

**Exploring the Possibilities of Learning Stories as a Meaningful Approach to Early
Childhood Education in Nunavik**

by

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the potential of learning stories to provide a means to incorporate Indigenous perspectives and transform the educational status quo by working with locally based early childcare educators to knead the learning story approach into something community specific. This is an action research project grounded in Indigenous methods and methodologies embedded in processes of transformative education informed by post-colonial discourse and de-colonial theory. The study found that learning stories provide a medium through which children can see themselves as part of a world that includes Inuit knowledge(s) and practices. These stories provide a place through which identities grounded in Inuit knowledge(s) and language can be formed. By creating learning stories, the work of the educator and children together becomes visible to children, parents, and the educator's colleagues. The process of creating learning stories and planning for them strengthens connections with Elders, who become through the process recognized for their role as valuable transmitters of cultural knowledge.

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my mom, Mary Alison Hains Rowan.

Glossary of Inuttitut Words¹

anaana	mother
anaanantsiaq	grandmother
angusiaq	boy who has a lifelong relationship like that of a godmother/god father with a ‘midwife’- who dresses the new born
arnaliaq	girl who has a lifelong relationship with the ‘midwife’- who dresses the newborn girl
atausiq	one
atigi	parka
amautiq	a woman’s parka with a pouch in the back to hold a baby
Avataq	seal float – name of the regional cultural association
illu	dwelling, illuuk – 2, illuit – 3 or more
ilira	fear
Inuit	three or more Inuit
Inuk	one person of Inuit ancestry
Inuuk	two people of Inuit ancestry
inuksuit	three stone cairns
Inuttitut	Inuit language
iqaluit	arctic char, fish, salmon - plural
iqaluk	arctic char, fish, salmon - singular
Ivakkak	name of the regional dog race
kamik	one boot, kamiik (pair of boots); kamiit (more than two)
maquruk	two (also marrujik)
nasak	hat
natsiq	seal
pingasut	three
Pigiursavik	place to practice – name of vocational training centre in Inukjuak
paaluuk	mitt (pualuk –alternative spelling as in Schneider, 2009)
qajaq	water tight boat that seats one (alternative spelling qayaq)
qallunaaq	non-Inuk (white) person
qammaq	sod house
qamukkaujait	Toy sled
qamutiq	sled
qulliq	traditional stone/oil lamp
sanaji	the person who dresses a girl child (mid-wife), a boy says arnaqutiga
silapaaq	parka cover
sitamat	four
sauniq	the person for whom a child is named (bones)
sauniriik	two people with the same name also atiq (name)
tallimat	five
ulipakaaq	shawl used for carrying babies

¹ Schneider (2009) has been referenced in the compilation of this glossary

Chapter 1: Introduction

Nunavik occupies the northern third of the province of Quebec. It comprises 14 Inuit communities with a combined population of 9,200 (Makivik Corporation, 2006). One of these communities, Inukjuak, population 1,600 (Statistics Canada, 2006a), is located on Hudson Bay at the mouth of the Innuksuak River. I came to Inukjuak as a grade 5 teacher in 1982. Ten years later, I married an Inukjuak man, and together we have three children. I have been actively involved in Inuit early childhood education (ECE) since 1988 when I was a founding member of the Iqaluit Child Care Association.

In 1990, the women of Inukjuak participated in a radio phone-in show held for the purpose of providing an understanding of the Inuk child to be used in the preface of a book about activities designed especially for use with young Inuit children living in Nunavik. The women expressed that

northern children are special because they follow and learn Inuit traditions as they grow. Inuit children have their own culture that is unique. Inuit children are special because of the food they eat. Most of the time, Inuit children eat country food like caribou meat, fish, ptarmigan and others. These foods are eaten fresh, frozen or cooked. Inuit children are often fed at odd hours, when they are hungry. Northern children are frequently taken outdoors, which helps them adapt to the cold northern weather. Inuit children often go hunting with their families. The Inuk child has a special family situation, meaning that adopted children know their natural parents. The adoptive parents are respected and considered the real parents of the adopted child. Last but not least, Inuit children show they need to be

loved. They need cuddling and hugs from their parents and caregivers, which in time will contribute to their behaviour and growth. (Kativik Regional Government, 1990, p. 5)

The Inukjuak women make it clear that creating programs with Inuit children and families must be at the heart of contemporary Inuit early childhood development (ECD). However, rather than being informed by an Inuit understanding of the Inuk child, as expressed above, Tasiurvik, the licensed child care centre in Inukjuak, functions with a mainstream North American operating system. The educators are trained in western developmental approaches. Most of the toys, materials, and equipment originate in southern Canada, and most of the books are in English. This is not surprising given that very little published academic research exists on ECE in Inuit communities. Written resources consist mostly of policy papers (Martin, Gordon, & Saunders, 1995), strategies (Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, 2006), frameworks (Joint First Nations/Inuit/Federal Child Care Working Group, 1995), and discussion papers (Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami 2001, 2005). Rachel Brophy (2007) has written about the missing links in developing holistic Indigenous early childhood services in Canada; she identifies a need for empirical research and notes that voices of families and children are absent from the literature, particularly within a Canadian context.

Following the national roundtable on research in Aboriginal² ECD in 2004, Monty Palmantier (2005) prepared a report with recommendations. Number three calls for a review of “current assessment, evaluation, and diagnostic tools pertaining to

² In Canada, the terms ‘Aboriginal’ and ‘Indigenous’ are used somewhat interchangeably. For purposes of the federal government, ‘Aboriginal’ refers to three groups of original inhabitants: First Nation, Métis, and Inuit peoples. Many original inhabitants now prefer to be called Indigenous when not referred to by the name of their specific cultural community. This thesis uses ‘Inuit’ and the broader term ‘Indigenous.’

Aboriginal early childhood development” and the establishment of “culturally relevant and culturally specific assessment, evaluation, and diagnostic tools with ongoing input from Indigenous communities” (p. 23).

This study takes up both Palmantier’s recommendation and Brophy’s (2007) appeal for educators to develop “radical pedagogical structures that provide students with the opportunity to use their own reality as a basis for literacy” (p. 43). It examines an approach to assessment for learning, called learning stories, which documents children’s voices and actively seeks participation of Inuit families and teachers. Learning stories (Carr, 2001) are a tool for documenting learning; teachers document stories depicting children’s interests and abilities. Learning stories provide a reference that contributes to expanding understandings of learners and learning. They provide a map that teachers can use to reflect and plan curriculum based on children’s learning as well as to deepen relationships with families, colleagues, and children. Families and children are involved in documenting children’s ordinary moments in the child care centre, and they add depth to the documentation by contributing stories and reflections (Carr, 2010a, 2001b, 2001c). In this study, learning stories provide a means by which to incorporate Indigenous perspectives, an opportunity to transform the educational status quo by working with locally based early childcare educators to knead the learning story approach into something community specific and local, as suggested by Battiste (2010). It is my hope that learning stories, through documenting children’s lived experiences at the Tasiurvik Child Care Centre, might provide a way to make Inuit language materials available to the children while at the same time making visible and validating Inuit ways of knowing and

being. I envision learning stories as the stones in a trail which has the potential to shift practice at the centre towards one that is more grounded in Inuit world view.

Study Purpose

This study's purpose is to explore learning stories as an alternative to Western approaches to assessing children's learning within the specific context of one child care centre situated in Inukjuak, Nunavik. In this study I introduced the concept of learning stories and the tools for creating them to a group of early childhood educators in Inukjuak through an action research project in which we investigated together what learning stories do with respect to Inuit knowledge(s), languages, identities, and relationships.

Research Questions

The guiding questions for my research are rooted in a desire to investigate learning stories and what they might do at the Tasiurvik Child Care Centre in Inukjuak.

These questions are as follows:

1. What kinds of knowledge(s) can learning stories generate?
2. What kinds of cultural identities can learning stories generate?
3. What kinds of language identities can learning stories generate?
4. What kind of relationships can learning stories generate?

History and Context

This section begins with a discussion of ECE in Canada, continues with description and analysis related to early childhood programming and development in Indigenous communities, and concludes with consideration of specifics related to Inuit ECE.

Early childhood education in Canada

In 1970, the Royal Commission on the Status of Women recommended a national child care act. Since then childcare advocates have worked relentlessly for “free, non-compulsory, publicly funded, non-profit, 24-hour national childcare” with “fair, equitable access to all and good quality for children” (Friendly, 2010). Forty years later, Canadian politicians have still not passed into law a national child care act, thus Canada lacks a comprehensive nationwide system of early learning and child care (Friendly & Prentice, 2009). In 2006 the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) reported that Canada made the smallest public investment in ECE of 20 countries surveyed: just .25% of GDP (OECD, 2006). UNICEF’s Innocenti Report in 2008 compared 25 countries on 10 benchmarks of minimum standards for ECE. Canada was situated in last place alongside Ireland, receiving a mark of only 1/10 (UNICEF, 2008). Only about 17% of Canadian children and families have access to licensed child care (Friendly & Prentice, 2009). In all Canadian jurisdictions (except Quebec, which has a provincial family policy and \$7/day fees), child care is expensive, and early childhood educators are often underpaid and undertrained.

Licensed formal child care in Canada is about providing education and care. It is about nurturing, teaching, and supporting young children between the ages of 3 months and 12 years. It is not about babysitting or formal schooling. The service is usually provided for a fee, between the hours of approximately 7 a.m. and 6 p.m., in provincially and territorially regulated full- and part-time programs in profit and non-profit child care centres or in licensed or unlicensed family home child cares.

Certain key ideas have influenced Canadian child care policy. These include the fundamental thought that the early years are of utmost importance for brain development, learning, and health, and that solid early childhood experiences are the foundation for a good life (Grantham-McGregor et al., 2007; McCain & Mustard, 1999; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). Karen Chandler (2009), author of a key text for child care centre directors, writes, “Quality early childhood development can provide members of the next generation of workers with a solid foundation of skills, competencies, attitudes, and behaviours that will ensure their success in a more technologically based economic environment” (p. 2). Child care also enables parents to work and/or study. Another foundational premise is that quality early childhood programs can provide powerful tools for disrupting cycles of poverty, thereby potentially playing a pivotal role in creating a more equitable society.

The ECE ideas reviewed above represent a mainstream perspective of childcare grounded in child development theories founded in developmental psychology. The reconceptualist movement, in contrast, “reexamines notions of diversity, equity and power in the conceptualization of child, family and notions of care and education” (Canella, 2005, p.17). Reconceptualists challenge notions of universal childhood, monoculturalism, linear, stepped child development theories and processes that create categories of people as “different,” “other,” or “at risk” (Bloch & Popkewitz, 2000; Smidt, 2006). They seek to challenge power, actively work to counter oppression, and work towards transformative action (Canella, 2005; Pence & Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2008). ECE work based in a postmodern paradigm involves understanding that children construct knowledges and identities within the contexts of their communities and

relationships. Dahlberg, Moss, and Pence (1999) explain that “contexts which are always open for change and where the meaning of what children are, could be and should be cannot be established for once and for all” (p. 57). Rather, meanings are complex, relational, and multidimensional.

Indigenous early childhood education in Canada

Prior to 1995, formal child care in Indigenous communities in Canada was mostly cobbled together through a patchwork of locally driven projects. Many of these received funding from the Child Care Initiative Fund, which played an important role in the development of childcare projects in the late 1980s and early 1990s. There were also about 2,300 spaces funded by the Department of Indian and Northern Developments in Ontario and Alberta, which had been established earlier (Joint First Nations/Inuit/Federal Child Care Working Group, 1995). In 1995, limited access to federal discretionary funding became available through two programs, the First Nations Inuit Child Care Initiative and Aboriginal Head Start, which are briefly described below.

First Nations Inuit Child Care Initiative

In January 1995, then Minister for Human Resources Development, Lloyd Axworthy, and Secretary of State for Children and Youth, Ethel Blondin Andrew, announced the First Nations Inuit Child Care Initiative (FNICCI). This program’s purpose was to bring the number of regulated childcare spaces available in Inuit and First Nation communities to par with the number available to the rest of the population. One of the program’s founding principles was creating services that were grounded in Indigenous knowledge(s) and were developed, delivered, and directed by Indigenous

stakeholders from Canadian Indigenous communities. The technical report about the program states:

Parents are trying to establish services based on models that incorporate the language, culture and traditions, while integrating approaches to care which meet the needs of modern community living.... Quality child care from a First Nations or Inuit perspective is care created by First Nations/Inuit, rooted in First Nations/Inuit culture, traditions and values, and provided in the First Nations or Inuit language where the language is still vital in the community, or integrated with language learning where the traditional language has not been retained as strongly. (Joint First Nations/Inuit/Federal Working Group, 1995, p. 5)

Aboriginal Head Start

In May of 1995, Health Canada announced the Aboriginal Head Start (AHS) program (Chalmers, 2006), an “early intervention strategy for First Nations, Inuit and Métis children and their families living in urban centres and large northern communities” (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2010). AHS set out to be locally delivered and was designed to directly involve parents and communities. The six core AHS program components include culture and education, education and school readiness, health promotion, nutrition, parental involvement, and social support. Jessica Ball (2008) describes AHS as “unquestionably the most extensive, innovative and culture based initiative in Aboriginal ECCD in Canada” (p. 20).

Effects of regulatory restrictions on Indigenous design and control

While both the FNICCI and AHS were founded in principles of local Indigenous design and control, they carry an obligation to conform to provincial and territorial childcare regulations. I am curious about the extent to which this obligation has prevented the development of programs grounded in Indigenous knowledge(s), languages, and ways. Danielle Mashon (2010) recently conducted research into quality Indigenous child development for her masters thesis. Referencing three participants who spoke to issues concerning licensing, Mashon explained how provincial regulations interfere with the provision of culturally consistent and appropriate programming in Indigenous communities. She detailed issues with ratios, community appropriate programming, and serving country food.³ Similar issues have been experienced in Inuit communities. For example, in 2007 the Hopedale language nest program operated unlicensed and with a 1:1 ratio because the local teacher who met the Inuttitut language requirement did not have the mandatory provincial educator certification (Tagataga Inc., 2007), thus limiting the opportunity for more than one child at a time to benefit from the program.

Fifteen years ago, when these programs were created, the expectation was that local direction would result in local control, design, and development, and that Inuit- and First Nation-specific programs, curricula, resources, and assessment tools would abound. This has not been the case. Centres have been obliged to meet regulations, which take precedence over cultural considerations. Nonetheless, much good cultural work has been done (Ball, 2008; Mashon, 2010). However, the approach to the development of

³ The Inuit Cultural Online Resource (ICOR) defines country food as “the name that Inuit use to describe traditional foods. Country food are things like arctic char, seal meat, whale, caribou etc. Originally these foods were consumed for day to day survival. Eating what the land and sea provided.” Retrieved from icor.ottawainuitchildrens.com/node/19

Indigenous materials has been largely piecemeal and bounded by limited access to resources, including research funding. Furthermore, integrating foundational Indigenous approaches has been curtailed in part, I suggest, by mainstream regulations.

Indigenous ECE in Canada is about renaissance, recovering lost languages, fortifying ones still in use, and rediscovering strengths in Indigenous communities and cultures. Indigenous parents intended ECE to be grounded in the context of meaning making from within the community (Joint First Nations/Inuit/Federal Child Care Working Group, 1995). Thus it makes sense to me to approach Indigenous ECE from postmodern, poststructural, reconceptualist perspectives.

Inuit early childhood education in Canada

Formal, licensed early childhood education in Nunavik started in 1984 when a group of teachers and government employees residing in Kuujuaq, the largest village in Nunavik, were seeking care for their children and started the Iqitauvik Child Care Centre. In the early 1990s, following a regional consultation on child care, a group of Nunavik Elders approached the office de service de la garde à l'enfance⁴ and requested childcare services for all Nunavik communities. In 1995 a regional childcare plan was created (Martin, Gordon, & Saunders, 1995). Systematically, with the availability of Aboriginal Head Start funding in 1995, the First Nations Child Care Initiative allocations in 1996, and the new Quebec childcare policy with major funding in 1997, licensed childcare programs expanded to each of the 14 Inuit communities in the Nunavik region. Ten years later, in 2005, there were 17 centres with 815 licensed spaces and 215 full-time staff (Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, 2005, p. 10). Kativik Regional Government, which oversees the services, has entered into a 23-year agreement with the government of Quebec and has

⁴ Child care services office for the province of Quebec.

assumed full responsibility for licensing, funding, and supporting regulated childcare programs in Nunavik.

The Inuit Early Childhood Development Working Group was formally established in 2004 and has developed a vision for Inuit ECE that includes “a common hopeful vision for the future of Inuit children, which is: happy, healthy and safe Inuit children and families” (Brown, 2007, p. 3). The working group brings together representatives from Inuit regional signatories to the Aboriginal Skills Education Training Strategy who manage funds from the First Nations Inuit Child Care Initiative. The Inuit ECD strategy, reviewed annually, includes the following defining statement: “Inuit early childhood development encompasses Inuit languages, Inuit culture and ways” (Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, 2006, p. 4). The ECD strategy’s goals include advocating for “resources, tools and strategies that enhance families’ involvement in children’s development” (p. 8).

In 2011, Inuit ECE includes licensed programs and services in the four Inuit land claim areas of Nunatsiavut, Nunavik, Nunavut, and the Inuvialuit settlement region.⁵ Due to provincial and territorial regulations and funding, access to care varies dramatically between the Inuit regions. Approximately 50% of children in Nunavik have access to licensed child care compared to 10% in Nunatsiavut, 20% in Nunavut, and 40% in the Inuvialuit settlement region (Tagataga Inc., 2007).

Some important work has been done in the direction of creating a childcare service based in Inuit knowledge(s), languages, identities, and cultures. In Nunavik, for example, there have been a number of region-wide Inuit early childhood resource development and curriculum projects, including the development of *Unikkangualaurlaa*:

⁵ Inuit-specific childcare programs also exist in Montreal and Ottawa to serve the children of urban Inuit families in those cities.

Let's Tell a Story (Avataq, 2006), a teacher's manual including 26 stories, songs, and games published in Inuttitut, English, and French; *Aningualaurtaa: Let's Play Outside*, an outdoor curriculum being developed in consultation with Elders, educators, parents, and children in each of the 14 Nunavik communities; and *Atuarsilaurluuk: Let's Read Together*, a collection of 19 Inuttitut-language children's books written and illustrated by Nunavik educators and published in 2009. As promising and positive as these resources are, they represent only a tiny percentage of the language resources used in the region, and much work remains to be done in this area.

In 2010 the National Committee on Inuit Education met to discuss Inuit ECE. Key messages in a policy document prepared for the meeting (Rowan, 2010) included positioning Inuit knowledge as the foundation of Inuit ECE, engaging Elders in all aspects of Inuit ECE, taking the steps necessary to achieve parental engagement at the child care centres, adopting a comprehensive Inuit language policy to ensure continuation and survival of the Inuit language, working towards ECE pay and qualification parity with school teachers, and providing for ongoing training, networking, and professional development opportunities.

Thesis Map

This chapter has established a purpose for the study by underlining the lack of research in Inuit early childhood education and considering the need for culturally appropriate assessment tools. The literature review that follows in chapter 2 considers aspects of assessment in Indigenous ECE and examines learning stories. In chapter 3, my theoretical perspective is woven with an understanding that local knowledge provides a base for meaning making, that colonialism has had devastating consequences for local

knowledge(s), and that Indigenous research methodologies provide a concept of relatedness that is encompassing and that integrates ontological and epistemological perspectives. In chapter 4, the research design, methods, and approach to data analysis are profiled. Chapter 5 presents findings and analysis, and chapter 6 summarizes the thesis, offers conclusions, and suggests some questions for further research.

Chapter 2: Assessment in Indigenous ECE – Current Practice and Alternatives

Early childhood education is for most children the first contact they have with institutionalized codes, practices and world views that privilege Western middle-class values and interactional patterns. As such, assessment in early childhood education must take into account these important variables when making judgments about children's learning. (Fleer, 2002, p. 117)

Assessment performs many roles in early childhood education. Assessment tools are employed to measure and evaluate what children know and can do and to highlight what children do not know and cannot do. Assessment reports are used to communicate with parents, children, colleagues, and funders. They are used to plan for learning, and can also be used to report on programs.

This chapter begins with a brief consideration of current practice in assessment at Aboriginal Head Start (AHS) sites and Indigenous child care centres in Canada today. A discussion of the limits of mainstream tools follows, along with suggested approaches for developing culturally relevant assessment practices in Indigenous communities. In particular, the second half of the chapter focuses on learning stories. I examine the roots of learning stories in the late 1990s as an approach to assessment in New Zealand. I describe how learning stories are being used in Māori programs and communities and explore the potential of this narrative methodology for use with Indigenous communities in Canada.

Current Assessment Practices in Indigenous ECE

As part of its agreement with the federal treasury board, Aboriginal Head Start is mandated to submit a national impact evaluation. For 2011/2012 AHS has chosen to use

the Brigance preschool screen to measure children's school readiness and healthy development. Tools to assess other aspects of the program, including Aboriginal language and culture, health promotion, parental participation, nutrition, and social support, have yet to be determined (Chabot, 2009).

Brigance preschool screen

Brigance is a teacher-administered tool that requires less than one day of training. It needs only the most basic materials: a pencil, a chair, and an evaluation kit. Administering the tool takes 10 to 15 minutes, and it is said to measure development in five broad areas: motor skills, language, cognitive, autonomy, and socio-emotional development (Chabot, 2009).

The Brigance tool has demonstrated AHS success (Chalmers, 2006; Doherty, 2007). Researchers in the western Arctic used the Brigance preschool and kindergarten screen in a comparison study of school readiness. Thirty-one AHS attendees and 31 non-participating children were tested at the beginning of kindergarten and again at the start of grade 1. The results of the survey showed that the AHS children performed significantly better than their non-AHS peers (Chalmers, 2006; Doherty, 2007).

Nipissing District developmental screen

Brigance's ability to demonstrate success is a powerful motivator for program consultants to consider when identifying assessment instruments for an impact evaluation of AHS and other early childhood programs that cater to Indigenous children in Canada. In Nunavik, however, Kativik Regional Government has opted not to participate in the Brigance-based AHS research. Centre staff in Nunavik do use the Nipissing District Developmental Screen, which was developed in northern Ontario and is widely employed

in Aboriginal childcare programs across Canada, to identify potential developmental delays. Educators in the CEGEP ECE training program are taught to use the Nipissing screen, which consists of an easy-to-use developmental checklist and a yes/no answer grid. There are 13 age-specific versions of the tool for use with children from birth to 72 months. The lists comprise between 4 and 22 items in a range of domains, including sight, hearing, speech-language, gross motor, fine motor, thinking, and self-help skills (Dahinten & Ford, 2004).

Work sampling system (WSS)

The work sampling system (WSS; Meisels, Jablon, Marsden, Dichtelmiller, Dorfman, & Steel, 1994, 2000) is another example of a teacher-administered developmental checklist; it was used by Aboriginal Head Start for a previous impact evaluation. In my experience as a consultant on contract with Aboriginal Head Start in urban and northern communities, I have taught many early childhood educators to use the WSS, which includes indicators in seven domains: language and literacy, physical development, health, mathematical thinking, science, social science, and art.

Challenges with Mainstream Assessment Tools in Indigenous ECE

Many developmental assessment tools, including the Brigance and Nipissing screens, seek gaps and look for problems (Ball & Janyst, 2008; Mantzicopoulos, 1999; Ruffolo, 2009). McShane and Hastings (2004) write, “Developmental scientists working with First Peoples’ cultures have concentrated their efforts on children’s problems and families’ difficulties. This has contributed to an incomplete and unrepresentative picture of First Peoples’ families” (p. 43). As well, many researchers have raised concerns about the use of mainstream tools in Canadian Aboriginal communities (e.g., Ball, 2008; Ball &

Janyst, 2008; McShane & Hastings, 2004; Philpott, 2007; Stairs, Bernhard, & Aboriginal colleagues, 2002). In a review of screening and assessment practices with Indigenous children, for example, Ball and Janyst (2008), citing the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996), argue that “many Aboriginal parents and early childhood practitioners believe that formal tools and approaches to support non-Aboriginal children and families are not either culturally appropriate or the most helpful for Aboriginal children” (p. 1).

In relation to the Brigance preschool screen, the tool was created in the United States; it is based in American developmental psychology for use with American populations. It was not designed for use with Indigenous children. Further, it was designed as a developmental screen, yet AHS is using it as a tool to measure school readiness. Finally, it is a tool which strives for universal applicability – which researchers including Ball (2008), Ball and Janyst (2008), McShane and Hastings (2004), Philpott (2007), and Stairs, Bernhard, and Aboriginal colleagues (2002) argue is inappropriate for use in Indigenous child care. Additionally, administration of the Brigance involves putting children into a testing situation, which is problematic because it requires on-the-spot performance. Such a test is externally driven rather than based on the child’s interests and needs. Greenspan and Meisels (1996) write, “A measurement or assessment approach that is not representative of a child’s usual functioning will not be meaningful” (p. 13).

Mantzicopoulos (1999) conducted a study concerning risk assessment with the Brigance screen. The study involved two cohorts totalling 256 Head Start children who were part of a longitudinal study in the United States. Mantzicopoulos underscored the

fact that the Brigance is a developmental screen and not a readiness tool: It is intended both to identify children who need further assessment and to predict problems at school. Mantzicopoulos (1999) found that the Brigance screen has “less than optimal accuracy in predicting early school achievement” (p. 405), and he questioned the appropriateness of the tool as an overall screen. He concluded by recommending that Head Start should prioritize educational activities that benefit most of the children served by the program. By doing so, he implied that Brigance does not serve this purpose.

Ruffolo (2009) raises similar concerns with the Nipissing District developmental screen. He questions the purpose of a tool that is described as a “screening tool that proactively identifies problem areas in a child’s development” (Nipissing District Developmental Screen, 2007, as cited in Ruffolo, 2009, p. 302). The purpose of the Nipissing screen is to find gaps in children’s development in order to identify areas for intervention. Ruffolo suggests that the gaps generated through the checklist create their own new ideas about childhood and developmental norms. One of his concerns is that the information arising from generating new norms based on the Nipissing data may not help children. In a separate study, one concern voiced by parents and teachers from four Aboriginal communities in BC was that the itemized task-specific assessment process involved in screening and developmental assessment undermines holistic approaches and understandings which are valued in many Indigenous programs (Ball & Janyst, 2008).

While tools like the Nipissing screen and the WSS provide a reference point for educators, with information about what some children might know and do at a specific age, these measures tend to standardize childhood with a simple checklist that does not consider cultural and social contextual realities (Carr, 2003). Furthermore the yes/no

checklist works on a “one flag” system (Dahinten & Ford, 2004), which means that checking a single ‘no’ activates a referral to a professional for further investigation. This type of tool perpetuates deficit-based thinking and may cause parents, children, and educators to worry unnecessarily (Somers, 2007). The use of this tool does not contribute to strengths-based approaches to ECE that Carr (2003) and Rameka (2007) have found to be beneficial.

Many educators, policy makers, and program consultants working in Indigenous communities suggest that many mainstream assessment tools are culturally inappropriate, meaning that elements in the testing, including both the instruments and the processes, do not make sense to the person being tested because, for example, the language or pictures used are not familiar or have meanings inconsistent with local knowledge (Rowan, 2010b). In Nunavik, where 90% of children speak Inuttitut (Duhaime, 2008), an assessment tool in English or French is unsuitable because these languages are not the language of the children and families in the community. In Nunavik images of farm animals and city buses are out of place – they are unfamiliar and therefore not recommended for use with young Inuit children for assessment purposes (Rowan 2010b). Cultural inappropriateness can also apply to social and cultural norms linked with school readiness in the Western system, such as saying “please” and “thank you.” The hunter-gatherer tradition, in which Inuit culture is based, operates on principles of individual egalitarianism which do not, as Brody (2001) explains, include “words of polite obeisance” (p. 46). Cultural inappropriateness includes assessment practices based in linguistic, visual, and relational knowledge(s) which are part of Euro-Western assessment methodologies and are foreign to Indigenous processes and peoples. Philpott (2007)

expands on this issue, arguing that “universal recognition of the inappropriateness of using standardized assessment among culturally/linguistically diverse students assumes even greater prominence when the discussion moves to labeling ability” (p. 21).

Alternative Approaches

The above discussion has focused on problems with universal, Western approaches to assessment that are considered to be culturally inappropriate for use in Indigenous communities. More appropriate approaches may be derived from research that is organized with participation of community stakeholders and includes local perspectives, values, practices, and directions. Research that informs assessment tools for Indigenous children should draw on a definition of progress that is grounded in the aspirations of local families and teachers and recognizes, respects, and incorporates culturally specific beliefs (Ball & Janyst, 2008; McShane & Hastings, 2004; Stairs et al., 2002). Attunement to the cultural context is a key to meaningful assessment, as McShane and Hastings (2004) explain:

Specifically, culture provides the broader context within which parents form their beliefs about which characteristics should be valued in children and how to promote those characteristics. Children also learn to interpret the meaning of parents’ approaches to childrearing according to the standards of their culture. (p. 36)

Narrative approaches that build on strengths are suggested as a useful way of documenting and assessing learning in young Indigenous children (McShane & Hastings, 2004). Philpott (2007) provides details about the Nunavut Department of Education’s approach to assessment. He describes the teaching and learning process as a collaborative

one that connects learners, families, and teachers in an educational community. The purpose of assessment in Nunavut is described as one which sets out with the goal of improving both teaching and learning. Seven key principles for culturally appropriate assessment have been defined in Nunavut: The assessment should support ongoing learning for all, respect learners, recognize unique abilities, encourage interdependence, be outcome- and strengths-based, have multiple purposes, and be meaningful (Philpott, 2007). Meaningful assessment is culturally attuned, draws on community knowledge, articulates locally based aspirations and connects all participants in the learning community in ways which are community derived and relevant.

The concerns raised above prompt me to challenge assumptions that screening tools necessarily act in children's best interest and push me to think about the kinds of assessment that support children and are grounded in community values and goals. In particular, I am interested in assessment for learning, and tools that are culturally appropriate for use with Indigenous children in Canada generally and specifically with Inuit children in Nunavik. A big question is: could learning stories replace developmental checklists and readiness screens? This is a dilemma, with which I will not be directly engaging in the process of this thesis. My interest is in re-thinking assessment from a local point of view; and employing Margaret Carr's idea about assessment for learning (Carr, 2001), as a springboard to uncovering and validating cultural knowledge(s) in an Inuit early childhood setting. In the following section, I explore the potential of learning stories as a strengths-based, culturally appropriate assessment tool that also provides a meaningful way of connecting learners, parents, and teachers.

Learning Stories

Margaret Carr (2001), in collaboration with colleagues in New Zealand, developed an approach to assessment called learning stories that was intended to support a new curriculum they had developed in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The curriculum, Te Whāriki, describes five strands of learning outcomes: well-being, exploration, belonging, communication, and contribution (Carr, 2001, p. ix). The BC Early Learning Framework (Government of British Columbia, 2007) employs a similar tool called pedagogical narration in its approach, which was informed by the work done in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

I use the terms learning stories, pedagogical narration, and pedagogical documentation interchangeably, although I consider the latter to have a more profound political purpose. Dahlberg and Moss (2005) write about pedagogical documentation as a tool for critical thinking:

Pedagogical documentation makes learning visible, but it goes beyond this and by so doing enters the political sphere, making what is visible subject to interpretation.... Pedagogical documentation can enable dominant discourses to be challenged rather than reinforced, normative frameworks to be transgressed rather than more tightly drawn, governmentality to be undermined rather than applied. (p. 157)

Pedagogical documentation is a way to develop shared meanings of children's, teachers', and families' learnings because the process is open ended and calls upon the collaboration of those who are connected through the child care centre. Pedagogical documentation, or learning stories, supports practices of communication, reflection, and

action, thus it holds great potential to contribute to the development of stronger, fairer, more just relationships among families and communities in Nunavik.

In developing learning stories, Carr (2001) and her colleagues sought an assessment strategy which respected the collaborative and reciprocal approach of the Te Whāriki curriculum. They approached the task by asking two key questions:

- How can we describe early childhood outcomes in ways that make valuable statements about learning and progress?
- How can we assess early learning outcomes in ways that promote and protect learning? (p. xiii)

In Aotearoa/New Zealand, learning stories are narrative-style, structured observations designed to show children's actions associated with one or more of five learning dispositions: interested and curious; involved; persevering after failure; opinion expressing; and taking responsibility (Carr, 2010b). Learning stories document children *as they are* in the process of showing interest, being involved in activities, expressing ideas and emotions, taking responsibility, and/or considering another's point of view (Carr, 2001).

In documenting a learning story, teachers recognize a child's learning-related action and take pictures or notes, and/or save the art, and write about the activity. Teachers describe the learner's strengths and create a document which details learning and can be used for discussion of future learning. Learning stories accumulate over time and are collected in portfolios and binders; they can then be referred to by teachers, families, and children to inform discussions about learning, assessments and self-assessments, and decisions about possible learning activities.

A review of selected literature (Carr, Lee, & Jones, 2004; Lee & Carr, 2002; New Zealand Government, 2009; Rameka, 2007) provides evidence that the learning stories approach holds great potential for Inuit ECE in Nunavik modelled on the Māori experience in Aotearoa/New Zealand. For example, the newly published *Te whatu pōkeka: Kaupapa Māori Assessment for Learning: Early Childhood Exemplars* document (New Zealand Government, 2009) presents a framework for analyzing learning exemplars grounded in Māori philosophy and world view. This guide is built from a Māori perspective and assessment is seen as a collective process involving teachers, families, and children. The method is strength-based and honours the Māori child. It originates in a social constructionist perspective which views knowledge as situated within culture, history, and society and regards the connection between the child and family as integral, relational, and irrevocable. These views of the child are consistent with those held by many Inuit (Briggs, 1970).

The learning stories approach is guided by several principles: Learning stories are strength based and holistic, and they involve reciprocal relationships, including those with families and communities. Below I examine these principles and draw on two recent studies to make visible how other researchers have approached New Zealand's learning story project.

The learning stories approach is strength based

Rameka (2007) provides powerful arguments for the Te Whāriki curriculum and the Kaupapa Māori Assessment for Learning Early Childhood Exemplars (Government of New Zealand, 2009). She makes clear how the guiding principles of the curriculum and assessment approach honour and respect Māori children and families, and explains

how the strength-based approach builds confidence by providing children with positive feedback and confirming their competence. This shift to credit-positioned (strengths-based) assessment requires teachers to move away from the view of a needy problem child, a view which ignores children's strengths and uses non-Māori indicators. The Kaupapa Māori exemplars support teachers in adopting a positive perspective and a sociocultural view of children and learning (Lee & Carr, 2002).

The learning stories approach involves reciprocal relationships

The understanding of the Kaupapa Māori approach to assessment is that learning and development is relational and encompasses relationships between people, places, and things, including the teacher and the learning environment. This view embraces a concept of knowledge which is co-constructed and grounded in history, culture, and community and is open to limitless possibilities for learning and becoming. As Rogoff (1998, as cited in Rameka, 2007, p. 131) explains, "What is key is transformation in the process of participation in community activities, not acquisition of competencies defined independently of the sociocultural activities in which people participate." This approach opens to the possibilities of broad learning within local knowledge(s) and understandings.

The learning stories approach involves family and communities

Families (whānau) are seen as an integral part of the assessment process. Kaupapa Māori assessment recognizes that assessment involves the child at the child care centre, and must be considered as connected with family and community. Rameka (2007) notes: "Whānau are intrinsically involved in the child's learning and so must be intimately involved in the assessment process. Embedded in the concept of whānau are concepts of

rights and responsibilities, obligations and commitments, and a sense of identity and belonging” (p. 136).

Learning stories provide a valuable way of connecting teachers, children, and families. They generate appreciation from parents of both children’s and teachers’ strengths. They help to show how children learn through play and provide evidence of children’s capabilities that can be shared with others (Lee & Carr, 2002). Furthermore, learning stories act as vehicles for involving families, and they help to create a context in which trust and respect can be built. Parents find learning stories highly meaningful (Rameka, 2007).

The learning stories approach is holistic

The learning stories approach is holistic in that it does not rely on a series of divided, hierarchical steps to learning, but rather is grounded in burgeoning deep understandings that validate and draw on what the learner brings to the classroom (Rameka, 2007).

Rameka (2007) presents the Māori child as competent, strong, capable, and gifted. This approach to assessment provides an image of the child that is positive, vibrant, and successful, a competent child connected to family and community.

Using words that hold much promise for Inuit children, Rameka (2007) describes the Kaupapa Māori approach to assessment as one that

privileges and empowers Māori children and insists that constructs of the powerful, rich Māori child be at the heart of understandings about learning and assessment rather than the deficit, problematic Māori child. Māori children’s cultural capital is acknowledged and valued and their learning

achievements celebrated. This requires that educators do not stand back aloof, unbiased observers, but involve themselves enthusiastically in the process and the celebration of learning and success. (p. 135)

Strengths and Challenges of the Learning Stories Approach to Assessment

In this section I consider two studies which provide insights into approaches and methodologies being used in research related to learning stories. I also consider Joy Cullen's (2008) critique of Te Whāriki and the learning stories assessment approach.

Ritchie and Rau (2008) conducted a project, Te Puawaitanga, which set out to explore, theorize, and document the voices and experiences of children, teachers, and families as they relate to bicultural government policies for early childhood education in New Zealand. Narrative methodologies were employed. The team included two researchers, a research facilitator, and 19 early childhood teachers who worked as researchers.

Ritchie and Rau set out to see if the documentation of children's and families' voices would increase teachers' interest and commitment to implementing activities based in Māori values and beliefs. The researchers wondered whether, if teachers "extended their understanding and ways of enacting Māori values and beliefs" (Ritchie & Rau, 2008, p. 1), this would lead to more effective programming and an improved ability for teachers to establish and maintain respectful and responsive relationships with children and families at the centre.

The researchers found that the collaborative process of documenting, reflecting, and analyzing children's activities using videos, photos, art, interviews, and learning stories led to improved understanding of cultural values, increased empathy, and more

meaningful relationships. The authors wrote, “Children and their families experienced Māori ways of being and doing as normalized; this, in turn, affirmed Māori identities and aspirations” (p. 2).

In a second study, Mitchell (2008) presented and analyzed findings from a comprehensive survey of child care centres in New Zealand. The study set out to document child care centre participants’ perceptions of curriculum materials and approaches at the end of the year 2007 and compare results with those collected and analyzed in 2003. Mitchell’s study is based in a view that “assessment processes are intended to support high quality teaching and learning by offering opportunities for teachers/educators, managers, parents/whānau, and children to gather and examine evidence/information and use it to enhance children’s learning and development” (p. 2).

Mitchell makes clear in the report that the New Zealand government’s comprehensive plan to train teachers, engage parents, and develop an assessment practice that supports and promotes complex relational learning dispositions is succeeding. The report demonstrates that teachers have increased their use of qualitative methods of documentation and credit-based assessment practices (p. vii) and are using the exemplars (teaching guides grounded in New Zealand-based ECE principles) to support their practice. Many teachers (59%) had at least 15 hours of professional development within a one-year period (p. ix). Teachers are using assessment portfolios to evaluate practice, examine programs, and provide feedback to children. Children are revisiting their portfolios, and parental involvement in assessment processes has increased from 53% in 2003 to 80% in 2007 (p. vii). This report provides much evidence for the viability of the

narrative, sociocultural approach to assessment which has been carefully implemented in early childhood education in New Zealand.

While Ritchie and Rau (2008) and Mitchell (2009) both document positive outcomes and implications of the learning stories approach, Joy Cullen (2008) critiques Te Whāriki and its associated assessment processes featuring learning stories. Cullen states, “Te Whāriki is ideologically driven rather than evidence based. Its outcomes are couched in items of broad outcomes for children – well-being, contribution, communication and exploration – each of which corresponds to a Māori strand” (p. 9). Cullen criticizes Te Whāriki for providing little direction about how to connect the strands of the curriculum, stating that “Te Whāriki is principled rather than prescriptive; it relies heavily on teachers’ qualities to guide teaching practice” (p. 10).

In examining narrative approaches to assessment, Cullen underscores that the approach needs highly skilled teachers and that it lacks systematic goals-based follow-up. She laments the “possibly incidental nature of narrative records (or learning stories)” (p. 10) and lambastes the current Aotearoa/New Zealand ECE curriculum, which draws on co-constructivist theories of reading and sociocultural philosophy, for failing to build children’s phonetic skills and equip teachers to support early reading development. Overall Cullen does not think that narrative approaches are good enough and is concerned about a lack of a systematic approach to skills and content teaching.

Cullen raises interesting points about the value of trained teachers and the importance of having structures and supports within which to work. Her ideas contributed to our planning around deep support for teacher’s learning. However, accessing cultural meanings through early childhood experiences and assessments

provides a foundation for learning that is of greater overall value to children and families than simple letter recognition and check-listed skills development. Learning stories have provided a method in Aotearoa/New Zealand early childhood centre-based practice which enables assessment to be focused on the interests of children and grounded in the values of the community. The research reviewed in this chapter demonstrates how a strength-based approach provides a path to assessment that enables teachers in New Zealand to incorporate Māori values and beliefs and that deepens connections between children, teachers, and families (Ritchie & Rau, 2008). By developing a comprehensive plan and working to create a complex practice of assessment, teachers have increased their use of strength-based assessment methods, children revisit their portfolios, and parental involvement is on the rise (Mitchell, 2008).

There is much to learn from the research and practice in Aotearoa/New Zealand that can be applied to Inuit child care and Aboriginal Head Start in Canada. I look forward to creating opportunities to share ideas about learning stories with early childhood education participants (teachers, administrators, families, children, and Elders) so that we can consider together how this New Zealand approach could be drawn on in developing a Nunavik-based practice of assessment. Later sections of this thesis provide some starting points for these considerations. The next chapter, chapter 3, presents my theoretical perspective.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Perspectives

My theoretical approach is grounded in an understanding that locally based social and cultural knowledge(s) provide a base for meaning, understanding, and strength at the community level. As Brody (1987) writes, “the voices of the people must be heard; their words breathe life into our understanding. We cannot know other cultures by looking at them; we must hear their accents, absorb their intonations, and enter their points of view” (p. xv). I strive not only to hear those points of view and incorporate these voices in my work, but to develop partnerships with community stakeholders and to work collaboratively.

I come to the work on this thesis deeply concerned about the consequences of colonialism and its byproducts: racism, injustice, and poverty. Brody (1987) provides direction again. He writes,

We must keep an argument at the centre of what is written. Briefly, this argument states that northern hunting peoples, like most aboriginal or tribal groups, have had to survive in defiance of a stereotype. Their ways of living and thinking are regarded as primitive; their wealth is characterized as poverty. This denies northern peoples their rights to land, challenges their freedom to hunt, fish and trap in ways of their own choosing; it questions parents’ responsibilities for their own children, and obscures the viability of their ways of life. Again and again we must deal with the nature and consequences of these stereotypes. (pp. xv-xvi)

In my work as an educational consultant, I am actively seeking ways to position community voices so that they are not only heard but provide direction and leadership. I

am trying to make visible strengths of Inuit world views, not as stagnant and unchanging, but as multiple and emerging, having originated in a hunter-gatherer tradition that values sharing, treasures children, and is fundamentally egalitarian. I am also trying to scrub off some of the smothering colonialist mould and to work in ways that celebrate Inuit's strengths and demystify some of their oppression.

My theoretical perspective is grounded in the belief that Inuit voices must be heard. I believe that Inuit knowledges are valuable and important. I understand that Inuit knowledges have been severely compromised and undermined – raped and pillaged – by colonial practices and policies. I believe that action must be taken to reposition the power balance in Inuit lands to restore Inuit control and redress the inequities, injustices, and social, cultural, and linguistic disruptions that have their roots in colonialism and that have been so destructive. Brody (2001) writes:

Hunters and gatherers have experience and knowledge that must be recognized. Their genius is integral to human potential, their skills are appropriate to their lands, and their rights are no less because their numbers are small. Political inequality, hostile and racist stereotypes, and conflicts of interest over land have created incomprehension and suspicion of hunter-gatherers. The powerful find it difficult to listen. But listening is what must happen, somehow, on every frontier, for only if the powerful listen will the needs and rights of the vulnerable be respected. (Brody, 2001, p. 7)

I begin this chapter with a discussion of issues of colonialism that form the springboard for my work. These issues provide a starting place for developing my

theoretical perspective because it is in response to the oppressive forces of colonialism that I come to consider theoretical strategies for moving beyond colonialism, including postcolonial discourse and decolonial theory. In this chapter's remaining sections I first define these concepts and then move on to consider the theoretical framework for my action research project within Indigenous research methodologies and in the spirit of Indigenous renaissance. Through this process I propose to make visible the epistemological and ontological footings of this work.

Problems of Colonialism

“Southern society,” Brody (1975) writes, “believed that it knew best how to use the north, how to develop its economic potential, and how to ‘improve’ the moral, intellectual and material lives of its inhabitants” (p. 13). Below I examine key ways in which the forces of colonialism contributed to change and created problems in Inuit society.

Economy

Colonialism includes three main facets: business, church, and state. Business first came to the north with the whalers, followed by the fur traders, starting in the 1600s. Brody (1975) explains the consequences: “It was trapping that broke Inuit self-reliance, trapping for the fur trade. Before the traders began demanding fox skin, that resource lay at the very edge of a hunter’s life” (p. 149). The Hudson’s Bay Company created an economic serfdom which led to hardship and which changed the purpose of hunting from harvesting food for family and community to trading with the corporation. It was after this shift that hunger became known. Brody (2001) explains how the hunter-gatherer lifestyle had insured food for most people most of the time; because resources were

shared, people enjoyed a similar quality of life, which included ample leisure opportunities. Inuit had equal access to the land and its resources, and their society was based on egalitarian principles of mutuality, not hierarchical systems. This reality is in stark contrast to the current one where in 2006 the Aboriginal Peoples Survey (2006) found that 24% of Inuit children experience hunger every month. Today major problems exist with Inuit social/community/economic structures.

Religion

Inuit had an oral culture. Their spirituality was animistic, involving “no demarcation between the life of an animal and that of a human – no word for ‘it’” (Brody, 2001, p. 14). In the 1870s missionaries introduced the Christian Bible and provided Inuit with a reading system based on syllabics. Christianity is now embedded in Inuit culture to the extent that Bible reading is considered to be an integral part of camp and community life while Inuit creation stories are not widely known or shared (Weetaluktuk, 2010). Some small communities have Catholic, Anglican, and Pentecostal churches. The colonizers’ religious imprint is so strong that many Inuit have major problems remembering and accessing traditional Inuit spirituality.

Government

Three areas of government intervention in the north include police, health, and education. Below I present brief statements to illustrate the current, problematic state operations in the Arctic.

Police

Brody (1975) writes about how police in the Arctic were feared and seemed to have discretionary powers that they could use as they chose. The Inuit word *ilira*, which

Brody defines as being about fear, power, inequity, and vulnerability, “goes to the heart of the colonial relationships.... They are people or things that have power over you and can neither be controlled or predicted. People or things that make you feel vulnerable and to which you are vulnerable” (Brody, 2001, p. 43). In 1975 when Brody first wrote about police being feared in the north, there were very few police in northern regions. Things have changed dramatically, to the extent that in 2009 the regional newspaper *Nunatsiaq News* reported that crime is on the rise in the Nunavik region and that the Kativik Regional Police Force (KRPF) had responded to 9,812 calls that year – more than double the 4,232 calls answered in 2007 (George, 2009). The total regional population is approximately 10,000. Why were there almost as many calls to the police as there are people in the territory?

Health

As the impacts of colonization gained strength, the physical well-being of Inuit declined. Davis (2009), writing about Indigenous peoples of the Americas, notes that “90% of the Amerindian population died within a generation or two of contact” (p. 66). In the 1950s through to the 1970s tuberculosis had a significant impact on the Inuit population. Some children were removed from their families and never reunited, or were sent back to the wrong family or given new names. Others died and were buried in nameless graves in the south; some parents who were taken out on the hospital ship *C.D. Howe* did not return to the community for years (Partridge, 1986). In January 2010, a Canadian Medical Association study reported an infant mortality rate amongst Inuit infants three times greater than the national average. Nunavik’s infant death rate was the

highest in Canada, with 18 deaths for every 1000 births (Rogers, 2010). How is it that in Canada in 2011 there are such inequities in the area of public health?

Education

In the 1940s schools were established throughout the Inuit homelands and children were taken from their families and enrolled in residential education designed to assimilate them into mainstream Canadian society. Classes were taught in a foreign language (English) and focused on skills that would only be useful in urban Canada (Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, 1990). The school curriculum did not include knowledge necessary for living on the land. Brody (2001) explains,

‘Education’ for many indigenous people has been a means of enforcing the things that Europeans believed in and getting rid of the things they did not.

Educators spoke of the need for ‘improvement,’ ‘development’ and

‘civilized religion’. But the real objective was to break rather than create.

(p. 183)

Arnaquq (2008) is an Inuk scholar who in her masters thesis has written about schooling, education, and leadership on Baffin Island. She writes, “At school, the cultural tension was the strongest. As we conformed to the Qallunaaq [white] teacher’s directions, expectations and commands, unbeknownst to us it had been eroding our parents’ way of life” (p. 63).

Brody continues to expose the depth of the problem with the colonial educational project in writing about the racism experienced by residential school children as they were taught that every aspect of their so-called primitive home life was wrong and their

language, clothing, food, and spirituality were challenged and denigrated by the non-Inuit teachers. Brody (2001) writes,

The residential school was part of a process of ethnocide.... The intention was to stop people being who they were – to ensure that they could no longer live and think and occupy the land as hunter-gatherers. The new and modern nation-states make no room for hunter-gatherers. (p. 189)

In 2008 the Prime Minister apologized to the Aboriginal people of Canada for the wrongs inflicted in the residential school system. However, the education system continues to be dysfunctional. In 2006 Statistics Canada (2006b) reported that only 39.3% of Inuit students completed high school, a figure about half of the 76.9% completion rate of the non-Aboriginal population. Why is the gap in the graduation rates of Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations so substantial?

The above discussion illustrates links between the imposition of colonial systems and structures and the economic, spiritual, and governmental failure of these systems to provide for a healthy Inuit society. In the next section I look more closely at one theoretical underpinning, evolution that shapes this disequilibrium.

Shaping Disequilibriums

In *The People's Land*, Brody (1975) tells a story about a fisheries officer who came into an Inuit settlement and consulted with other whites but did not meet with any local Inuit. Brody writes, “At no time did these experts on fish and fishing discuss with the local people their reason for visiting the settlement” (p. 7). How can Inuit voices be heard when those in power do not consult? How is it acceptable for white officials to come to town and not speak with people of that place, of that land, of that sea? This racist

silencing of Inuit voices is inherent in theories of colonization that are intended to undermine Indigenous knowledge(s) and provide license to take over Indigenous lands.

One theoretical problem for the colonized is based in evolutionary theory. Brody (2001) explains:

In the Americas of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, both the practices of settlers and the application of legal theory to indigenous peoples' rights to land were based on ideas of human evolution, with the hunter-gatherers at the bottom of a developmental ladder and Europeans seated at its peak. (p. 122)

Davis (2009) laments the continued presence in the scholarly literature of academic reasoning grounded in evolutionary theories. He writes,

Such a transparently simplistic and biased interpretation of human history, though long repudiated as an intellectual artifact of the nineteenth century as relevant today as the convictions of Victorian clergy who dated the earth at a mere 6,000 years, has nevertheless proved to be remarkably persistent, even among contemporary scholars. (p. 65)

Evolutionary theories, which categorized people by colour and ethnicity, have played and continue to play, I would argue, an important role in perpetuating white privilege in the north, a privilege which has had a pivotal role in shaping human disequilibrium, to the extent that Brody (2001) writes, "The Indigenous peoples of Canada have been forced to respond to a strong implication in modern legal theory that they do not qualify as fully human" (p. 282). An example of this implication in practice is that the *Canadian Human Rights Act* (CHRA) of 1982 included a section, 67, which

stated that the CHRA did not apply to the Indian Act. Section 67 was finally repealed in June of 2011 (CNW Group, 2011). Another example is that the *Canadian Multiculturalism Act* “does not give any special recognition to First Nations, Métis, or Inuit languages as the founding languages of Canada, nor does any other federal law. Attempts to do so have all failed” (Tulloch, 2009, p. 48).

Evolutionary theory is one of several powerful forces which have made possible the colonization of Inuit lands and peoples, silenced Inuit voices, and quieted the Inuit language. In recent years political steps have been taken to shift the balance. These include the creation of the Nunavut territory in 1999 and, most recently, the release of the Inuit Education Strategy in June 2011. Can these steps of renaissance and resistance unravel the bindings that persistent, invasive, racist, and unjust false thinking have tied? Margo Greenwood (2009), in the abstract of her doctoral dissertation, suggests that they can:

The key findings of this research suggest that early childhood (and related educational considerations) is a critical site for cultural rejuvenation, for the (re)building of community, and for the establishment of healthy Aboriginal communities in the future. Fundamental to this (re)building is autonomy by Indigenous communities over language and culture, over the care and education of their children, over their lives and futures, and over the lives and futures of their children. (p. ii)

Can the power shift? Can functional frameworks be repositioned through early childhood projects? This research project attempts to contribute to Indigenous rebuilding,

revitalization, and renaissance by introducing learning stories to ECE practice in Nunavik.

Theoretical Positioning with Postcolonial Paradigms

In the first part of this chapter I have considered problems of colonialism in order to lay the foundation for my theoretical positioning within postcolonial paradigms. These include decolonial theory and postcolonial discourse, which I elaborate briefly below.

Decolonial theory

“Western culture,” Smith (1999) writes, “constantly reaffirms the West’s view of itself as the centre of legitimate knowledge” (p. 63). Decolonial perspectives recognize the imbalance of power relations and the destructive processes of colonialism and Eurocentrism. Marie Battiste (2010) once gave a lecture during which she showed a cartoon featuring a pickle jar with the caption “marinated in Eurocentrism.” I think she used this image to depict how we have all been influenced by colonizing practices that undermine Indigenous knowledges and pedestal Eurocentric superiority. At a later point in her talk Battiste introduced the concept of cognitive imperialism, which she explained has left no conventional place where Indigenous knowledge has been allowed to thrive.

Decolonial theory sets out to make visible the domination of Eurocentrism and its goal of assimilation. De Lissovoy (2010) offers this definition: “Decolonial theory might be said to extend the anticolonial project into consideration of the domain of being and knowing; at the same time it draws from the complex account of cultural discontinuity and imposition offered by postcolonial studies” (p. 280). Decolonial theory, as espoused by De Lissovoy (2010), suggests working globally towards co-existence and developing “sensitivity to difference” (p. 280). He postulates that in order to acknowledge

differences one must first know history from the Indigenous perspective: the history of domination and violation. He recommends that African and Indigenous stories be prioritized in curriculum and that steps be taken to ensure that even the most junior students learn history from the viewpoint of “historically marginalized populations” (p. 286). In sum, De Lissovoy’s (2010) decolonial ethics embrace co-existence, multiple paths, and diverse truths; they are relational and dialogic. De Lissovoy offers theoretical tools related to knowing and being that are grounded in decolonial theory that I can use. For me the starting place is in recording and telling stories within an Inuit community, stories that will, for the most part, originate in Inuit perspectives and engage Inuit minds.

Postcolonial discourses

Postcolonial discourse is a way to first make visible systems, situations, and actions that are founded in colonialism and which erode Indigenous knowledges and frameworks; in a second step, it enables “actions and activities which have the potential to make accessible Inuit knowledges” (Rowan, 2010b). Battiste (2010) speaks about a two-pronged project of deconstruction and reconstruction. The deconstruction involves addressing political, moral, and theoretical inadequacies and dismantling racism and colonialism. The reconstruction incorporates Indigenous perspectives, transforms the educational status quo, and supports the formation of selves connected to Indigenous communities.

Viruru (2006) suggests that postcolonial discourses provide venues which enable individuals to recognize inequities and subsequently to work for social justice. Ritchie and Rau (2007) write about looking deep when developing curriculum, going beyond the visible to discover embedded cultural patterns of communication and interaction and to

get at culture-based knowledges and ways of being. Finding Indigenous relational patterns and meanings, making those accessible, and then integrating them into early childhood programs are all parts of a postcolonial discourse.

Postcolonial discourses provide researchers with tools to disassemble the wreckage of colonialism and build anew, drawing on Indigenous resources, languages, patterns, and conceptualizations. Through this thesis, my intent is to see if learning stories provide a place to practice postcolonial discourses, and whether they could be used to illuminate Inuit knowledges, cultural identities, and language identities.

Indigenous Research

Indigenous researchers Battiste (2010), Martin (2008), and Wilson (2008) give insights into relational theory as a holistic way to approach this study. In this section I touch on their epistemological and ontological views and consider them in relation to my own.

Battiste (2008) describes Indigenous epistemology as incorporating ontology. She writes, “It is a knowledge that required constant vigor to observe carefully, to offer those in story and interactions, and to maintain appropriate relationships with all things and people in it” (p. 499). She goes on to explain how Indigenous knowledge is dynamic and always changing; it is relational and “collectively developed and constituted. There is no singular author of Indigenous knowledge and no singular method for understanding its totality” (p. 500). Indigenous knowledge must be learned in Indigenous ways and come to be known within the context of a community; it is gained through experiences on the land and with people.

Karen Martin (2008) is a Noonuccal/Quandamookah researcher from Australia. Her book *Please Knock Before You Enter: Aboriginal Regulation of Outsiders and the Implications for Researchers* was originally written as her doctoral dissertation. In this work Martin presents an “Aboriginal epistemology within the framework of relatedness” (p. 7). Her relatedness theory includes three parts: ways of knowing, ways of being, and ways of doing. Martin (2008) positions ontology within the Indigenist research paradigm, explaining that all things and experiences exist in relatedness. Engagement is dialogic, expression polyphonic, and ways multiple. Epistemology is also relational. Wilson (2001, cited in Martin, 2008) writes,

An Indigenous paradigm comes from the fundamental belief that knowledge is relational. Knowledge is shared with all the creation.... It is with the cosmos, it is with the animals, with the plants, with the earth that we share this knowledge. It goes beyond the idea of individual knowledge to the concept of relational knowledge. (p. 82)

Relatedness theory is founded in the integration of ontology and epistemology. I approach my work with an understanding of the construction of knowledge (epistemology) and ways of being or perceiving reality (ontology) that is rooted in this theory of relatedness.

Mashon (2010) defines an Indigenous research method as “a tool for decolonization”; an “enactment of self-determination”; as validating Indigenous knowledge; and as grounded in “research priorities of Indigenous people” (p. 40). She writes about building foundations for Indigenous early childhood education; in her work, she “found that critical to community involvement is the development of equitable

relationships between teachers/institutions and families” (p. 32). It is my intent that this research project will serve as a practice of Indigenous research methods and methodologies by facilitating the development of a practice of making learning stories which I hope will make accessible Inuit knowledge(s), patterns, and meanings and, in so doing, make spaces in ECE practice for Inuit ways of knowing and being.

Transformative Education

My approach is embedded in the practice of transformative pedagogy, which recognizes the value of home and community knowledge. Ado and Campoy (2004) write, “Transformative education recognizes the importance of voice, the need for education to foster the critical consciousness that leads to speaking one’s personal and social truth. Voice takes special force when words are not only spoken but also written” (p. 14). For this project, which set out to support educators in documenting stories about children in their classrooms, the influence of Ado and Campoy (2004) is significant. For example, their transformative education model “sees home and community knowledge as integral parts of students’ lives and as valuable sources of knowledge” (Rowan, 2010b, p. 162).

Action Research Approach

MacNaughton and Hughes (2009) write about doing action research in early childhood settings. They describe theoretical foundations concerning action research for professional change. They explain how “praxis is knowledge for a purpose” (p. 46) and how “educational change is most effective when practitioners own and manage change” (p. 46). This research project set out to support educators in learning to use learning stories to “promote professional growth and learning in individuals and teams” (p. 47) and with a mind to developing an approach to assessment which could serve as a means

of first recognizing and secondly deepening Inuit cultural and linguistic approaches to early childhood education.

I originally planned to use participatory action research (PAR) as my main methodology. PAR is cited repeatedly in the literature (Battiste, 2008; Chataway, 2001; Mashon 2010; Wilson, 2008) as a recommended methodology to use in collaboration with Indigenous populations because it is an inside-out approach that is designed to work with community involvement and direction in all aspects of the work. Wilson (2008) describes PAR as “a complementary framework for accepting the uniqueness of an Indigenous research paradigm” (p. 16). Although I draw on PAR principles of deep community involvement, I do not call this a PAR project, as I have entered the work with predetermined questions. I call this an action research project grounded in Indigenous methods and methodologies embedded in processes of transformative education. This is because I have entered the project with the intent of exploring learning stories. I have predefined the purpose; however, the process is a relational one which evolved, guided by the voices and practices of the educators and collaborators.

Summary

To summarize, my theoretical perspective is founded in a strength-based view of Inuit knowledge(s) and a profound desire to position myself to hear Inuit voices and to act with them. The imposition of colonialism has had devastating effects on Inuit economically, socially, physically, and spiritually. One theoretical force which has shaped the disequilibrium is the theory of evolution. This review of some of these processes underscored Brody’s remarks about the colonizers’ ultimate refusal to recognize and engage with the Indigenous mind (2001). Greenwood (2009), however,

finds early childhood to be a place for cultural rejuvenation. Decolonial theory provides ethical considerations concerning multiple truths and dialogic processes which could aid this process. In this study, postcolonial discourses provide ways to explore my learning story questions from Inuit perspectives.

In the next chapter, I describe my research methods and methodology.

Chapter 4: Methodology and Methods

In this chapter I put forward the inner workings of this qualitative project. I begin by explaining how this project came about and why Inukjuak was chosen as the site. I then introduce the members of the research team and describe aspects of the process, including ethical considerations, participants, research activities, data collection procedures, and approaches to analysis. I then consider rigour and validity and conclude with a section on the study's limitations.

Background

Kativik Regional Government (KRG) funded the research phase of this project. They had received funding from the Public Health Agency of Canada, specifically Aboriginal Head Start Urban and Northern Communities Strategic Initiative Fund. The impetus to study alternative approaches to assessment came after Larrivée (2007) reported that nobody – not the board, not the child care centre staff, and not KRG staff – was involved in evaluating educational services at Nunavik's child care centres (p. 49). Larrivée also noted that relationship-related problems existed at every level – educator-child, educator-parent, educator-board, educator-KRG, and educator-community. Larrivée (2007) recommended that every effort be made to maximize opportunities to create a strong educator-child connection, to expand and strengthen educator-parent relationships, and to support partnerships involving a shared interest in children's development. Larrivée's report encouraged thinking within the community and throughout the region about relationships and about evaluation and assessment. My long-time associate at KRG, Margaret Gauvin, and I wondered if learning stories could

provide a way of building relationships through assessment; thus the seed of this project began to grow.

Research Site

Inukjuak is an Inuit community of 1,600 (Statistics Canada, 2006) situated on the eastern shores of Hudson's Bay in Nunavik. Accessible only by air, it is considered to be an isolated community. Ninety-four percent of the population is Inuit and 90% speak Inuttitut at home. About 10% of the total population is four years of age or younger. There are a total of 110 childcare spaces in the community (Rowan, 2009). Two physically separate centres function as a single licensed childcare service overseen by a parent majority board and managed by a centre director who is supported by a bookkeeper and a secretary. Pigursaviapik has 30 places and operates as a multi-age centre with a staff of four educators and an administrator (assistant director); it is situated in Pigiursavik, the adult education centre. Tasiurvik is an 80-place facility with 6 playrooms and 12 trained educators. The early childhood team includes a pedagogical counsellor, Maaji Putulik, who is one of two co-researchers on this project and who supports the educators, the majority of whom have completed the 1,800-hour Collège d'enseignement général et professionnel (CEGEP)⁶ training program (Rowan, 2009). Other staff includes two cooks, two janitors, and a driver.

There are a number of professional reasons for choosing Inukjuak as the research site. The Inukjuak child care centre was the first of the Nunavik child care centres to open in 1998 with the combined new provincial and federal funding. It has, since its inception, been well run with competent directors and a pro-active parent board. It is a place where staff and leadership have been interested in embarking on new pedagogical endeavours.

⁶ College of general and vocational education.

The pilot study for the *Aniingualaurtaa, Let's Play Outside* project (Rowan, Nulukie, & Gauvin, 2009) took place in Inukjuak in 2008. Members of the childcare community also participated in the initial stages of a community-based curriculum design initiative (Rowan, 2009). Almost all of the teaching staff has completed the college certificate program. They are one of two communities in Nunavik with a pedagogical counsellor.

Furthermore, I have a long-standing relationship with the Inukjuak people and place, having come to Inukjuak as a grade five teacher in 1982. Since 1992 I have been married to an Inukjuak man, and together we have three children. We have many family relations in the community. In considering the Indigenous research paradigm, Wilson (2008) writes, "Family is seen as of utmost importance for many Indigenous people. Family is what holds us in relationship as individuals and bridges us as individuals into communities and nations" (p. 86). I felt that my own connections and previous research activities in Inukjuak would fortify connections and make for a strong project consistent with Indigenous research practices.

Research Team

Battiste (2008) is clear that a main principle for Indigenous research is that Indigenous people should conduct their own research and control Indigenous knowledge. She states, "If others should choose to enter into collaborative relationship with Indigenous peoples, the research should empower and benefit Indigenous communities and cultures, not just researchers, their educational institutions or Canadian society" (p. 501). This project's research team and processes were designed in consideration of this understanding. Our research team was composed of three members: myself (a white woman, married to an Inuk man, with a thesis to write), Maaji Putulik, and Annie

Augiak. I came from the University of Victoria with a family footing in the community. Maaji Putulik, the Inuk pedagogical counsellor from the Tasiurvik Child Care Centre, came from the community and was committed to supporting the educators in delivering the centre's educational program and supporting Inuttitut language and Inuit cultural activities at the centre. Annie Augiak, a KRG childcare counsellor and Inuk woman with years of experience implementing the Nunavik Nutrition Program, came to the project from the region to provide a link between the project, the community, and the regional government. One consideration in creating the team was to ensure that the research would benefit the community and the region; the potential to do this increased with local and regional participation on the research team.

Battiste (2008) writes that

Indigenous knowledge must be learned in Indigenous ways. Indigenous knowledge is diverse and must be learned in the similar and diverse meaningful ways that the people have learned it for it to have continuing vitality and meaning. Educators must also respect the fact that Indigenous knowledge can only be fully known from within the community contexts and only through prolonged discussions with each of these groups. (p.

501)

Having a team composed of stakeholders from the community and region positioned us to come to know our work in the context of the community.

A third factor in assembling the team was to assure that the project's practice and process could take place as much as possible in Inuttitut. Arnaquq (2008) writes,

Your identity can be strengthened in the telling and retelling of stories.

Artistic creativity through arts, literature, music and drama is the reflection of a thriving society. Although this has been happening more and more, our generation is used to thinking and writing in English and has had less opportunity to intellectually debate, orate or narrate in Inuktitut. We need to think, write, work, debate, develop, conceptualize and critique in Inuktitut. (p. 190)

I am not a competent Inuktitut language speaker; my intent was that by assembling a team that included two competent first-language Inuktitut speakers, much of the discussions and thinking could happen in Inuktitut. Tulloch (2009) writes, “All evidence suggests that a thriving bilingualism will only be achieved by putting the Inuit language first” (p. 12). Battiste (2008) states that “Indigenous knowledge must be understood from an Indigenous perspective using Indigenous language: it cannot be understood from the perspective of Eurocentric knowledge and discourse” (p. 505). By intent, our team strove to put Inuktitut first. It was critical to a project designed to investigate what learning stories will do with regard to cultural and linguistic identities that the project be grounded in the cultural and linguistic fabric of the community. As Weenie (2008) writes, “Aboriginal thought embedded in Aboriginal languages is what must be cultivated and nurtured in Aboriginal curriculum” (p. 554). The presence of Annie and Maaji on the team ensured that thinking about the project, on the site and in relationship with educators, parents, and planners, could take place in Inuktitut. This practice was limited, however, in that most communication involving me happened in English or in translation.

Ethical Considerations

Three sources I drew on in planning and executing this thesis research included guides for conducting research in Indigenous communities: one produced by the University of Victoria (2003) titled “Protocols and Principles for Conducting Research in an Indigenous Context”; another written by Brian Snarch (2004) about ownership, control, access, and possession (OCAP), principles which have been established to guide research practice in Indigenous communities; and a guide for researchers produced by the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami and the Nunavut Research Institute (2007). A main theme of these documents related to assuring community participation and ownership. The University of Victoria Ethics Board granted a Certificate of Approval for the project on March 4, 2011.

Atkinson (2001, as cited in Wilson, 2008) presents a list of principles for Indigenous research. The first is that “Aboriginal people themselves approve the research and the research methods” (p. 59). I started by seeking the approval of the Tasiurvik Child Care Centre. I spoke with the centre director about the project and she invited me to address a letter to the board. I then drafted a letter explaining the project and seeking board support. (This letter is included as appendix A.) The parent majority board approved the project and issued a resolution that included a description of the key methods. I felt that it was important to have the child care centre’s approval before approaching the community because, after all, the work was going to take place at the centre. Once I was in the community, and with the resolution from the child care centre in hand, I sought approval from the municipality. (My letter to the Inukjuak mayor and

council is included as appendix B.) On March 1, 2011, the municipal manager signed a letter endorsing the work I was doing at the Tasiurvik Child Care Centre.

I then wanted to bring the participants into the research circle. Atkinson's fourth principle of Indigenous research is that "research participants must feel safe and be safe, including respecting issues of confidentiality" (2001, as cited in Wilson, 2008, p. 59). During the first discussion group session, Annie and I showed examples of learning stories and talked about the action research project with the educators. We distributed the information letter, which described the project information and researchers' responsibilities, and had a question period. All materials were distributed in Inuttitut and English, presented verbally and explained. We promised to not reveal names in reports and publications and reminded people that they would be recognizable if photos and videos were used. In addition to the participant consent form, which had three boxes for various areas of approval, we also asked educators to sign a confidentiality agreement.

A letter to parents was distributed about two-thirds of the way through the project. (The English version of this letter is included as appendix C.) This letter sought parents' permission to use their children's work and photographs and video recordings. We had tried, starting during my first week in the community, to hold a parent information session. The first meeting was cancelled at the last minute because two hunters were missing. Then, during the second week, the meeting was cancelled because it had been scheduled for a Friday night and the board chair advised me that another night would be preferable. The third week the board had training and was therefore otherwise engaged, so the meeting was not scheduled. During the fourth week we booked the meeting for the Monday night; everything looked good until the party of hockey players that included the

child care centre director got stuck in another community without spaces on the plane to come home; without the centre director the meeting could not take place. Finally, after consulting with the educators and co-researchers, we decided that the best way to reach the parents would be through a newsletter which included the consent form for children. It also included an invitation to a parents' meeting two weeks later.

There were a few parents who did not sign the consent form and whose children were featured in key stories. In the end I was glad that we had waited to obtain the consent forms, because I thought that, had a parent not issued permission up front, we would not have been able to include their children in the stories. As it stands, children were included, and all the stories are contained in the binders for the use and enjoyment of families and friends; in cases where I did not get parental consent, I have not used the stories.

Participants

In many ways, all of the children who attend the two child care centres in Inukjuak participated in the project, as did their families, their educators, and the centre staff, including cooks, janitors, driver, bookkeeper, centre director, assistant centre director, and the secretary. The entire child care centre community participated in the project in one way or another. The children are featured in the stories. Their stories are collected in the binders, which were shared with the parents at the parents' meeting. The parents participated by attending the parents' meeting in great numbers (35 parents were at the meeting). Families also contributed by completing the information page about their children (see appendix D), signing consent forms (see appendix E), and taking the portfolios home and reading the stories to their children.

Wilson (2008) documents a comment by a fellow researcher named Cora who said, “no matter what I do it has to be hooked to the community. It has to benefit the community” (p. 102). While this project netted most members of the child care centre community as participants, the key informants were the educators. There are 16 early childhood educators who work at the two child care centres in Inukjuak. All of the educators were invited to attend the six discussion group sessions and were encouraged to take up the creation of learning stories in their classrooms. All educators who were involved in the discussion groups and subsequently in the creation of the learning stories were invited to participate in narrative conversations. In the end, all of the educators made stories; a total of 59 were produced during the eight weeks I was in the community. Attendance at the six discussion groups averaged thirteen participants per session, and a total of seven narrative conversations were recorded, five with educators. Every one of the educators worked on creating a binder/portfolio for each child, took photos, wrote stories, and learned the basics of the computer publishing program. The educators’ participation also took the form of attending the parents’ meeting.

Strategies of Inquiry

I wanted an approach to inquiry that was flexible and capable of moving with the educators, children, and families in the moment. Wilson (2008) writes, “Strategies of inquiry build upon a methodology to fill in how you will arrive at the research destination.... By including a strategy step in your research, it becomes possible to change methods to best suit the situation” (p. 39). Wilson goes on to describe methods as the tools or techniques used to collect data. In this part of the thesis I examine my overall strategy of inquiry and sources of information and then identify the tools and techniques I

used to collect data and the processes I employed to consider the content and do the analysis.

MacNaughton and Hughes (2009) suggest that “using more than one [data collection] method helps you to draw on the strengths of each method and reduce the limits overall in your data collection methods” (p. 126). Using multiple methods was also very much consistent with an approach, which I was trying, to base the research in Indigenous methodologies. Battiste (2008) considers that, “within a functional system of family and community dynamics, Indigenous knowledge is constantly shared, making all things interrelated and collectively developed and constituted. There is no singular author of Indigenous knowledge and no singular method for understanding its totality” (p. 500).

My strategy involved three main components: a group teaching piece which took the form of six discussion group sessions; an application part involving all aspects of creating the learning stories; and reflection activities. A vital part of the strategy was situating myself in the community for the duration of the project. I spent eight weeks in total in the village. The first week was devoted to arranging logistics and the next seven were spent at the child care centres working on the learning stories. The Inukjuak-based co-researcher, Maaji Putulik, worked at the centre and was on the site each day. Annie Augiak travelled to Inukjuak for three separate weeks to work on the project with the educators, the technology, and the stories. When Annie was not in Inukjuak, she was supporting the project by developing the approach for designing the story sheets for publication, processing and printing stories, and typing text.

Data Collection Processes and Products

In this section I describe the five main sources of data (discussion groups, learning stories, research journal, observations, and narrative conversations) and the data that were generated. Within each of these sections I consider the purpose, explain the process, identify the products (data collected), and reflect.

Discussion groups

The idea of the discussion groups was to create a time and space to work with the Inukjuak educators on the learning stories. The approach was very much inspired by the work of Glenda MacNaughton (2005), who writes about critically knowing early childhood communities, and Sally Barnes, who took part in a curriculum club composed of critically thinking educators (MacNaughton, 2005, p. 204). For our project we wanted to have a time to meet with the educators as a group in order to share theoretical and practical information related to the research and the practice of making learning stories. We also wanted to create opportunities for the educators to share their stories and engage in conversations about the work.

The project ran in the community for seven weeks. The discussion groups were held on six out of the seven Monday nights in the Tasiurvik Child Care Centre's multi-purpose room. The first three sessions ran for two hours from 18:00 to 20:00; then we had a one-week break and the second set of three sessions ran from 18:00 to 21:00. The extra hour was added to the sessions in the second set because we needed more time to be together working on the project. Dinner took at least 30 minutes to eat, and then people liked to have a smoke, so we ended up with only an hour and 20 minutes to work. Before the second set of sessions started, I checked in with each participant and asked if it would

be okay to extend our evening session by one hour. All of the educators agreed to stay. In fact, several of the educators indicated to me that they would have preferred to have a session on the night we took off.

Each evening session began with a supper. On the last night, Annie Augiak brought frozen fish from Kangirsuk, which we ate with frozen caribou meat from Inukjuak. During our final meal together, the group sat on the floor in a circle. A quiet peacefulness and engagement connected us as we took great joy in sharing a meal of country food.

Childcare was available during the Monday night sessions for the children of the educators, who were all paid their usual salary. In the initial weeks of the project the Monday session was used to introduce the basics of learning stories, create initial stories, and plan our approach together. As the educators became more familiar with the methodology, the activities shifted to a focus on sharing and exchanging ideas and reading stories out loud, and then cycled through to shared reflections, cooperative analysis of the learning stories, and considerations of next steps. On most of the nights I presented a short talk related to the evening's content. The teaching approaches included a lecturette, large group discussions, small group discussions, and individual reflections. One session began with each author standing beside her story board, which was positioned on the classroom wall, and reading the story out loud to the group. On another evening, we gathered on mats on the floor and educators took turns reading aloud to each other, as in circle time. The discussion group sessions created a valuable opportunity for stories to be read in Inuttitut. Tulloch (2009) writes,

When only one in five Inuit who are able read and write the Inuit language actually read the Inuit language version when they see bilingual publications (Nunavut Bureau of Statistics 2002), accepting English as the default reading and writing language becomes a self-perpetuating cycle.

When people are not reading in Inuit language, they are not improving their reading fluency, nor or they improving as writers. (p. 56)

The last session was devoted to assembling the stories in binders and preparing for the parent information session and open house, at which we shared our work with the centre families. The schedule for the discussion topics is presented below in table 1.

Table 1: Educator discussion group schedule.

Tasiurvik Child Care Centre	
March 7	This action research project – about narrative assessment – about action research
March 14	Learning stories
March 21	Photos and children – experiences in the playroom
April 4	Narrative assessment – sharing documentation, communicating with families and children
April 11	Reflecting on the practice – sharing documentation considering “Who is the child?”, discussion about knowledge and identity
April 18	Putting it all together – creating the binders, finalizing the stories and preparing for the parents’ meeting and open house

Data

Videos were taken of the discussion groups using a Sony-HDR Handy Cam and then downloaded onto my Macintosh computer in QuickTime. I took the video footage to supplement the data and to provide reference for validation purposes. I have some footage from three of the six discussion groups. In all there is a total of 95 minutes and 28 seconds of video from the discussion groups.

On one of the evenings, the educators were invited to review learning stories which had been posted on the classroom walls and to write on a blank sheet below the original story a question or comment or make an observation. The educators commented on seven of the stories. Annie Augiak typed the comments in Inuttitut and Jobie Weetaluktuk (my husband) provided the translation. These seven one-page comment sheets are another part of the data. In addition, notes were made concerning the discussion groups in both the observations and reflections pages and in my research journal.

Preliminary analysis

Three pages of notes were assembled from a review of the videos where I looked for key points and footage related to my questions under the headings language, culture, relationships, knowledge, and learning stories.

Reflection

I have not drawn on the discussion group data as a primary source of information for this study, but I wanted to include the discussion group in this section as these sessions provided an important foundation for the work. I was trying to figure out what action research meant as I went along. For my part it meant striving to be connected in the moment – feeling my way, along with the co-researchers and educators, for the best approach and trying to make the process work with the people and resources. The discussion groups were a pivotal piece as this was where we introduced the project and the related theories. I also wondered how the project could get at Inuit ways of knowing and being. On the evening of the third discussion group session, Maaji and I were getting ready to set up tables in the multi-purpose room when one of the educators stopped us.

She said, “We don’t need tables.” We heard her words, thought for a moment, and put the tables away. From that night forward our meetings took place with the participants sitting on mats on the floor. In many Inuit homes, families gather to eat sitting on the floor. I think this seating arrangement was part of the process of adopting an Inuit research practice. I also think this in-the-moment responsiveness is part of action research.

Learning stories

The learning stories are the key data. They are the focal point of this project. The idea of the project was to work with educators to develop an approach to creating learning stories at the child care centre and to see what those stories would do. My hope was that learning stories would provide a place to make visible Inuit ways of knowing and being, and through that process form and fortify Inuit linguistic and cultural identities. I was working from a sociocultural understanding that children construct knowledge within their own communities and relationships, and that the stories, which originated in Inuit perspectives, would engage Inuit minds.

Obtaining “the artifacts” (the key data of the learning stories) required that the educators learn about how to create the stories. The discussion group sessions, described above, were one way which supported the educators in creating and considering learning stories. Below I examine the many methods we employed to engage with the educators in creating the learning stories and in sharing them with others. To do this I follow a chronological order.

Observation – Week 1

Margaret Carr (2009) writes about learning dispositions, which pivot children to a place where they engage in learning activities, initiate projects, use diverse strategies,

negotiate, and collaborate. In the Kei Tuo o te Pae materials, Carr, Lee, and Jones (2004) refer to the progressive filters of noticing, recognizing, and responding (p. 6) as three parts of the cycle of learning and assessment. In this project we wanted to encourage educators to become aware of the act of noticing by intentionally looking for evidence of children's interests. Thus during the first week, when Annie Augiak and I visited each of the eight classrooms in the two child care centres to observe and take pictures, we invited each educator to observe and look for evidence of moments showing children's interests during the course of that week. We discussed these during the Monday night discussion session in week 1.

The first story – Week 2

During the previous week, Annie Augiak, the co-researcher from KRG, and I had taken 1,195 digital photos. In preparation for the second discussion group session, I downloaded photos onto my computer, saved them as PDF files, and printed them so that the teachers could select photos from the printed sheet which they could cut and paste onto a blank page to create their own stories. Most teachers received a set of about 20–25 photos spread over 5 to 7 pages. In the end, 14 stories were produced. Examples of these stories are presented in the Findings and Analysis chapter. Some educators cut out the photos from the picture sheet, reformatting and reorganizing them and gluing the pictures onto blank paper, which we had provided. Others selected a set of photos from the page and wrote directly on the paper. All of the stories except for one were written entirely in Inuttitut. The exception depicts a boy reading an English-language book; it includes eight words in English from the text. These were the only English-language words used in the

entire set of stories. The shortest story is composed of one photo frame and the longest is eight frames.

During the course of this week, Maaji and I visited the classrooms. We each had a camera, the child care centre's and mine. Our goal was to create an opportunity for each educator to take a set of photos connected to the idea of "depicting children's interests," guided by Forman and Pufall (2005), who have written about photographing children. They advise taking pictures that tell a story, show competence, make problem solving visible, explain learning, and depict culture – not cute posed portraits.

Sharing and reflecting – Week 3

The highlight of the discussion group session this week was the educators reading their stories out loud to the group, followed by educators writing comments beneath the stories and then engaging in reflective conversations. The thinking behind this process originates in the British Columbia Early Learning Framework (ELF; Government of British Columbia, 2007) and was informed by the "Steps for Incorporating Pedagogical Narration into Your Practice" (Government of British Columbia, 2009, p. 15). The five-step cycle of pedagogical narration presented in the ELF proceeds as follows: "record ordinary moments; interpret ordinary moments to make learning visible; share description with others, add to and deepen interpretation; link your pedagogical narration (with) the framework; evaluate, plan and start the process again" (p. 14). This process encourages conversations about stories and enables one to consider the many varying perspectives from which a story can be viewed, and how a story changes with input from others and when used to assess for learning (Carr, 2001). The discussion group platform provided a

place to enter into professional conversations; the learning stories provided the subject matter.

Eight cameras and three computers arrived at the centre this week. Because each playroom now had a camera, the educators were better equipped to take pictures. During this week the research team took part in a two-and-a-half-day training session to learn Microsoft Publisher – skills which we then honed and shared with the educators.

Cameras and computers – Week 4

This week the educators began in earnest to use the computers and cameras, to work with Publisher, and to make the learning stories from start to finish. In embarking on this project I wasn't sure how the pieces would come together, but after I spent a couple of consecutive afternoons working with Lesa, I knew that the educators would create learning stories on the computers. In table 2 below, I present an excerpt from my observation and reflection log.

Table 2: Creating the first photo story with Lesa.

March 16, 2011	On Tuesday afternoon I went to bring my camera to the Pink Room. The teacher was busy and not available for taking photos at that time, so I checked in the Brown Room next door and Lesa agreed to take pictures. She took eleven photos, which I downloaded into a file on my computer. The next afternoon during naptime I returned to the Brown Room. Lesa was free and wanted to see the pictures. We looked through them together. She wanted to download the images into a document to make a story. She selected four pictures of a four-year-old girl gluing popsicle sticks. I started by highlighting the first photo with the mouse and dragging it into a document while Lesa watched, and then she took over. We sat side by side and worked together in the quiet of naptime to manipulate the technology, inserting each image carefully into the template. In the end we had a four-photo story. On Monday Lesa will add the words.
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While I worked with Lesa in the soft, curtained light of a sunny afternoon, I began to see that this one-on-one approach would be the way to work with the educators on figuring out the computers and creating the stories, and, as the educators had suggested, that nap time would provide the perfect time to do the work.

This week Maaji set up a computer workstation in the staff room. There are two laptops and a colour printer. While the children slept we worked with the educators on the learning stories. We also spent time in the staff room during breaks and tried to be available to work with people as opportunities presented themselves. The educators set the pace. Most of the first set of stories were printed the first time with pictures only. The educators then spent a day or so hand writing the story to go with the pictures, before typing the text on the computer. Maaji typed for people who weren't interested in typing yet.

One important aspect of our method was that we privileged Inuttitut. We wanted to support the teachers in writing in Inuttitut and in using the computers to process the stories. The AiPai font, which is used in Nunavik for writing in syllabics, was installed on the laptops. The standard key faces that come with the computers are in roman orthography, and so the educators had to type in roman while referring to a syllabics chart we had posted on the wall above the computers. Some syllabic key stickers are available and I tried to hunt them down to make the typing process easier. First I called around to each of the local organizations – Pigiursavik, Avataq Cultural Institute, Innalik School, Kativik Regional Government – but nobody had any stickers. I tried head offices of organizations situated in Nunavik: Nobody had any syllabics stickers. My husband found some on-line, but they weren't in AiPai font, and when I checked with Maaji, she

informed me they wouldn't work for us. Over the course of several weeks, I tried relentlessly, making at least 20 separate inquiries to try to acquire syllabics stickers, then finally, one day my husband's cousin had a set to give me that she had received from the school board in Montreal. The next day I called the school board's Montreal office and was referred to their purchasing agent. He informed me that he had the stickers and he would send me a big stack. He didn't want them because they didn't stick properly on the keys and people complained. Finally, seven weeks after starting my search, the syllabics stickers arrived in the community and were affixed to the keys.

Another barrier to the smooth typing of Inuttitut syllabics was the addition of finals.⁷ The Kativik Regional Government's information technology department had installed Word 2010 on all the computers; to add the finals the educators had to make sure that the computer was operating in Indonesian, return to the insert section in the tool bar, and perfect the finals using the symbols chart. Even with the hurdles described above, the educators persisted and typed the stories in Inuttitut. It should be noted that, aside from the font, the computers' operating systems and directional information within the computer programs was all in English. Is it any wonder that Tulloch (2009) refers to English as a default language? She writes,

Another reason given why English seems to have become the default language for reading and writing (except perhaps in the religious domain, in which Inuit reading and writing was introduced) is that the huge majority of written material in the North is in English. Even where Inuit

⁷ Finals are a symbol added after typing a syllabic to complete the syllable; some people call them consonants.

language materials exist, many of these are based on, or translated from, materials originally created in English. (p. 56)

Our group commitment to Inuttitut was strong; every one of the typed stories was in Inuttitut. Inuttitut writing was an important action in a project rooted in Indigenous methodologies and it actively engaged the participants, through the writing in an Indigenous language, in the practice of postcolonial discourse.

Sharing stories with parents – Week 5

In the discussion group we talked about sharing the stories with families. The educators thought it was important to share the stories with the parents because they show growth, educators' work, and children's learning. Rinaldi (2006) writes that, "through documentation parents can have a direct look, with real and tangible examples, at the enormous wealth of their children's potential, which is made visible" (p. 129). Margaret Carr (2009) calls learning stories "conscription devices" (p. 10) as they are a great means of encouraging family participation. Upon discussion we decided that posting the stories on the wall outside the playroom, at adult eye level, might be a good place to start. We also decided to purchase binders to contain the stories. Each child would have a binder in which the stories would be collected.

Linguistic and cultural identities – Week 6

Article 30 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) states:

In those states in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities or persons of indigenous origin exist, a child belonging to such a minority or who is indigenous shall not be denied the right, in community with other

members of his or her group, to enjoy his or her own culture, to profess or practice his or her own religion, or to use his or her own language. (United Nations, 1989)

During the weekly discussion group we studied Article 30 of the CRC. We looked at the paper written in 1990 by the women of Inukjuak, which is included in the introduction. We considered the vision of the Inuit Early Childhood Development Working Group (“happy, healthy and safe Inuit children and families” (Brown, 2007, p. 3). We also reviewed notes from a parents’ meeting held in April 2009 where participants, when asked what they hoped for their children, said they hoped they would become strong people, with strong (Inuit) identities, as knowledgeable about the land as their grandparents, and equipped to make healthy choices. These four texts provided a springboard for a discussion about the possibilities that learning stories presented in terms of linguistic and cultural identities, knowledge, and relationships.

The stories, which I discuss in chapters 5 and 6, were starting to connect with the main questions of the thesis research linguistically, culturally, and relationally, and we wanted to reinforce, encourage, make visible, and fortify the importance and value of Inuit knowledge(s) and the work of making learning stories. We thought with the educators about this practice. In her thesis, Naulaaq Arnaquq (2008) writes about racist attitudes, invisible barriers, and a “lack of respect for Inuit in the workplace” (p. 152). Through the methods of our learning story project, we strategically set out to value, respect, and recognize Inuit knowledge(s) and ways of knowing and being. Our process included making Inuit-generated documents both visible and validated. Another part of this process was to reflect on our practice and consider both how it connected with Inuit

knowledge(s) and what else we could do to make those connections. The process intentionally set out to displace the forces of colonialisms and racisms.

Binders/portfolios – Week 7

This week the learning stories were assembled in sturdy white binders with plastic slots on the front and back covers as well as the spine. A binder for every child – 112 – was purchased, and 300 plastic page covers were bought to protect the learning stories. When the children leave the child care centre, their binders will go with them. The binders were set up to organize the stories, celebrate the child, and enable families to easily carry the learning stories home for a night or weekend and bring them back. The cover of each binder featured a full-page 8 by 10 photo of each child, and the child's name was written boldly in syllabics on the spine. The first page in each binder was an information sheet about the child. This page had been completed by the families at home; it included the names of the child, parents, sauniq (the person after whom the child was named) and sanaji (the person who dresses a child⁸). In addition, information about the child's favorite country food, family's summer camping spot, and parents' wish for the child was included. Every binder featured the educator's biography. These autobiographies included a picture of the educator and a description of her interests, education, and involvement at the child care centre. The learning stories followed the biographies. A learning story was included in the child's binder if the child was part of

⁸ In the past, most children born into the camps around where the community of Inukjuak is now situated took part in a dressing ceremony. This practice continues today, although we are not sure to what extent. The annursiniq ceremony is an important intimate event, whereby the sanaji (translates to maker, but referred to as dresser), dresses a newborn child in brand new clothes. While the infant is being dressed the boy becomes an angusiaq (man – begotten) and the girl an arnaliaq (female – made). From here forward the dresser and dressed have a special relationship, and may refer to each other by their ceremonial names.

the story. Some stories featured individual children and others included small and larger groups. Tulloch (2009) writes:

The most important contribution parents can make to their children's language acquisition is providing exposure to varied uses of the language. Parents' own oral (and written) use, and the practices of visitors and other family members (speaking to each other as well as to the children) provide rich stimuli for children's learning. Nonetheless, some parents who are doing their best to speak the language at home wish for greater availability of materials in the Inuit language, which would help them to expose their children to a wider range of speech practices, especially advanced uses. (p. 70)

The binders were an important way in which this research project ensured that the knowledge generated by the project stayed in the community and made a useful and important contribution to community life.

Data

In all, 59 Inuttitut-language learning stories were created. The shortest story has one photo on one page; the longest has nine photos and extends over five pages. The stories include colour photographs of children accompanied by Inuttitut-language text. They were assembled using Microsoft Publisher 2010. Once I returned from the community to my home office, I had the stories translated into English. My husband, Jobie Weetaluktuk, did the translation. He spoke the words and I wrote them up on a separate page and then later penned in the English words on the stories. I then took a preliminary analytical step and created a story chart with four columns in which I listed

the title of the story, the room of origin, the main idea, and where the story fit in terms of relationships, knowledge(s), linguistic and cultural identities, and more.

Research journal

I wanted to keep a research journal as a reflective and reference tool. I was inspired to keep a journal by Chataway (2001), who describes how her own reflective journal enabled her to gain insight into determining a productive path for her work.

I was in the community for eight weeks. On the first Monday morning of my stay, the first official day of my research, I made my morning coffee and returned to bed with research journal and pen in hand, and wrote in my journal. Each day began the same way. In total I wrote 185 pages in a Moleskin notebook, 54 consecutive entries of three to four pages each.

I found these notes useful in writing my observations and in reflecting on the process of creating learning stories with the educators. They provided a place for me to record thoughts, make observations, consider and retell stories related to community events, and compose initial analytical ponderings. Upon returning to Victoria I carefully read through the journal and extracted content related to learning stories and what they do. In the end I had typed up twelve pages of notes. At a second level of analysis I reread the notes and inserted comments. I draw on these highlights and comments from the research journal in presenting my analysis (see chapter 5).

Observations

Wilson (2008) writes:

Traditional Indigenous research emphasizes learning by watching and doing. Participant observation is a term used for this watching and doing

in a scientific manner. The aim of this strategy is to gain a closeness or familiarity with the group, through taking part in their day-to-day activities over a long period of time.... The relationship building that this sharing and participating entailed is an important aspect of ethical Indigenous research. (p. 40)

I wanted to watch, to observe from both inside and outside of the action. I wanted to build relationships with the educators, children, families, and the child care centre community. In planning the project I thought that my fellow researchers and I would be both participant and non-participant observers, and that this role would vary depending on the situation and the phase of the research.

In fact, during the first research week Annie and I spent our time observing and taking pictures. The purpose of this observation was to get a sense of what was happening in the playrooms. The photos we took as part of our observation process became the content for the first set of stories. During the second week, Maaji and I stopped by the playrooms with cameras in tow. We were in and out of the rooms as the teachers snapped photos, and we engaged in conversations with teachers and children and took pictures depending on the situation. As the weeks progressed, the focus of the observations evolved and I began to photograph and write about moments when the learning stories were being shared and the binders examined. As I observed, I thought about what learning stories were doing in relation to the people, places, and things in the playrooms, at the centre, and in the community, and how these connected with my thesis questions about knowledge(s), cultural and linguistic identities, and relationships.

I also wrote observational notes and took some photos and videos during the discussion groups. I did this in order to document the activities and to later reflect, connect, and question. MacNaughton and Hughes (2009, citing Coghan and Brannick, 2004) write, “By reflecting on the content, process and premises of your data and analysis, you can test your assumptions about events and interpretations continuously and build new knowledge in all aspects of your project” (p. 127).

Over the course of 7 weeks in the centre I made 25 entries on 26 pages of single-spaced notes, which I typed on my computer at the end of the day or immediately after a particularly important event. The first level of analysis of these observational records, upon returning home, was to read through the notes with a highlighter, jotting notes in the margins. As a second level, I reviewed these notes and noted where I could find references to points I wanted to make in the analysis.

An important product that came as part of the observation process were the 1,564 photos which captured images from the playrooms, the outdoor environment, of children, art work, educators, researchers, parents, and activities. The photos provide a visual record of the centre, the people, and the place. During the course of the community-based research I often reviewed and selected photos and made albums which were used to make stories or presentations for the discussion groups. This was an important part of building layers into the work.

I created a total of 17 photo albums in iPhoto. The albums ranged in size from 3 to 32 photos and totaled 338 pictures. The initial set of albums provided the base for making the first set of learning stories. Later albums were projected during the final discussion groups and parents’ meeting using an Epson 3 LCD projector; the photos

served as a means of making our work visible to ourselves – researchers and educators – as well as to families. I felt that showing the photo albums in a slideshow format also served as a means of validating our work and opening it up for comment and conversation.

The final data arising from observational activities are 13 video clips totaling 28 minutes and fifteen seconds. The video was taken on the morning that the quilliq was lit. As a first level of analysis, I reviewed these clips and made notes. The next step was to make a 3-minute video with the clips.

The observational data is absolutely critical to the analysis as it provides both visual and written documentation, which I have used to both reflect on the research and to construct ideas based on the evidence.

Narrative conversations

The intent of the narrative conversations was to embark on a shared reflection of the process of documenting children's learning and the content of the learning stories with the educators who agreed to participate in the conversations. Kvale (1996) notes that the original Latin meaning of conversation is "wandering together with" (p. 4). I am attracted to this notion which I see as an opportunity to ramble. I see the narrative conversation as an occasion to gather together with educators to reflect and share ideas. Wilson (2008) writes, "Interviews are focused discussions that allow the researcher to gather information directly from the point of view expressed by the research subject" (p. 41). Merging Kvale's notion of wandering with Wilson's point about focus, I created a list of questions as a guide (see appendix F). My expectation for the narrative conversation was to get some ideas about how the educators and my co-researchers saw

what learning stories were doing in terms of linguistic and cultural identities and knowledge(s).

All but one of the narrative conversations took place during the children's afternoon naptime during the second-to-last week of the research. I conducted seven interviews: five with educators and two with my co-researchers. I decided to interview my co-researchers because I thought their insider perspective would provide valuable insights into the products and the process. I recorded the interviews on my Macintosh computer using Garage Band. The shortest recording is 20:38 and the longest 46:32. In all I had 222 minutes of audio-recorded data as a result of the narrative conversations.

Once the interviews were completed I downloaded them to iTunes. This made the conversations highly accessible and easy to consider when preparing the highlight notes. These I compiled by listening carefully to each of the conversations and identifying key pieces of content related to my thesis questions, which I typed on the computer. I ended with 34 pages of notes. My second level of analysis was to read back through the notes and make comments using the Word comment bubbles. A third level of analysis involved creating a list of themes which emerged from the interviews and then searching for comments that linked with the themes. I also made a list of points from the conversations that connect with my main questions under the headings language, culture, and relationships. Finally, I made an educator summary from the narrative conversations.

The narrative conversations were a valuable way of building knowledge together and developing shared understandings; they served as a catalyst to move the work forward.

Data Analysis

The first phase of data analysis involved reviewing and sorting the data assembled during the research phase and preparing it for analysis. This initial analysis involved transcribing the notes from the narrative conversations, organizing the learning stories thematically, logging photos and videos assembled during the classroom observations, organizing my notes, and selecting highlights. Most of these processes have been discussed above as part of the description of the tools. The videotape from the discussion group teaching and learning sessions was used to supplement the analysis for validation purposes, but it has not been extensively analyzed as a part of the current study.

Rigour and Validity

Below I consider rigour and then validity. I entered this project with a view that rigour and validity are keystones of the research process.

Concerning rigour

MacNaughton and Hughes (2009) provide points to consider when setting up an action research project to enact rigour. These points include using diverse methods, analyzing data from several perspectives, making your values explicit, and enacting the action research cycle. In this section I examine how my project fits within these guidelines.

My strategy involved three parts: teaching and learning (comprising the six discussion group sessions); application (encompassing all aspects of creating the learning stories), and reflection (which can be viewed as layers of reflection that occurred through activities including the narrative conversations and the research journal).

MacNaughton and Hughes (2009) write, “Recording how you found different views of events and different interpretations allows you to show and see what has influenced your project over time” (p. 127). My analysis employs a layered approach and the data include a diversity of voices and a variety of types. For example, on the topic of the learning stories, I have references in my analysis originating from the observational records, the narrative conversations, and the learning stories themselves. This breadth of sources combined with numerous purposeful reviews of the content enables me to write with confidence that I have analyzed the data from several perspectives.

In the theoretical chapter I articulated my frustrations with colonialism and explained how I have come to work from a perspective that employs decolonial theory and postcolonial and Indigenous methodologies and how I strives to practice an approach to research guided by Indigenous research methods within an action research frame. I have made every effort to make my values explicit.

Finally, in enacting the action research cycle, I have tried to show how I planned, acted, and evaluated at each stage and, in describing the learning stories, how through that process our research team worked for change.

Concerning validity

Patti Lather (in Moss, Phillips, Erickson, Floden, Lather, & Schneider, 2009) provides three quality touchstones for validity in qualitative research: “rigour of reflective competence”; validity as being “far more about deep theoretical and political issues than about a technical issue”; and “practices toward quality that move us toward a science more accountable to complexity that might result in less comfortable, less imperialist social science that courts unknowingness, fluidity and becoming” (p. 506). I understand

that, with Lather as a guide, the validity of my work will be grounded in qualities of reflection, depth of consideration, and willingness to travel nomadically with the content.

MacNaughton and Hughes (2009) provide a definition of validity: “to validate something is to confirm or corroborate it” (p. 128). They explain that action researchers are obliged to ensure their work is valid and can be checked. How will my work be validated? MacNaughton and Hughes (2009) write about achieving validity through moments of equity; in my project I seek validity through moments of Inuit cultural and linguistic presence, which become part of a decolonizing practice. I consider that these moments of cultural and linguistic presence enable decolonizing practices.

MacNaughton and Hughes (2009) write about another form of validity which resonates with my project. As they explain, “catalytic validity can be established in an action research project when someone says, “AHA!’ because they have just understood something differently, or when someone risks the uncertainty of creating change because they want to transform their practices and ideas” (p. 131). In my project the educators transformed their practice by creating learning stories. Evidence of my research being catalytic includes widespread interest on the part of the educators and pedagogical counsellor at Tasiurvik in developing projects grounded in cultural knowledge, which I explore in the Findings and Analysis chapter.

Limitations

This is a one-time study, with one homogenous group of people in one community. I am not embarking on a comparative analysis. For me, the most important limitation of this study is that I am not a competent Inuttitut language speaker. This study

would be much stronger if I had the capacity to engage in deep and meaningful theoretical conversations in Inuttitut.

Chapter 5: Findings and Analysis

To make visible some of the data collected, in this chapter I present research findings and analysis. I do this in four parts. In part 1, Beginning Observations and Reflections, I present an excerpt from my observation journal from my first week at Tasiurvik Child Care Centre, and then I reflect on those observations, focusing on my impressions of Inuit language, culture, knowledge, and narrative approaches at the centre. In part 2, Narrative Analysis, I create a narrative composed of four learning stories, along with excerpts from my observation notes and research journal, and highlights from the discussion groups and the narrative conversations with the educators. In part 3, Thematic Analysis, I explore key themes that emerged from the narrative conversations with the educators. In part 4, Language, Culture, and Relationships, I examine the data in relation to the topics embedded in the research questions about language, culture, and relationships. This section draws from the narrative conversations with the educators.

Part 1: Beginning Observations and Reflections

During my first week at the centre I wanted to gain an understanding of what was happening in the playrooms. I was specifically looking for information about language, culture, and Inuit knowledge, as well as narrative approaches to assessment. I also wanted to take some initial pictures and get an overall idea about life in the playrooms at Tasiurvik. Below I present an excerpt from my observation journal, and then I reflect on those observations. The excerpt records part of a morning spent in the Yellow Room.

Excerpt from observation journal – March 10. This morning I visited Sara and Lucy's three-year-old group. There are a total of 14 three-year-olds in the group when all are present. Upon arrival very close to 9:00, I noticed a group of children actively engaged

in constructing puzzles. Sara commented to me how this group can be wild. I noted the focus with which the children concentrated on the puzzles, to which Sara replied that they were interested in the puzzles because they were new.

The room was divided into three main sections. The puzzle place has a radio and was later used for circle time. Decorations include a calendar, number chart, and clock positioned on the wall. Across the front of the room there is an eating and work area; this section occupies half the room and features two large, crescent-shaped tables. On the left-hand side, across the three-quarter-length windowed part of the room, there's a rug with a roadway motif, beads on a wire, a couple of soft pillows, a plastic kitchen area, and some plastic toys, including kitchenware, in bins.

Sara had prepared a play dough activity. The children were engaged in rolling the dough and cutting it. One girl was interested to see what would happen if she stepped on the dough with her foot. She made a pattern with the sole of her shoe. Then a boy came along and wanted to do the same thing. The sticky dough stuck to the bottoms of their shoes and the teacher removed it.

Thinking of Inuit language: The educators spoke to the children all in Inuttitut. During circle time, I think that many of the children demonstrate excellent comprehension because of the way they follow along. The absence of Inuttitut language books was most noticeable when Lucy translated an English language story about a dog for the children.

Considering Inuit cultural knowledge: There were a couple of activities related to the dog theme evident in the classroom. One was a painted-over outline of a puppy dog and the other a cut-out qamutiq (sled) with dogs.

Reflections on the observation. I wondered about a possible link between Sara's report of the children's sometimes-wild behaviour and inconsistencies between home and school life. Some of the best current practices in ECE (see, for example, Ashton, Hunt, & White, 2008; Carter & Curtis, 2008; Rinaldi, 2006) are described as cultivating connections and building bridges between home and school. Curtis and Carter (2008) explain: "Yes, we want children to feel at home and form strong relationships in our programs, but we must simultaneously do all we can to keep children connected to their families when they are with us" (p. 31). The structure and set-up of the playroom and the items displayed on the wall during my initial visit⁹ did not give me a sense of being in an Inuit place. Except for the Inuit in the room and the Inuttitut language they spoke, the playroom and activities therein could have been situated in any community in Canada with purpose-built licensed childcare facilities.

The Inuttitut language presence is important, but I wonder what children are learning about reading and writing English and Inuttitut when an educator reads an English-language roman orthography text and translates the words into Inuttitut. Arnaquq writes, "As a language that is oppressed by a dominant one, Inuktitut¹⁰ need[s] the space to thrive as well as to evolve without being translated" (p. 175). Tulloch (2009) explains that

the plethora of English-language materials, next to the dearth of Inuit language materials, makes it tempting to just use English. Again, some feel that children are receiving the subliminal message that English is more important than the Inuit language when so many high quality

⁹ In later weeks the walls were covered with pictures from the community/region.

¹⁰ I am using Arnaquq's spelling here. I have chosen to use Inuttitut based on the syllabic chart.

materials are available in English and so few are available in the Inuit language. (p. 71)

Most of the playrooms at Tasiurvik have some English books, while the presence of Inuttitut language materials is limited. In the Green Room, for example, there is one Inuttitut-language board book and the rest are all in English. In the Purple Room, the educators are working hard to create an Inuttitut language space. Signs of Inuttitut were present in two colour charts, one featuring shapes and another using kamiit (seal skin boots). There was also a number chart using local symbols to demonstrate the numbers one through five (atausiq, maquruk, inuksuit, sitamat, tallimat), as follows: atausiq natsiq (one seal), maquruk iglu (two snow houses), pingasut inuksuit (three stone cairns), sitamat qayit (four kayaks) and tallimat iqaluit (five fish). Maaji works hard to create Inuttitut language and cultural materials and works with the educators in material development. During my visit I watched one boy who was reading and rereading a bilingual book that Maaji had made using photos from Ivakkak, the annual Nunavik regional week-long competitive dog race. In the Purple Room the teacher was just completing a calendar framed with images of the Inuit world: a qulliq (stone lamp), kamiiit, a goose, and so on. The educator wanted this calendar to be meaningful for the children and to look as good as any imported from the south.

I did see some evidence of narrative approaches to assessment. Throughout the two child care centres, parents are provided with a daily report on foods eaten, naps taken, and toileting. In the Green Room evidence of narrative approaches included four displays featuring photographs. One, presented in a glass case, featured the children with their mothers. Another recognized birthdays, a third was for the daily record, and a

fourth, displayed on the door, identified each of the children in the room. Overall, however, there was not much evidence that narrative approaches to assessment were being used in the centre.

In terms of Inuit knowledge, I noticed in the Green Room a wonderful sequence of events when a woman passed by the playroom several times and on each occasion called a greeting through the half door: “Anaana ngai (Hi, Mom).” The caller was addressing a young child in the room who had been named after the caller’s mother, and so the woman addressed the child as “Anaana” in recognition that the child was named after her mother. Throughout my career, which has been devoted to working in the development of childcare programs in Inuit communities, Elders have consistently spoken about the importance of preserving traditional name-calling practices. This is the kind of knowledge that is not seen, but heard, knowledge that fortifies relationships and that is grounded in Inuit cultural understandings. This kind of knowledge happens, I suggest, “within a functional system of family and community dynamics” (Battiste, 2008, p. 500).

The example of the woman calling “Anana ngai” into the playroom leaves me with an initial idea – that we will be able to make this kind of story visible through learning stories and that this would be a very meaningful activity based in Inuit knowledge. Clearly the stories will provide a valuable source of printed material in Inuttitut, and an opportunity to make visible Inuit ways of knowing and being.

In the next section I present the learning stories.

Part 2: Narrative Analysis

The four learning stories I present in this section originated with Sara and Lucy in the Yellow Room.¹¹ I selected these four stories from one playroom to show how the stories grew and connected, and how they worked to make Inuit knowledge(s) visible. Please note that only Inuttitut is used in the illustrations of the stories; an English translation is provided in appendix G.

Story 1: A Girl Makes Footprints in the Clay

Sara and Lucy created their first story during the Monday night discussion group using the pictures I had taken during my observations of the first week. The story is called “A Girl Makes Footprints in the Clay” and is presented in figure 1 below.

¹¹ The names of the educators and rooms have been changed.

Figure 1: A girl makes footprints in the clay.



Reflection on the story. When I first look at this story I am intrigued by the pattern created by the sole of the shoe in the play dough. I am interested that the girl moved the dough off the table, where her classmates were rolling with pins and cutting with cutters, and created her own activity. I see this as an independence of spirit and an

indicator of a classroom atmosphere which allows for deviations. The girl is also showing her curiosity and investigative nature. I smile at the line in the story, “She was astonished to find her footprint.”

Discussion group highlights. The authors of “A Girl Makes Footprints in the Clay” presented their story during the educators’ discussion group session on the Monday night. On this particular night educators wrote comments about the story on a paper posted on the wall beneath the story. These have been translated as follows: (1) It’s stuck to the floor so she picks it up with a scoop (dustpan). (2) She wants to know what it is, so she steps on it to know what it is. (3) The scoop has a colour; she wants to know if it is the same colour as her shoe sole.

I am interested in the second statement and curious about the idea of getting to know something by stepping on it. I wonder about how learning stories can generate ideas about relationships with things like foot and print.

After the discussion group session, a teacher in another class followed up and made play dough in her class so that the children could make foot patterns in the dough. This learning story therefore provided an idea for curriculum and, I suggest, positioned the teacher who had the original idea as a person who organizes and documents activities that others are interested in taking up. For me this provokes ideas about professional exchange and relationship. I wonder whether learning stories, combined with discussion groups, can act as catalysts for building professional relationships with colleagues.

MacNaughton (2005) refers to curriculum clubs which teachers convene every six weeks or so to work collaboratively and to question. The teachers who meet are “committed to the notion that teachers should continue to be learners and that they should and can take

responsibility for their own professional learning” (p. 208). Our weekly discussion groups brought the educators together and in this way contributed to the development of a professional community.

Discussion. When I look again at this story, I ask myself why I should include it in the findings section of the thesis. I chose to do so because it shows the first story created by the Yellow Room teachers, and I want the readers of this thesis to see growth and change and to have a starting place. When I thought further, I looked at the footprint and at the girl in relation to the footprint (perhaps inspired by comment 2 from the discussion group, above). I began to wonder whether this story, which depicts a girl with a print made by her foot, could connect with historically important Inuit tracking activities. Could this girl’s relationship with the footprint connect with valuable cultural knowledge and approaches to animal tracking? It seemed that these stories, even in their earliest renditions, could be generating connections with important relational knowledge(s) such as considering oneself in relation to a footprint in the sand or the snow, or to a piece of play dough on the floor.

Story 2: Snow Illu

In some ways “Snow Illu” is the centerpiece of this chapter as it is the story in which I use the most layers to try to consider the dimensions of the story and how they relate to the research. I start with an introduction followed by an excerpt from the observation notes. Then I reflect on the observation notes before presenting the story. After the story I reflect on the story itself and present highlights from the discussion group session in which the story was discussed. Finally, in the last part of this section, I present highlights of the narrative conversation in which Sara and I engaged during the

final weeks of the research. I then reflect on this conversation and conclude with a discussion in which I draw together the many elements of this large and complex piece.

The story started when Sara came running into the room where I was working and asked to borrow the camera (the project cameras had yet to arrive in the community). That same day at lunchtime she showed me the pictures she had taken. She had climbed the hill to visit the qammaq (sod house) and illu (snow house) built by the Elders. The next afternoon I had an opportunity to work with Sara and the photos. The following excerpt from my observation notes recounts our session.

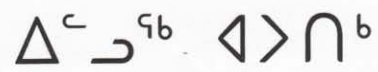
Excerpt from observation journal – March 25. After looking at some pictures I had taken previously, Sara decided that she wanted to use the pictures she had taken with my camera on Wednesday. This was the day she had climbed the hill to the qammaq and illu with her group. We looked through the photos together. Sara decided that she wanted to make a story featuring a young girl named Mary. At first Sara selected six photos. The last picture showed Mary crying. We had saved this photo into the folder and then Sara changed her mind: She didn't want to use this photo after all. I told her I was glad that she had decided not to use that photo because everything else about the story shows Mary's strengths and comes together in a connected way. The photo of Mary crying does not feature strengths and was disconnected from the rest of the story. We selected five photos and copied them to a folder on my computer before saving them to the flash drive and transferring them to the Tasiurvik project computer.

Sara then found the template for five photos. She told me that she liked this template because "I like the story all in one place. It seems more connected." She

inserted the photos into the template, saved the file, and decided to take her picture story home to consider the words over the weekend.

Reflection on the observation. “Snow Illu” is about children visiting the qammaq and illu built by members of the local cultural committee. Greenwood (2009) writes, “The importance of stories for children is critical— stories offer pathways to their Elders, their history, their knowledge(s), and ultimately to their identity as individuals and members of the collective “(p. 67). The description of Sara’s process above highlights how she chose to focus on the strength side of the story, which is in keeping with Carr’s (2009) notion of learning stories as a credit-based approach to assessment. Carr (2009) describes effective formative assessment as involving meaningful tasks, engaged learners, successful learners, and self-assessment (p. 4). The learning story provides a tool for self-assessment and more. “Snow Illu” is presented in figure 2 below.

Figure 2: Snow illu.



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Reflection on the story. When I read “Snow Illu” I became aware of a story about an educator who takes a group of children to visit two traditional Inuit shelters. Inside the children find a stone stove – a qulliq – and stones on the ground. In the pictures the reader sees the exteriors of both structures and the children with them. The story makes cultural knowledge and positions available. On reviewing the story and photos, the children can see themselves and feel themselves as part of a world that includes qammaq and illu. I am also interested in Mary’s fascination with the rocks.

Discussion group highlights. On the next Monday night we held the fourth educators’ discussion group, and during this session Sara read her story to the assembled educators. During the subsequent conversation I mentioned to the group that I wondered about Mary smelling the rock and about creating an activity around smelling. I asked everybody to close their eyes and passed around a jar of dried fish scales for people to smell. Then Sara said, “Well, actually, Mary wants to see the qulliq lit.” At this point the centre director said that the child care centre could hire somebody to come to the centre to light the qulliq. I told the group that with advance notice, arrangements could be made for Elders to be at the qammaq and they might be willing to light the qulliq. So the story started to grow and the layers began to add.

I was excited by this moment for three reasons: (1) I thought this story was helping to make connections with Elders. During the meeting we had discussed strategies for connecting with the Elders, even considering the possibility of bringing an Elder in for the qulliq-lighting event. Making meaningful connections between the child care

centre and the Elders has been hard.¹² (2) This story positioned Sara to consider Mary's point of view and come up with the idea of seeing the qulliq lit. (3) It makes me think that the learning story was playing a part in a cycle of learning and assessment which made it possible for Sara to reflect and consider the possibilities for learning that the story presented for future learning.

Narrative conversation. During our narrative conversation, held during my second-to-last week in the community, Sara and I spoke about the snow illu story. The following section is a summary of highlights from our interview, which I will use to conclude this discussion about the snow illu story. The words in italics are Sara's.

Our culture is important and our children need to see it – everything – and it needs to be here at the child care centre.

I like it when the parents know more about our culture. I want to learn more about our cultural way.

I like it when the Elder is with us. Because I ask her how she knows and she tells me enough. Because the story I did – I didn't know about the illu – I didn't know that it was broken. I like it when Elders teach me about what I don't know and I like sharing with the children what I learned.

I am glad when the Elder comes here, because she helps so much. And she tells children about their relatives and how to say uncle and aunt. Yes, Inuit didn't call their names – they called relatives and friends by their relationship name, people didn't even have a last name.

¹² Currently there is an Elder who floats between classrooms as a replacement. Her work is recognized in this piece. What is referenced here is establishing a relationship between the childcare centre and Elders in the community.

I liked learning how to make a book, especially when they are our culture. So we need more activities in our culture.

Learning stories can help the children outside and inside. At the qammaq and the illu they help the children see what they don't see at home anymore.

Reflection on the narrative conversation. Sara's words underscore the valuable and comprehensive contribution the Elder plays. For example, in terms of language she teaches the children "how to say uncle and aunt." In terms of knowledge it is the Elder who tells Sara about the broken illu: "I didn't know that it was broken." In terms of relationships and culture, Sara said "I like it when Elders teach me about what I don't know and I like sharing with the children what I learned." Agbo (2004, p. 26, cited in Mashon, 2009, p. 28) argues that "one of the most important traditions is the social bond that ties every community member to a common ancestry, and the Ojibway language conveys [that] traditional knowledge to people." Therefore, Mashon (2009) explains, "critical to the discussion of both the 'how' and 'what' of Indigenous knowledge in early childhood education (Ball & Simpkins, 2004) is the inter-generational transfer of Indigenous knowledge through Indigenous language" (p. 28).

The Inuttitut language, like the Ojibway language referenced in the quotation above, carries embedded within it valuable cultural knowledge. The experiences in the Yellow Room are greatly enriched in the presence of the Elder because of her knowledge of language and culture, which can then be incorporated into the lives of the children at the child care centre and into the stories which retell moments in those lives and connect across generations. My conversation with Sara revealed her belief that the learning stories are providing a way to get at valuable cultural knowledge. Greenwood (2009) writes,

“We draw from these storytellers, from the stories, from our past, and from our lived experience to gain understanding of Indigenous knowledge(s) and come to know and understand our world from that place” (p. 69).

Discussion. What does this story do in terms of Inuit language identities, cultural identities, knowledge(s), and relationships? This story provides a pathway to Elders’ history and knowledge (Greenwood, 2009). This story took place at the snow illu and at the qammaq. Through recording children’s presence in these places, positions grounded in cultural knowledge(s) become available to children, and these positions are reinforced when the children return to review the story. This story acted as a springboard to setting up more activities based in Inuit knowledge(s) and culture. This happened when Sara thought Mary would like to see the qulliq lit. Further, the story acted to build and fortify relationships with Elders, for example, during the discussion group when strategies for involving Elders in the qulliq lighting at the child care centre were proposed. The story also provided a place where the educator could consider the child’s point of view. Concerning the Inuttitut language, “Snow Illu” provided a mechanism for uncovering new words. The educator had not known the name for a broken illu, which was revealed through the Elder’s explanation, and which, in turn, provided a path to recognizing and valuing Elders’ knowledge. Finally, in my conversation with Sara, she confirmed that the story made available to the children “what they did not see at home anymore.” I suggest that this story generated meanings rich with Inuit cultural and linguistic foundations and further served to build relationships, identities, and knowledge(s).

Story 3: Going to the Playground

When I looked more closely at the work done in Yellow Room I noted that Sara had taken the photos for two contrasting stories. One, “Snow Illu,” shows a little girl climbing on the illu, standing beside a qulliq, and smelling a rock inside the qammaq. The story is resplendent with images originating in Inuit knowledge and culture.

In contrast, “Going to the Playground,” presented below in figure 3, depicts a trip to the municipal playground, which features a large plastic and metal construction with bars and a slide. In the first image we see the children on their way to the playground attached to a harness. The two middle images show the children playing with the equipment, and in the last we see the children on the return trip, back in the harness again.

[illegible]

Reflection on the story. The story presents children outdoors on a beautiful winter's day. I am disturbed by the images of harnessed children. I compare the children with harnessed dogs. This bothers me. I look again and see children climbing the steps to the slide, confident and capable, and I am warmed by the smiling girl. Then I wonder, how do the children see themselves when they are harnessed? What do the parents think? The story creates an opportunity to consider the place of imported equipment, an opportunity for comparison, and more in-depth reflection. In figure 4 below, I have placed photographs taken by a professional photographer of the playground equipment and the snow illu presented in the stories above side by side to see what happens.

Figure 4: Contrasting cultures.



Reflection on contrasting cultures. I wonder what happens when children's lives are filled with imported plastic playground equipment and materials like the harness for children. I wonder how, inside and outside of the child care centre, children's minds and beings absorb materials like the playground equipment and systems like the licensed, regulated childcare system and how this time spent immersed in this imported and imposed world might interfere with the absorption, in early childhood, of ways of knowing and being grounded in Inuit cultural and linguistic realities.

Discussion. “Snow Illu” creates a space for considering pedagogy from within an imagery, which includes recognizable and symbolic Inuit spaces. Weenie (2008) writes about curricular theorizing and cites Campbell and Gregor (2002) in the following quote, “We enact the world we inhabit and know about” (p. 550). When I think about this quote I go “Aha!” “Snow Illu” is important because, in rereading and reviewing this story, the children can see and feel themselves in a space that is recognizably Inuit and they can act on that. Greenwood (2009) explains:

The early childhood setting becomes the context in which children are embedded and where they become sites of cultural transmission. With this in mind, one of the greatest challenges facing early childhood caregivers is to take principles of Indigenous knowledge and actualize them in current practice. (p. 75)

“Snow Illu” provides a record and presents a sequence of events involving the children which were rich with Inuit cultural knowledge. The story then creates opportunities to think and comment on those moments and makes them accessible for future consideration. On fathoming the import of documentation, Rinaldi (2000) contributes the following:

Documentation, or all the materials produced during observation, is also an important instrument for the children. Through procedures that are analogous to those of adults, children can see themselves in a new light, and revisit and reinterpret their own experiences of events in which they were the direct protagonists. This kind of process produces new cognitive dynamics, a new and different vision of oneself and one’s actions in relation to others. (p. 130)

Above I purposefully placed “Snow Illu” beside “Going to the Playground” in an effort to make visible the contrast between local and imported materials and systems. In this section it has been my intent to show how the snow illu learning story, which was inclusive of the Inuttitut language and embedded in Inuit culture, provided a place through which identities grounded in Inuit knowledge(s) could be formed. “Snow Illu,” I suggest, acts as a decolonizing device by making available Inuit ways of knowing and being.

Story 4: Qulliq

The qulliq (stone lamp/stove) story represents the culmination of seven weeks of activity focused on learning stories at the child care centre. Below I tell the story of the qulliq. I begin this section with notes from my research journal to give background information about the story. Then I present the story and conclude with a reflection.

Research journal excerpt – April 18, 2011. Yesterday I spoke with Sara about the story she had created called “Snow Illu.” When we analyzed this story, Sara mentioned her wish for Mary to see the qulliq lit. Within the group we talked about arranging to return to the qammaq with someone who would light the qulliq. Last week there was a lot of sickness and many educators and children were absent from the centre so the qulliq lighting did not happen. Educator absences are a huge problem at the centre. During the narrative conversation we spoke again about how to get the qulliq lighting happening. Sara said, “The children would love to see the qulliq lit up. Maybe I can even light it.” In the end, Sara decided she would do it in the morning with the Elder who is a permanent floater at the centre.

The next morning I was advised, “The Elder is with her grandchildren. It’s after 8:30 she will not be coming today.” This meant that our plans to light the qulliq might not be realized. After a while Sara decided to light the qulliq herself. So we prepared the materials, retrieved the qulliq from the top shelf in the office, found the burlap and the Crisco oil. Sara prepared to light the qulliq and Maaji arrived to take photos. In the end, all of the children from the Orange Room came to take part in the ceremony, as did Kitty, one of the educators from the Green Room. When the qulliq was fully lit Sara said, “I am a real anaanatsiaq (grandmother) now.” I noticed how one of the boys who had been quite aggressive in the playroom nestled in beside Sara and observed the proceedings, captivated by the process.

Reflection on the excerpt from the research journal. This story embodies the purposes of this research. It came about sparked by a picture in another story, and it provides evidence that the stories can act as catalysts for more stories connected to Inuit knowledge(s) and cultural identities. The story requires Inuit knowledge of stove lighting. Through this story, the teacher herself became a purveyor of Inuit knowledge who sees herself as “a real grandmother.” Furthermore, interest is generated among neighbouring classrooms and there is a centre-wide interest in the activities of the Yellow Room.

During the next week Sara wrote the qulliq story, presented in figure 5 below.

Figure 5: Qulliq.



Reflection on the story. The pictures in this story show an educator in the process of lighting a qulliq (stone stove/lamp) with children in a playroom at the child care

centre. The first picture shows the educator carefully and purposefully tending the qulliq with a wooden pointer. In the first image two girls look wide eyed at their teacher, who is concentrating deeply on managing the flame. The next image and the last one are filled with children gathered around the qulliq. The middle two pictures show the teacher working with the stove, the tool, the burlap, and the flame and the children watching with intent.

The text of the story recognizes how the qulliq was used long ago and positions the Elders as knowledgeable people “who were good with only the qulliq for their needs.” It also describes the children as both astonished and happy.

Discussion. Greenwood (2009) writes, “Stories serve a dual purpose. On the one hand they are a vehicle through which others may create their own understandings of Indigenous knowledge(s) – they are both content and process understood through experience” (p. 67).

When Sara lit the qulliq she said, “I am a real anaanatsiaq (grandmother) now.” The story set Sara up to see herself, and for others to see her, as a person with cultural knowledge and as a person who can share cultural knowledge. The learning stories and the processes involved in compiling them led to this moment. In the summary below, I consider learning stories in relation to teachers, children, families and Elders.

Summary

Learning stories such as “Snow Illu” and “Qulliq” provide a medium through which children can see themselves as part of a world that includes Inuit knowledge and practices. These stories provide a place through which identities grounded in Inuit knowledge(s) and language can be formed.

Through the creation of learning stories, the work of the educator and children together becomes visible to children, parents, and the educator's colleagues. This work positions educators amongst peers as people with valuable ideas and activities to share, and leads, through the sharing of stories, to a professional exchange of ideas.

The process of creating learning stories and planning for them serves as an impetus for strengthening connections with Elders, who become further recognized for their role as valuable transmitters of cultural knowledge. Wonderfully, at the end of the qulliq story, the teacher herself, by lighting the qulliq, became "a real anaanatsiaq" and a valuable transmitter of cultural knowledge.

Part 3: Thematic Analysis

In this section I examine the following themes, which emerged from the narrative conversations with the educators: (1) intertwining of language and culture; (2) things have changed: people don't go out as they used to; (3) learning place names is an important part of cultural knowledge; (4) stories are good; they will make kids smarter; (5) value of direction; (6) lack of Inuit materials; (7) problem of mixed language; (8) relationship of culture and pride. Below I discuss these themes.

Intertwining of culture and language

This theme relates to people's perception of language and culture being connected. Through the conversations, the intimate, almost taken-for-granted relationship between language and culture became clear, as is demonstrated in the following quotes in response to the question "What does strong cultural identity mean to you?"

It means the clothes we wear, the kamik, paaluuk, atigi, nasak,¹³ the food we eat, hunting, and our language, I guess. (Brenda)

That they have to keep their Inuttitut language, not just start speaking English. They love when their grandmothers sew and grandfathers/father go hunting. The children are proud. (Akinisi)

If he knows his culture then they are more traditional at home. His parents speak to him in Inuttitut. (Betsy)

The above examples show how the educators view language and culture as connected. Weenie (2008) writes, “There are those ... who believe that every time we speak our language we are decolonizing ourselves. There is a distinct worldview in language and to dismiss or discount that is no longer acceptable. The word order and structure in Aboriginal languages is indicative of a different way of seeing and experiencing the world” (p. 554).

Things have changed; people don’t go out as they used to

Weenie (2008) writes, “Aboriginal thought embedded in Aboriginal languages is what must be cultivated and nurtured in Aboriginal curriculum” (p. 554). In conducting the interviews I noticed that many of the educators spoke about change.

I don’t know, nowadays it is very different from ten, fifteen years ago. I don’t think they even talk to their children. Here we talk to the children. We don’t see much of the dog team. But in the summertime we see a lot of people going by canoe. We don’t see so many people going on skidoo. (Akinisi)

To do the fishing holes – that would be fun, especially for the older group. Because I am sure they don’t get that advantage on the weekend with their

¹³ Kamik–boot; paaluuk – mitt; atigi – parka; nasak – hat.

parents. Younger age, I don't think they go often, as they used to, before, so we can kind of help in that way. They can go home and say, "I went fishing today." (Betsy)

In both of these examples the educators expressed concern that children were not getting out on the land as they used to. Interestingly, they both saw opportunities for connecting with this knowledge through programming at the child care centre.

Learning place names is an important part of cultural knowledge

In several of the conversations the educators spoke about knowing the names of the families' original camps and of lakes and sites in the areas. One of the spaces on the children's information sheet was to provide the name of the child's favorite camping place.

If the grandmother or the parents tell them about where they came from before they came to Inukjuak that would be nice too. I don't think that is something they do these days. (Akinisi)

Carol: And when we think about children as knowledgeable about the land as their grandparents, can learning stories play a role?

Oh, I think so. Why not? They can learn the words of their camping sites. Each little pond has their own little name. I am sure some of the kids talk about it – just some of them. We were at this lake and they will say the name. (Betsy)

Carol: And they will remember the name because they are going to hear it; it is going to be retold. It will be documented through the pictures, read to the children. They are going to have it in the binder. They are going to show their parents.

We can create stories with that. I just had an idea – you can ask each room to tell a story about a cultural/hunting event with the actual words of hunting sites in Inukjuak. That would be a good one. (Betsy)

Knowing the Inuttitut names of places is an important part of disrupting colonizing ideologies and decolonizing minds. Bannerjee (2000, p. 10, cited in Iseke-Barnes, 2008, p. 138) explains that the “creation of historicized connections in the present, and incorporation of these into Indigenous identity discourses, is appropriate because they can play an empowering role in identity politics and articulating forms of resistance” (p. 138).

Stories are good; they will make kids smarter

Many of the educators spoke about the value of the learning stories, saying “It is good for children.” Learning stories increase the amount of Inuttitut language material for children. I include the following quote from a conversation with Lesa as a way to show how the stories could contribute to “making kids smarter.”

Carol: For example, when Eva’s story is written up and it’s available in the binder for children to read, what do you think is going to happen then?

With the example of Eva – she will see her thoughts and how she’s going to work. It was hard for her and she figured it out. She was thinking very much, she thought carefully first about what she was going to do and then she started gluing and one of the kids asked her, “Are you making a raft?” (Les)

This excerpt features the child as a learner deeply engaged in thinking. I included this example because it shows how this educator believes that the learning stories supported this child in seeing her own learning processes and making visible the value of her work.

Every participant in the narrative conversations wanted the stories to be shared with other Nunavik communities. The following excerpt from a conversation with Betsy enumerates some of the positive ways in which she saw learning stories.

Carol: What do you think was important about the last 6 weeks that we have spent together working on this project?

I noticed that the kids and the parents and the educators are working more together. The point of the photos – the parents will actually know that they are doing learning stuff. (Betsy)

Carol: That makes learning visible.

That it is very important with their speech. (Betsy)

Carol: So that the learning stories contribute to the development of speech?

And new words and places where they are going, we take pictures of them, and the qammaq. It is not everywhere in Nunavik that they have that. (Betsy)

Carol: So if you were going to go on the road and you were going to tell other Nunavik educators about what we have been doing here, what would you like them to know?

That it is fun. It is interesting. You have to do it. You just have to. It should be part of every centre. It should be part of it because it shows the photos, the children, what they are doing, their interests. (Betsy)

The above excerpts from the conversations celebrate strengths that educators are finding in the approach, including learners deeply involved in thinking; work valued; kids, parents, and teachers working together; development of speech, words, and place names; and children's interests made visible. The positive response from the Inukjuak

participants has been very strong. This increases the possibility that learning stories will be created in all of the Nunavik communities in the future. In fact, in the fall of 2011, Kativik Regional Government will be introducing the learning stories in another Nunavik community.

I think that a “smart” quality of these stories is that they could be used in the cultural negotiation of education (Stairs, 1994). Stairs writes about the importance of cultural identities and defines school as a cultural phenomenon. She offers cultural negotiation as a model of Indigenous education, explaining: “The story is told from daily microevents events in the classroom to overarching models of cultural context and meaning” (p. 169). Greenwood (2009) voices concerns about the challenges early childhood faces in actualizing Indigenous knowledge(s) in practice. Are learning stories providing a tool which is helping to transition to a practice more grounded in Inuit ways – a tool for the cultural negotiation of education? The findings of this study indicate that they are.

Value of direction

One of the recurring points the educators referenced was the importance of having someone with whom to bounce ideas back and forth, to validate ideas, and to offer support in areas including Inuttitut language use and actively seeking to work with cultural knowledge. Some of the educators’ comments are included below:

I never thought of it that way. But now I think I am going to be able to take pictures more now and know what to do with it after. (Brenda)

The above statement followed a conversation about relational naming and unseen practices in which Inuit knowledge is embodied.

In the beginning I didn't quite know – I was just taking shots and then I realized, oh yeah, the children's interests, and then I started taking pictures of what they were doing. (Annie)

Carol: Yeah, giving the focus. During week one I wrote on a little sticky – What are children interested in? And I gave that to each of the teachers to post somewhere.

Carol: You noticed how on the Monday nights I have asked the educators to read out loud their stories in Inuttitut to the group. I noticed that this is another way that we can build on the educators' capacity to read out loud in Inuttitut.

This has really helped, since you came here, in Inuttitut. (Maaji)

We just need a little bit more guidance and we'll be able to. Like you are guiding us through this. If you were not there I don't think it would be happening. (Betsy)

When I read these excerpts of conversations and others like them, I began wondering, did we (that is, people supporting the development of child care in the region) forget to realize the importance of supporting linguistic and cultural objectives? Why did we not ensure human resources and tangible mechanisms such as language policies and strategies for procuring locally made materials and actively incorporating Inuit knowledge in the childcare programs? We have been working at it slowly, and maybe this project will finally lead the way. I contemplated the barriers, because building on Inuit knowledge(s) at the child care centre has been tough. The childcare regulations were designed within Euro-Western systems, the buildings designed by southern architects, and access to southern catalogue ordering is so easy. Battiste (2008) writes, “Today, Indigenous people throughout the world are feeling the tensions created by a modern

educational system that has taught them not only to mistrust their own Indigenous knowledge and elders' wisdom but also their own instincts, creativity and inspirations" (p. 498). Through this learning story project and others like it, the hope is that we take steps that help us rebuild faith in Inuit knowledge(s).

Lack of Inuit materials

All but one of the educators brought forward points concerning the lack of Inuit materials at the centre. The following excerpt from the conversation with Akinisi underscores the problem.

Carol: Sewing, hunting are a part of their cultural identity.

So they love that. So when our theme is culture we have to tell them stories about hunting or pretend hunting, camping. They love that except that we don't have much Inuit stuff in the playroom. (Akinisi)

Other comments related to the absence of Inuit materials at the centre include the following:

- Absence of resources is a barrier to building strong cultural identities.
- Don't have enough Inuttitut language books. Need more stories.
- We need more Inuit culture stuff to create the feeling that this is a cultural place.
- Need more materials (based in Inuit culture) for inside and outside, adult size and child size.
- Need more activities (based in) our culture.
- Would like to buy seal skin from hunters and trappers.
- Would like to have little qamukkaujait (toy sleds).

- Would like to have materials to make silapaaq (cover) for amautiq (women's parkas with a pouch for holding baby).
- Need more Inuit things.

During my first week at the child care centre I visited classrooms. One of the overwhelming feelings I had on concluding those visits concerned the extent to which the centre seemed to be a place which could be anywhere in Canada. Aside from the presence of the Inuttitut language, which was spoken by the educators and most of the administrative staff, I found the centre to be operating within a Euro-Western paradigm. Many of the materials came from the educational catalogues and the program was designed to operate in conjunction with the Quebec education policy. In a lecture at the University of Victoria, Battiste (2010) spoke about how Indigenous peoples have been “marinating in Eurocentrism.” She commented that that which is not valued in the neoliberal economy is not reproduced by it. In fact, Indigenous knowledge(s) and languages have been systematically destroyed through strategies of ethnocide (Brody, 2001) by the colonial system. The clearly articulated desire on the part of the educators for Inuit materials in the centre is an important part of a process of renaissance. Battiste (2008) writes about the challenge in education to ensure that “receptivity to inclusive diverse education is appropriately and ethically achieved and that educators become aware of the systemic challenges for overcoming Eurocentrism, racism, and intolerance” (p. 498).

What is exciting here, arising from the narrative conversations, is the enumeration of items needed in the centre to help create a space that is more embedded in Inuit cultural knowledge(s). This is not a simple shopping list: It is a list that is complicated by

systemic barriers – barriers which make the development of childcare programs grounded in Inuit culture and knowledge difficult. But this is what we are working to achieve: We are using learning stories as one of the vehicles to get there.

Problem of mixed language

I was surprised when the Inukjuak-based staff raised concerns about mixed language. One educator noted how she really had to work hard to focus on speaking a homogeneous Inuttitut.

Carol: My next question is what does it mean for children to have strong language?

It means a lot. If they can't speak their own language it would be terrible – so it is very important for us to speak our own language as much as we can, especially me. (Brenda)

Another commented on the access to English through popular children's television shows and described her efforts to focus on speaking Inuttitut with the children.

Carol: When you talk about redirecting children to speak Inuttitut what is your value?

That they should speak in Inuttitut and they should know what it is in Inuttitut. Because some of them watch a lot of TV Treehouse – and they speak English and so we always try to speak to them in Inuttitut and correct them. (Akinisi)

Maaji noted a concern with educators using a mixed language which could compromise the development of strong linguistic identities.

Carol: So what can other educators do to help the children develop strong linguistic identities?

If they speak – not to mix it like we mix English and Inuttitut at the same time. We should stop mixed speaking. Not short language. (Maaji)

Tulloch (2009) writes, “When children do not have basic speaking and understanding down, they do not have the foundation upon which to build advanced skills such as reading, writing, singing and story telling” (p. 65). Duhaime (2008) reports that 90% of the Inukjuak population speak Inuttitut. However the fragility of the language is made visible in the comments above which describe how English is creeping into the Inuttitut language and how important it is to be aware of the language spoken.

Relationship of culture and pride

I was very much drawn to the repeated comments in the narrative conversations that linked culture and pride. Three examples are presented below.

They love when their grandmothers sew and grandfathers/father go hunting. The children are proud. (Akinisi)

I know it brings back a lot of pride in who they are, what they are, what they are seeing. The pictures really help for people to see what’s happening. (Annie)

Carol: When a child knows their culture, then what does that mean for the child?

He’s proud. (Mary)

Iseke-Barnes (2008) writes about how telling stories sustains Indigenous knowledge(s) and honours Elders’ experiences. Weenie (2008) states: “Despite centuries of colonialism and oppression, language and culture remain veritable sources of knowledge that reinforce and validate Aboriginal identity (Weenie, 2008, p. 555). I wonder if the connections made with culture and pride described above relate to

honouring the knowledges of Inuit ancestors, an act which is made visible through the learning stories?

Summary

In this section I have reviewed a selection of themes which emerged from a careful analysis of the narrative conversations. This includes a consideration of the intimately woven connection with Inuit language and culture. I also considered concerns related to lifestyle changes in the community which limit some children's access to the land and lead educators to want to offer more culture-based activities at the centre. This is an important impetus for the development of a program grounded in Inuit knowledge(s). Learning local place names, including places of import to the child's family, are valuable components of cultural knowledge(s) which learning stories can be used to reinforce. Knowing where one is from is an important part of cultural identity and of decolonizing processes (Iseke-Barnes, 2008).

The participants in this project appreciated the support and encouragement for using Inuttitut and employing cultural knowledge offered by an outside professional. This external validation and encouragement was seen as important to the realization of cultural and linguistic goals. It was very encouraging that the educators wanted to make and buy Inuit materials, but actually getting the goods has been difficult, complicated by systemic barriers connected to colonialism.

Learning stories show children in the process of thinking and learning and are seen as contributing to language development. They can help in rebuilding views that celebrate Inuit strengths and work as decolonizing forces. This strength-based visibility,

combined with the capacity to generate cultural knowledge(s), ignites a potential for learning stories to act as a tool for the cultural negotiation of education (Stairs, 1994). Finally, the stories are linking culture and pride, and it seems that this may be connected to ways in which they honour Elders' knowledge(s), which can make them deeply meaningful.

Part 4: Language, Culture, and Relationships

In the final section of this chapter, I consider the study's findings in relation to ideas contained within the research questions, with a mind to making visible the evidence from the research about what learning stories are doing at the child care centre in each of the following areas: language, culture, and relationships. This section's content comes from my observations and research journal and the narrative conversations.

Language

The Nunavut Literacy Council (n.d., cited in Tulloch, 2009, p. 1) provides the following definition of literacy:

Literacy is understood broadly as incorporating a wide range of communicative skills: Literacy is a skill that enables people to interpret and effectively respond to the world around them. Based upon language development from birth, it includes the ability to learn, communicate, read and write, pass on knowledge and participate actively in society.

In reviewing the data generated during this research project I searched for evidence related to what learning stories are doing in terms of language. A number of points become clear. Educators report that children are starting to talk more. Some children who were not before are now recognizing their names in print and are speaking

their names out loud. Other children are starting to speak using words. In some groups children are learning and speaking place names and finding meanings of new words and speaking them. The learning stories are having an effect in terms of language acquisition. Greenwood (2009), in writing about Indigenous languages, writes,

The importance of language to children's growth and development cannot be overstated. It is a keystone element for their 'good care.' As such, the immersion of children into their language becomes paramount, giving them access to knowledge, and the construction of that knowledge, beyond the spoken word. This significance of language to knowledge is expressed in stories and orality. (p. 66)

The learning stories are also providing an important source of Inuttitut language material at the child care centre and in the community. Fifty-nine new stories written in Inuttitut provide a substantial source of Inuttitut language reading material which can be taken home in the children's binders and read out loud by parents at home. The stories are being read out loud by teachers to teachers, such as during the educator discussion group sessions, and by teachers to children during the day. The stories are also read by children with children. In one instance an educator copied a learning story created by a teacher in another classroom and put it on the playroom bookshelf for the children to read. The learning stories have been put on display at adult eye level in the child care centre for parents to read and are displayed inside some classrooms at the child's eye level for the children to read. The learning stories are a new and interesting source of Inuttitut language material.

In speaking with the educators and fellow researchers, other points emerged about the effect of learning stories on Inuttitut language use at the centre; these included opportunities to read stories aloud, thereby developing capacity in reading and speaking Inuttitut and moving the language into a place where it is read and spoken, and opportunities for educators to discuss Inuttitut language word meanings amongst themselves in an effort to find just the right terminology to describe a particular set of photos. On numerous occasions educators reported to me learning new words. Learning stories also created the occasion to learn how to type in syllabics. The stories are now generating an interest amongst some people to take an Inuttitut grammar class.

In the narrative conversation I had with Betsy, Betsy expressed that she found that by doing activities and taking photos and then making stories, children are starting to talk more. She said, “Words are coming out now. We have to keep this up because I noticed that some of them couldn’t really say their names and they are starting to pronounce their names now.” According to Betsy, learning stories are providing a way to communicate with parents about children’s activities. In fact, she thinks learning stories should become a part of the curriculum at every Nunavik-based centre, as she explained, “because it shows the photos, the children, what they are doing, their interests.”

The above description demonstrates how learning stories are working to provide a significant source of Inuttitut language material in the child care centre, which can be taken home. It shows how the stories work to create an Inuttitut language place in the print-and-read world of Inuit children and families. It shows, I would argue, how learning stories can act to replace the foreign language literature sources that are currently being read in translation to children; in this way it acts as part of a decolonizing practice.

Culture

Annahatak(1994) writes,

More often than not Inuit values are left out of school. I have taught many lessons which I have come to term “floating lessons.” These I find not to be connected to our cultural purposes and I see them more for surface learning, that is, to learn the physical aspects of our culture (food, clothing, tools, customs, etc.). They rarely touch upon students’ choices, decisions and identity. (p. 17)

Betsy Annahatak’s (1994) definition of culture in the classroom pushes me to dig deep in thinking about culture, inclusive of invisible understandings and ways of working that are connected to ethnicity. In speaking with the teachers about what learning stories are doing in terms of culture, I found that they understand that learning stories are working to make cultural knowledge(s) accessible to children. This was made visible in the narrative analysis of the set of learning stories from the Yellow Room considered in the first part of this chapter. There are other examples; I share one below.

Minnie, the educator in the Blue Room, wrote a story about Lizzie and another girl. The photos feature the two girls in the process of brushing their teeth.

Brushing Teeth

Lizzie wears kamiik which she knows will keep her feet warm.

She’s brushing her teeth so that one day she can make her own kamiik.

Her grandmother makes her kamiik. When she grows up she wants to make her own kamiik. That’s why she’s taking care of her teeth.

On speaking with the educator about this story, I learned that these girls wear kamiik (seal skin boots) to school, and that the educator wanted to recognize the grandmother's work while at the same time positioning the girls to consider the possibilities of becoming kamik makers when they grew up. Strong teeth are needed for kamik making because the seal skin must be chewed as part of the process. I find this a powerful story which speaks directly to what learning stories are doing now to position children with cultural identities grounded in Inuit knowledge(s).

In thinking about learning stories and the educators in relation to generating cultural knowledge(s), I am excited. I have seen that the educators are seeking opportunities to incorporate cultural content in the stories, as they do in the example above. Educators are looking for Inuit materials in their classrooms and talking about ways of getting materials into their classrooms. They are also looking to connect with Elders as part of a process of knowledge seeking and learning in relation to the stories.

In the narrative conversation I had with Brenda about the learning stories process, we came to consider how learning stories can work to help us see elements of culture which are visible, such as "wearing clothes, eating food," and invisible, including relational name calling and cooperation. Brenda believes that through the process of reading the learning stories with the children and looking at the pictures with them, language is strengthened. She also thinks that lending cameras to families and having families record significant cultural events and activities could strengthen cultural knowledge. The photos could later be turned into stories which could also be included in the child's binder.

Weenie (2008) suggests that Aboriginal educators can incorporate more cultural concepts in their work “as a way of reversing the effects of being marginalized” (p. 554). The learning stories are providing a path to showcase invisible elements of culture and, by so doing, act to reverse the effects of marginalization.

Relationships

In considering the Inuit perspective on relationship and how children become human beings, Tagalik (2007) found the following practice from the past:

The process of *inunnguiniq* or ‘making a human being’ (child-rearing and socialization) was a responsibility of everyone in the group and was a central preoccupation. The process was part of all areas of life and relied on keen observation, constant communication and a shared and specific plan for the future of the child. Most importantly, it was based in the process of building meaningful relationships in all areas of a child’s life.

(p. 10)

Relationships are key in the Indigenous research paradigm (Wilson, 2008). They are also key in the child care centre. Wondering if learning stories could act as a relationship builder was a foundational part of this thesis research. During the narrative conversations, the educators reported ways in which learning stories are contributing to strengthened relationships. These include providing a way to communicate with parents about children’s activities, providing a place to connect with families, and having a positive influence on self-esteem. Several teachers spoke about how learning stories made visible ways in which children cooperate and share. They also spoke about an increased awareness of children’s interests.

Between educators the learning stories are providing a mechanism for professional conversations. These concern specifics of the Inuttitut language, sharing ideas of things to do with children – as learned through the stories, and creating an opportunity to figure things out together with the computer. Educators are asking each other for help troubleshooting issues with the computer. All of these elements combine to have an effect of bringing educators together in a community of teachers and learners, a community that did not really exist to this extent before.

During our narrative conversation Akinisi spoke about relationships. She found that learning stories provided a place where children could connect with family.

I can see that learning stories are working to bring parents, teachers, and children together at the child care centre. They are serving as a way to position Inuttitut as a language that is written and read. They are providing a means to uncover Inuit cultural understandings. In this research learning stories are presenting themselves as a critical part in a process of revisioning child care in Nunavik within Inuit perspectives.

Next, in the final chapter of the thesis, I consider the process of this work, its implications, and its connections with the research questions.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

When I started this project of creating learning stories with early childhood educators in Inukjuak, Nunavik, I set out to answer these questions:

1. What kinds of knowledge(s) can learning stories generate?
2. What kinds of cultural identities can learning stories generate?
3. What kinds of language identities can learning stories generate?
4. What kinds of relationships can learning stories generate?

In this chapter I address these questions and offer some questions for further research. First, however, I summarize the thesis.

Thesis Review

This work was approached with an understanding that meaningful assessment is culturally attuned, draws on community knowledge, articulates locally based aspirations, and connects all participants in the learning community in ways which are community derived and relevant. Meaningful assessment is considered as an alternative to culturally inappropriate practices which include assessment based in linguistic, visual, and relational knowledge(s) that are part of Euro-Western assessment methodologies and are foreign to Indigenous processes and peoples. The research set out to develop a culturally attuned approach to assessment.

Literature review – learning(s)

The literature review found that in Indigenous programs, many present assessment practices are not culturally attuned and are problematic (Ball, 2008; Ball & Janyst, 2007; McShane & Hastings, 2004; Philpott, 2007; Stairs, Bernhard, & Aboriginal colleagues, 2002). For example, screening tools like Brigance preschool screen, which is widely used

in Aboriginal ECE, require on-the-spot performance (Greenspan and Meisels, 1996) and may not be in the interest of most children (Mantzicopoulos, 1999). New ideas about children derived from checklist data, like those coming from the Nipissing District development screen – might not help children either (Ruffolo, 2010). One concern is that these data may create their own understandings of problems with children. Researchers working in Indigenous communities have found that this problem-oriented approach in relation to Indigenous children perpetuates problem thinking (McShane & Hastings, 2004).

Rogoff helps explain: “What is key is transformation in the process of participation in community activities, not acquisition of competencies defined independently of the sociocultural activities in which people participate” (1998, as cited in Rameka, 2007, p. 131).

The literature review examined Māori successes and cited Ritchie and Rau (2008), who found that through learning stories, “children and their families experienced Māori ways of being and doing as normalized; this in turn affirmed Māori identities and aspirations” (2008, p. 2). I examined learning stories and explored this narrative style, structured observation, designed to document children in the action of learning (Carr 2001, Carr, Lee & Jones, 2004; Lee & Carr, 2002; New Zealand Government, 2009; Rameka, 2007). McShane and Hastings’ (2004) work, which promotes narrative approaches that build on strengths as a useful way of assessing learning in young Indigenous children, helped to make a link with the learning stories of Aotearoa/New Zealand and this study in Inuit Canada. Current Canadian models, such as the BC Early Learning Framework that uses pedagogical narration (Government of British Columbia,

2007) were considered as valuable examples of methods to promote and support critical thinking. These considerations allowed for an opening up to the possibility of employing an assessment tool as a mechanism for social change which could perhaps lead to stronger, fairer, more just personal, professional, and societal relationships.

This research project has set out to re-think assessment. It has not answered the question: could learning stories, as used at Tasiurvik, replace developmental screens and checklists. It has not dealt with the dilemma concerning the place (if any) for mainstream assessment measures in Inuit early childhood settings. There is certainly a need for more research in this area.

Theoretical underpinnings

Colonialism has been and continues to be a problem in the Inuit world. Its powerfully destructive forces, embedded at least in part within a now-discounted evolutionary theory (Brody, 1975, 2001; Davis 2009) perpetuate. The effects of colonialism have worked to fracture Inuit relationships, linguistic identities, cultural identities, and knowledge(s).

Viruru (2006) proposes postcolonial discourses as a way to recognize inequities and through that process open up to possibilities of social justice. Battiste (2010) speaks about a two-step approach to postcolonial discourse. Deconstruction involves dismantling racism and colonialism. Reconstruction involves transforming the educational status quo by incorporating Indigenous perspectives. Decolonial theory (De Lissovoy, 2010) is relational and dialogic; thus it prompts me to consider ideas about recording and telling stories from Inuit perspectives.

Methodologies and methods

Indigenous researchers Battiste (2010), Martin (2008), and Wilson (2008) provided insights into relational theory as a holistic way to approach this thesis. This is an action research project grounded in Indigenous methods and methodologies embedded in processes of transformative education. The research has been done within a postmodern paradigm which functions on understandings that children construct knowledge(s) and identities within the contexts of their communities and relationships. In doing the work, the researchers set out to develop, in collaboration with local educators, and co-researchers, including the pedagogical counsellor, an approach to assessment that is culturally and community specific.

Knowledge

Battiste (2008) writes that:

Indigenous knowledge must be learned in Indigenous ways. Indigenous knowledge is diverse and must be learned in the similar and diverse meaningful ways that the people have learned it for it to have continuing vitality and meaning. Educators must also respect the fact that Indigenous knowledge can only be fully known from within the community contexts and only through prolonged discussions with each of these groups. (p. 501)

This study introduced a Euro-Western tool – the learning story – and integrated it into life at an Inuit child care centre. We spoke in the Inuttitut language and were situated in the Inuit community. We found through the course of our work that Elder knowledge

was critical to accessing Inuit ways of knowing and being. We found in fact that learning stories acted as a decolonizing device by making available Inuit knowledge(s).

Culture

It is interesting to consider the kinds of cultural identities learning stories generate. What I saw and what I heard from the educators, and in discussions with my co-researchers, was that the learning stories were providing children with access to cultural knowledge(s). This happened through the “Snow Iglu” story when the children experienced the illu and the qammaq. Upon reading the story, the children engage with the opportunity to return and re-experience the illu and the qammaq. Through this process they are encouraged to remember those moments and to see and feel themselves within that space that is recognizably an Inuit space. I suggest that in these moments spent reviewing these stories, the children construct themselves as part of a world rich with Inuit cultural imagery and filled with Inuit meanings. A world comprised of cultural identities grounded in Inuit ways of knowing and being.

Another example of how the stories can act to position children to generate ideas about themselves connected to Inuit culture and knowledge is in the story about the toothbrush and kamiik. The author of this story set out to encourage the children to dream, to see themselves in their own futures, as sewers of kamik and chewers of seal. When these children revisit this story with other children, family members, and so on, they position themselves to imagine what it will be like to become a sewer of kamiik. This activity enables the child to construct self, as one who has this potential to become a kamik maker, and this potential, linked to Inuit knowledge(s) is, through the stories,

nurtured to grow, which in turn positions the child to build identities grounded in Inuit knowledge(s).

The stories have acted as promoters of culture and have served as a mechanism to encourage educators to seek out and incorporate cultural knowledge in story content. This process was described in the evolution of the qulliq story, where the educator, upon reviewing the “Snow Illu” story, determined that the young girl really wanted to see the qulliq lit. So the teacher arranged for the lighting of the qulliq. I would say that through this process cultural knowledge(s) are viewed as valuable, interesting, and worth seeking out. In fact, I think, it is partly as a consequence of the work with the learning stories that many educators have been actively voicing an interest in incorporating cultural knowledge at the centre, and are seeking to purchase cultural materials and connect with Elders for information about Inuit cultural ways. They are also talking about the possibility of engaging in taking children fishing and out on the land. The educators also noted how, through activities at the child care centre, and by documenting these with learning stories, that children can come to see cultural ways and gain insights into cultural knowledge that they might not otherwise experience.

An additional point around the preparations for the qulliq story was that on the day when the qulliq was going to be lit, the Elder was unavailable. At the last minute and after much deliberation, the educator decided to light the lamp herself. When the lamp was fully lit, she announced to the group, “I am a real grandmother now.” I think that at that moment she became a valuable transmitter of cultural knowledge, and saw herself in that role. I conclude this subsection reflecting on the power of learning stories to act as a catalyst, as in this instance above, when the learning story served as the vehicle for

inviting cultural knowledge (in the form of the qulliq) to enter the childcare spaces and to become a part of them.

Language

Through the process of this study I have learned so much about the workings of learning stories in relation to language. In studying the findings I see that the learning stories worked to position Inuttitut as a written language at the child care centre. This happened through the production of 59 Inuttitut language stories, featuring the children of the centre. These stories were read to children and colleagues and shared with parents. Through this process Inuttitut became a language which was read out loud at the centre to groups and individuals. When the stories were packaged in binders to be taken home, they began to provide an important source of Inuttitut language print material for parents to share with children.

The process of creating stories moved Inuttitut to become a language that was written by all educators at the child care centre for the purpose of documenting children's interests, and through this process the educators became authors. The combined process of writing stories and reading them aloud led to an increased awareness on the part of the educators in the value of speaking Inuttitut, accompanied by a heightened awareness of the infiltration of mixed language in everyday speech. This process became clear when several educators articulated concerns about mixed language. It also led to an increased awareness in the value of the written word, which in turn contributed to discussions about the possibility of Inuttitut grammar lessons.

In speaking with the educators about the stories and how they were affecting the children, I learned about increased language acquisition in terms of spoken word

vocabulary and name recognition; even in the case of the toddlers, one educator reported how children in her class were beginning to speak their names out loud as a result of the stories, in which individual children were featured and the child's name in syllabics was inscribed as the title across the top! The educators also spoke about an interest in a more systematic effort to share knowledge about place names with children, accompanied with recognition of the importance of children learning and knowing the names of lakes, ponds, and campsites in the area surrounding the community.

In speaking with educators and research project collaborators on what the stories did outside of the playrooms I learned that educators were discussing and refining Inuttitut word meanings between themselves and also seeking Elder advice on some terminology. I also learned that when the educators read out loud in Inuttitut during our weekly discussion groups, this created a valuable opportunity to develop this capacity to read and speak in Inuttitut.

What kinds of language identities can learning stories generate? In the community of Inukjuak, at the childcare centre called Tasiurvik and at Pigiursaviapik, learning stories are creating spaces where Inuttitut is valued, read, written, talked about, refined, and appreciated. Through learning stories Inuttitut is seen as a language at work, a language of play, a language of value, a language which is used to communicate ideas, to share knowledge, and to tell stories about what children know and can do.

Relationships

The question “What kinds of relationships can learning stories generate?” is fundamental to this research. The findings show that the learning stories positioned educators to communicate with parents about activities, to connect with families and to

notice children cooperating and sharing. They also served as a mechanism for educators to develop professional relationships with colleagues by exchanging and reading stories aloud at the discussion groups, sharing knowledge of computers, seeking specifics of word meanings, sharing cultural knowledge and activity ideas, and discussing and questioning the meanings in stories. Furthermore the process of reviewing and reflecting on the stories in the discussion groups prompted educators to consider meanings in the pictures and text from the child's point of view.

Sharing the stories in the playrooms served to strengthen relationships between child, families, and educators, and provided a viable mechanism through which the children could make their life at the centre visible to their family. The stories were also said to have positive influences on children's self-esteem. This is easily conceived when one considers the impact of a story in which a child is featured. Children see themselves within the context of their life in their community. When the story is discussed and shared and considered, new ideas are generated and the story grows in response. A new story is made; perhaps it builds on the old. The stories, in sequence, are collected in a binder/portfolio on which a full 8 by 10-inch photo of the child is featured on the cover. This process positions children to look back at the stories and reflect on them, and to see themselves in the process of experiencing their lives.

Lesa told a story about Eva in chapter 5 which featured Eva as a thinker. The process of reviewing the stories, of crafting them and trying to imagine what children are doing and thinking, positions people who write the stories and read them to view children as smart, thinking, capable, strong people. The process has raised an awareness with educators about children's interests. The stories have raised an awareness in the centre,

community, and region of the work that children were engaged in at the centre. They have provided a vehicle for parents to connect with children. They have prompted parents to consider and grow respect for the educators' work.

The stories, as evidenced above, have done much to build relationships. Wilson (2008) notes, "This relational way of being is at the heart of what it means to be Indigenous" (p. 80). Through the process of this research I have found that learning stories can serve to generate relationships between people, ideas, and things connected with Inuit language, knowledge, and culture. This is powerful stuff.

Conclusions

This research demonstrates that learning stories are a productive way to incorporate Indigenous knowledge(s) and to consider culture in education. The research shows how these learning stories worked as valuable connectors in building strengthened relationships at the child care centre, and how they are contributing to the development of a practice that is becoming increasingly grounded in Inuit ways.

Importantly, the work makes visible how the stories are prompting educators to seek culturally based options and to incorporate cultural knowledge in the activities at the centre. It also shows how some of the deeper and more invisible aspects of Inuit culture and knowledge(s) can be uncovered through the story writing and sharing process – a process which I think contributes to a rebuilding of faith in Inuit knowledge(s). The incorporation of cultural concepts in early childhood practice reverses the effects of marginalization and can play an important part in revisioning childcare in Nunavik within Inuit perspectives.

Greenwood (2009) writes about early childhood as “a critical site for cultural rejuvenation” (p. ii). I believe this research demonstrates one way in which this can be done.

I suggest a number of questions for further research: How do we keep this process going, and go deeper? How can the learning stories be used a part of a process of the cultural negotiation of education? How do we address systemic barriers? How can we arrange for the procurement of Inuit materials including books, locally made equipment and clothing, tools etc.? How can we facilitate linguistic and cultural support at the centre? How can we build strong relationships with Elders, both at and outside the child care centre? How can we embark on more activities in which children at the child care centre go to where the cultural action is? How do we take principles of Indigenous knowledge into practice? What else can be done to rebuild faith in Inuit knowledge(s)?

I think learning stories provide a starting place.

Final Word

Through this project Inuit language, knowledge(s), and culture occupied important space in children’s lives. Inuit knowledge(s), language, and culture must be available, must be lived, must be embodied to be known. It is this accessibility that makes possible the continued construction of Inuit knowledge(s), linguistic identities, cultural identities, and relationships.

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Appendix A: Letter to Tasiurvik Board and Director

Mary Caroline (Carol) Rowan
548 Dallas Road, Apt. 411
Victoria, BC V9V 1B3

January 26, 2011

Susie Kasudluak Morreau and the Tasiurvik Child Care Centre Board
Tasiurvik Child Care Centre
Inukjuak, Nunavik
J0M 1M0

Dear Susie and the board:

For the past sixteen months I have been working towards obtaining a masters degree at the University of Victoria in Victoria, British Columbia. Last year I was occupied with course work. This fall I have been in New Zealand learning all about child care. From February 28 – April 21, 2011, I would like to do the research phase of my thesis at the Tasiurvik Child Care Centre in Inukjuak.

I'll tell you about what I'd like to do in two parts. First I'll describe the project and then I will detail what I think it will involve in terms of the centre and staff.

About the project

My thesis project is about learning stories. Learning stories were developed in New Zealand as a way of documenting children's learning. Teachers took photos of children in the process of learning and then focusing on children's strengths used the pictures and words to make stories in order to document, plan, reflect and share children's learning with children, families and fellow teachers.

Two researchers in Aotearoa (the Māori name for New Zealand) have found that learning stories can provide a way to incorporate Māori values and beliefs in the working life at the child care centre and to deepen connections between children, teachers and families. I would like to see if learning stories could provide a way of doing the same thing for Inuit at the Tasiurvik Child Care centre in Inukjuak.

I have picked Inukjuak because I personally have many strong connections in the community, because the centre has a large percentage of qualified staff and the centre has been well run for many years. Also – I sense an interest amongst the staff to do the best they can do at their jobs and to continue learning to do so.

What will it mean for the centre?

If the board agrees, the research phase will take place starting on February 28th and running until April 21, 2011. While the research is taking place the teaching staff will

learn about the learning story methodology and develop their own approaches to assessment based in this “story based way” as part of their daily activities at the centre with my support. This project is being supported financially and administratively by Kativik Regional Government and is linked with a global development project being developed with KRG and the regional board of health and social services.

During the research phase daily life at the centre should continue pretty much as usual, although I will be at the centre and circulate amongst the rooms – supporting teachers as they learn to create learning stories and develop an approach that works for themselves and children and families at the Tasiurvik Centre in Inukjuak. I am also hoping to do teaching and discussion about the approach on Monday evenings from 18:00 – 20:00.

At the end of the research phase I would like to meet with the board and seek feedback on the work to date and advice for next steps. Finally I would like to speak one-on-one with at least six teachers, for between 30 and 60 minutes each in order to reflect together about learning stories.

I hope to complete the centre based work of this project by April 21, 2011, when I’ll return to Victoria to look closely at the work done in Inukjuak and to write my thesis. I would like to return to Inukjuak and share my findings with the board and staff in late June 2011, in order to seek your input and advice before finalizing my thesis. When my thesis is complete I will be delighted to send a copy to Tasiurvik!

This project presents an excellent opportunity for Inukjuak educators to learn about learning stories and develop an assessment tool and capacities. At Tasiurvik the project should bring some positive outcomes including educators creating learning stories and using this documentation to connect with children, parents and colleague. This project is the first step toward implementing a new assessment approach throughout Nunavik and will guide the implementation process in other Nunavik communities. This is an important contribution that Inukjuak can make because of the strength of the staff, administration and board in the community.

Do you agree that I do my thesis research related to learning stories at the Tasiurvik Centre in Inukjuak, Nunavik? Would your board agree to pass a resolution supporting this project?

I look forward to your reply, and if you have any questions – please ask!!

Sincerely,

Carol Rowan

Appendix B: Letter to Inukjuak Mayor and Council

Mary Caroline (Carol) Rowan
548 Dallas Road, Apt. 411
Victoria, BC V9V 1B3
January 26, 2011

Sarollie Weetaluktuk
Northern Village of Inukjuak
Inukjuak, Nunavik J0M 1M0

Dear Sarollie and members of the Inukjuak Municipal Council:

For the past sixteen months I have been working towards obtaining a masters degree at the University of Victoria in Victoria, British Columbia. Last year I was occupied with course work. This fall I have been in New Zealand learning all about child care. From February 28 – April 21, 2011, I would like to do the research phase of my thesis at the Tasiurvik Child Care Centre in Inukjuak.

I have sent a separate letter to the Tasiurvik Child Care Centre director and the board describing the project, which is attached for your review. Briefly, this project is about developing an approach to assessment called learning stories which was first developed in New Zealand and adapted in New Brunswick. I am really interested in working with the Tasiurvik educators to see if we could take this methodology and mold it to serve as a means of effectively exchanging information between teachers and parents and children related to children's learning. I am interested in seeing if this method could serve to strengthen relationships and support, protect, and promote the Inuttitut language and Inuit knowledge.

As part of my ethics application to the University of Victoria I am seeking your support of this work. I would be delighted to discuss any questions you may have. I can be reached by e-mail at mcrowan@uvic.ca. My supervisor at the university is Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw, who can be reached by e-mail at vpacinik@uvic.ca.

This project presents an excellent opportunity for Inukjuak educators to learn about learning stories and develop an assessment tool and related capacities. At Tasiurvik the project should bring some positive outcomes, including educators creating learning stories and using this documentation to connect with children, parents, and colleagues. This project is supported financially and administratively by KRG and is the first step toward implementing a new assessment approach throughout Nunavik and will guide the implementation process in other Nunavik communities. This is an important contribution that Inukjuak can make because of the strength of the staff, administration, and board in the community.

Do you agree that I do my thesis research related to learning stories at the Tasiurvik Centre in Inukjuak, Nunavik?

Sincerely,

Carol Rowan

Appendix C: Letter to Parents

April 6, 2011

Dear Parents:

My name is Carol Rowan. I have been working with the children and staff at the Tasiurvik Child Care Centre since February 28, 2011. My colleague Annie Augiak from KRG has also been here during two of the weeks. Maaji Putulik, the Tasiurvik pedagogical counsellor, has provided great support, and the Tasiurvik educators have participated with interest and enthusiasm.

I am a masters student at the University of Victoria and have been doing research for my thesis. This work has involved working with the educators to create learning stories. These are photo stories which show children's learning and interests. The educators have started to post stories outside their classroom doors. They are making a binder for every child. These binders will feature stories about your child.

Attached is a paper detailing important information about your child for you to complete. This will be placed in the opening pages of the binder. Please return this page on Monday April 11th.

We would like to invite you to come to the centre at 5:00 on April 20th to have a light supper and take part in a presentation and discussion about the work. The session will last one hour. Babysitters will care for your children while the talk is being held in the multipurpose room. Afterwards you will be invited back to your child's class to check out their new binder and take it home over the Easter weekend – if you like!!

With your permission, I would like to be able to use your child's photo in my research. I do sometimes present at national and international conferences and write in academic and professional journals. We are also using this work at the Tasiurvik Centre to inform KRG's regional childcare work. So I would like to be able to share stories about your child – locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally.

I have attached a permission form. If you have any questions please ask me. My current phone number is 819 254 8776. Once I have returned to Victoria you will be able to reach me at 250 388 5554. Please return the permission form to your child's educator by April 11th.

Hope you can make it on April 20th.

Sincerely,

Carol Rowan

University of Victoria
Masters Candidate

Appendix D: Child Information Sheet

Name:

Parents:

Sauniq:

Sanariq:

Favorite camping place:

Favorite country food:

Parents' wish:

Appendix E: Consent Form

Permission to use children's work and photographs, video recordings

Exploring the possibilities of learning stories as a meaningful approach to assessment in Nunavik

Principal Investigator: Carol Rowan, mcrowan@uvic.ca in collaboration with Annie Augiak, aaugiak@krg.ca

Your signature below indicates that you give permission to the practitioners and researchers involved in *Exploring the possibilities of learning stories as a meaningful approach to assessment in Nunavik* to use your child's work, take photographs and video recordings of key learning activities in which your child may be involved as a part of the research project. Your child's work and photos/videos will be used to create learning stories. Your child's work and/or photo/videos might be used in publications done by practitioners and/or researchers including: articles, book chapters and masters thesis written as part of the project.

In terms of protecting your child's anonymity, his/her name will not be revealed in transcripts, reports, or publications that we produce that include the photograph/work of the child and any personal information about the child will remain anonymous. We will change such things as his/her name, details about the child and any kind of information that identify him/her. Our research results will not reveal the identity of your child or your family.

However, participants involved in the child care centre your child attends/and those who know your child will be able to recognize him/her in the photographs/video recordings. We ask all personnel and parents in the child care centre to respect the confidentiality of the children by not revealing their identity or other identifying information. We cannot guarantee that all members will keep the identity of your child confidential. In addition, your child may be identified by community members, especially in a small community.

The confidentiality of the data will be protected by ensuring that no one other than the researchers will have access to the photographs, and video recordings as well as his/her work. Photographs and video recordings of your child will be used by the researcher and practitioners to report publicly and to share the results of this study. The confidentiality of the data (photographs, video recordings, and children's work) will be protected by means of storing the data in a locked filing cabinet and password protected computer files in Carol Rowan's office. Data will be stored for a maximum of five years. All forms of data will be destroyed by March 31, 2016. Electronic data will be deleted, paper copies will be shredded and audio and video recordings will be erased or burnt.

Name of child/children in care

Signature of parent or guardian

Date

I agree to have practitioners and researchers ... take photographs and/or video recordings of my child during his/her time at the child care centre.

I agree to have educators and researchers take photographs and/or video recordings of my child during his/her time at the child care centre for public distribution and reporting.

Signature

Appendix F: Interview Questions for Narrative Conversations

1. What does it mean for children to have strong cultural identities?
 - a. What can educators do?
 - b. What can learning stories do?
2. What does it mean for children to have strong linguistic identities?
 - a. What can educators do?
 - b. What can learning stories do?
3. What does it mean for children to be as knowledgeable about the land as their grandparents?
 - a. What can educators do?
 - b. What can learning stories do?
4. What would you like me to document about our process of developing an approach to documentation and assessment?
5. When we look at the sample documentation (learning stories) we have developed, will you describe what can we learn from the stories about language, culture, knowledge, and relationships?
6. What would you tell other Nunavik educators about the approaches we have developed to documenting children's learning?
7. What would be the best way to share knowledge about narrative assessment with educators at other Nunavik-based centres?

Appendix G: English Translation of Learning Story Text

Figure 1 – A girl Makes Footprints in the Clay

The girl steps on the clay to see what happens.
She's astonished to find her footprint.

Figure 2 – Snow Illu

Mary¹⁴ and the children went to see the iglus.
They saw a qulliq.
They left the qulliq through the broken hole.
Then they visited the qummaq.
Mary was surprised to find a rock on the floor.
She picked up the rock and smelled it.
They were so happy to visit the iglu and the qummaq, on the hill.

Figure 3 – Going to the Playground

Today is a beautiful day. We children are in the Yellow Room.¹⁵
Today we are going to the playground. First we tie ourselves together with the rope.
After a long walk we finally get to the playground. We slide many times.
One of the girls looks at the camera – she was so happy.
On our walk back to the child care centre we watch for anything and everything.

Figure 5 – Qulliq

The qulliq was used long ago for heat and cooking. When the qulliq was being lit the children watched in astonishment. They were happy to watch the lighting. Our grandmothers were good with only a qulliq for their needs.

¹⁴ The name has been changed to honour the confidentiality agreement.

¹⁵ The name has been changed to honour the confidentiality agreement.