuumijaaqtuuk. Qulliqtaaminira aturiuqsugu Solomon Avaup sanauganga uutsitiminiq savirajaq. Matuqanngimmat igluvigaaq aggakka qiullutik, manirlu ikilitainnarakku, ikinnasaqtuq.

Qulliup ikumanga anurisiuqtitauppat “aqtairaqtuq”. Taimali qulliq uqsuqarunniirnikumut qamippat “paliqtuq”. Taannali qullira uqsuqaraluaqtillogu sulii naqitiqtugu qamikkukku taijaugajaqturli “qattiqtuq”. Qulliup isuanit isuanut ikummasaqsimappat “iqtiqtuq” amma mikijurulummik ikumagalanniqqat “kukuuttaaqtuq.

Tunnujait (ujarait) ammalu marngutiliarisimajut uvvalu suppiviit ikitsigutauqattarnirmijut.

Script while presenting

Aingai nakurmiik qaigunnaratsi. Mialiu Junga University of Victoria mi illiniaqtunga Una qulliq ikiqaqlugu pigiarutigisijara. Qullilajara uqausiq ilisarimut, kisanittauq tajjausuut paap sanianniinnisait Alliq.

Ukkusiksaulluni piliusiaminira nalliutitillunga illukulumma qailauqsimajanga Jerry Ellngulauqtuup sanauganga. Qulliit ujaramik ammalu savirajarmi sanajauqattarmijut. Maniq ammalu pualunnguat atsalitsimajurmik maniqaqtunganga. Uqsunga arviminirmik uqsutsiavalik, piuniqsaunirarmijangit Sakiakulugilauqsimajarma Uqsuraliup, qilalugaullu natsiullu uqsungit puqtuniqsauqattajujut aiviminiup amma ujjuminiup uqsunganik.” Tusaumanarmijut Asingit uqsugijauqattarnirmijut tuttuup tunnunga ammalu iqaluup aqiamua. Qilalugaullu uqsunga kaugaranningittuq.

Una Taqqut qijuk, aturatsaummijut uppigaat nunamiinngaqtut ammalu akirruat sanaugait. Una marngut, manirmik pualunguanillu ilulilik Qulliup ataanittuq irngautikkuvik uvvalu irngaut – Uqsuraliup unikkaanginni uqaqsimajuq “Irngautinga uqsutsatsiangunngittuq. Uqsuinnialiraimman ilajauvajumimmina irngautinga kuvijauqattajunngimmat maunngatuinnaq. Ikumasitaunngimman irngaut upinnarani unarnikuugami. Angijuutailijumik uqsunga ilamavajumijut ikumanga pukkilualiqunagu”. Illutinni saap qaanganittisuura. Ikumatigajuttara mikininga akaugillugu aturajuttara. Maninga pualunngamik manirmillunga atsalitsimajurmik ikumautilik. Ilangit suputimik pualunnguatuinarmillunniit atusuungummijut.

Sila ikkiinaqsijuumigaimmat illuvut uqquusakkanniqumut qullirmut uqquusininga ippinaqsisuuq. Qaummaqquitiit qaminngakutattillugit allaat manniliuqsimaliqtunganga qulliup

qulaagut pitsiviqagtunga igavimmik. Qullitaarigiurutigilauqsimajara savirajauulluni uutsitimirmut sanaugaq Susan Avingaup qaitakulugilauqsimajanga Iglulingmiitillunga qujannamiirutiginiraqsuniuk paninga Avvaqtaara piqatigitsialaurnirakku ilinniaqatigiittunuk. Qulliq amisunik uqausilik, uqalimaagaaq atuqasiutiniqpaarilauqtara atilik “Qulliq” Inuit Uqausinginnik Taiguusiliuqtiikkunninngaqtuq, aqqitsuijumiuniulluni Jeela Palluq-Cloutier Ajjinguallu Pirurvimmingaqtuminiit. Sakiakulummattaq Uqsurali Uttuqiup Unikkaamingit Letia Qiatsummut qujagimmijakka illinniarutigigiangit. Qulliup mitsaanut uqausirasaummata ilinniaratsakka amisuugaluaqtillugit tavvuuna unikkaarunnarama mikijuugaluamik atsualuk quvvapallirutigisimajara ilinniarninnut silattusarvijjuakku. Tanna tautulauqlutigu pijariiqpat apiqqutiqarutsi, atuinnauniarivunga.

Atsalitsinirmik irngutakallagilauqsimajarma, Uppik Pitsiulaap uqautisimalauqsimammaanga, kisiani taanna uqausiq “aksalikta” tukilik maniq suputillu katitittugit atsaliksimajut “inninganittillugit” uqsumut masatsimallutik. Uqsumut masatsimalirami maniq ikigatsausisuuq. Ikumatsiaqqat qulliq “ijjangainniraqtausuuq”. Kisianili ikumatsiarunniiqpat “ijjajuq”. Maniq nunami ilisarilirunnatsimagakku nunamiittillugu iijjujaaqtuq kajuulluni. Panitsiasuunguninganut atsaliganniqtuq ilanginnut ilajausuuq pualunnguanut suputimulluunnit ikumautitsiavaummat. Marngutiliuqsimaliraluaqsunga taanna atusuura maminnik pitaaminira kanguujakkuvigisuurillugi maniqautigisurillugulu

Ongoing goals

Eventually, I want to write about the process of making the supivvik sometime. It is the eider duck basket that I use to store the wick. I think about the other projects I have completed around the way that have led me to the qulliq and how it would be neat to create an image with all the things that connect to the qulliq. I will see if this is something I can work towards in this project, but if not, I plan to continue the work by creating more information about pieces that connect to the importance of the qulliq. As part of this research project, I want to give Inuit, ages 18-25, living in Iqaluit an opportunity to come together with food, tea and a chance to sit together, learn the parts of the qulliq, light it together and take the qulliq with them. Through a digital poster in Inuktitut and English, I hope to eventually invite 3-5 Inuit, in Iqaluit, ages 18-25, to join for 2 hours of learning the terms and use of the qulliq as well as eat together. I hope that learning and receiving a qulliq, taqqut and a small bundle of maniq and suputiit will mean something to them. Accessing the materials will bring them some connection and encourage their own learning of the qulliq and by feeling more connected to their Inuk identity. I want to share more Inuktitut words speaking about the qulliq. Words related to the qulliq are collected from experience, written resources, stories and videos. Spending time on the land allows me to see the patterns of life, collecting the materials, saying the words in Inuktitut, knowing what to look for, when to gather, how to store materials, lighting the qulliq, what to use, and daily cultural activities that I observe outside.

Conclusion

Trials through this experience:

As someone who works in education, I still have moments of struggle over the idea of our educational system and institutional structures. Just because I work in the system, my hope and goal have been to work from a place of learning and understanding. It still freaks me out when I think of the vulnerable nature of our children in the system, schools and beyond. I am not certain why I feel compelled to share, but being a constant work in progress, I, too, have times of reassessing my reasons. I try to do my best in my choices, but even the choices I've made can be, and many have been from hurt and hurting moments. Yet, something in me says, I am here now, deal with it, take responsibility for the choices and do your best.

A short story that comes to mind is in my first few weeks of becoming an elementary school teacher. I was so excited, like beyond anything I had ever chosen to do. The kids were the absolute best. I knew then and there that I had found my gifting. I even told some people that I wish I could follow that group of students because of their brilliance and excitement; they woke me up to my true nature. One of those days, I went to my mom's home for lunch and in the middle of enjoying what was likely natsiminiq (seal meat) or something delicious, I started to tell my mom about my joy and excitement. Then the tears started to fill my eyes, and my throat suddenly felt thick with emotion. I tried to hold it back, but it needed to come out. The need to cry, moments before, was elation and happiness, but it became painful and sad. I choked between the words and, taking a break from the plate of food, said to my mom: "They are so little, they are so young. I just can't imagine yelling at them or making them feel scared for

speaking Inuktitut, it breaks my heart that you experienced that." My mom stopped to respond; her face fell into her hands. We both cried, a deep, necessary cry. There were no words, just a needed moment. Eventually, my mom and I wiped the tears, gathered around to clear the dining table. A few additional thoughts were shared, but that reflective time with my mom was a gift. A painful, heart wrenching, memory-heavy gift.

My mom went through so much, not in vain as I hope none of it was wasted. The work she continued to do brought me the need to draw on her memories. My connection to my mom will continue. The qulliq in our home will be lit. I will gather the maniq, the suputi, the uqsuq. I will continue to learn and share the words for the qulliq. I want to be there for someone else who may need that grounding. I will offer what I've learned to others willing to learn. Access to who we are should not be painful. This process and this work have been difficult, but the challenge is a process towards greater understanding, which is why I continue the work. So that my students should not be afraid to learn, especially for speaking, trying, learning and doing their best in Inuktitut. Sometimes we just need that way of connecting, to help our confidence grow and continue to reclaim as we go. The qulliq will be the subject for me. As I build my own confidence, I will continue to find ways to share that knowledge. Thank you for taking this journey with me. Nakurmiiqqakka uvannik ikajuqsimajut amisut.

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Appendix

This project video was created by collecting images, including photos and videos, over the years and much of it thanks to my husband, Jason Sudlovenick.

– Kinaunira Qulliq Isumagillugu Identifying Through the Qulliq

Watch the video through the link here: <https://canva.link/l1y1cpyzhcqsumu>