Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit Practices in Entrepreneurship

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ED618N Leadership & Reflective Practice

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March 2013

Iqaluit, NU

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Title of Signature Project: Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit practices in entrepreneurship

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Department: Faculty of Education

Degree: Master of Education

Year: 2013

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Abstract

The research study investigates local Inuit women in business in Iqaluit, Nunavut to explore their uses of traditional knowledge in their private business practice. Data about what Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit principles were applied in the private sector were collected through semi-structured interviews with four participants. They described some of the challenges and positive experiences they have faced as indigenous business owners. Their work practices include efforts to persevere, promote, and revitalize the Inuit language, traditional knowledge, and culture including educating people about them. The findings show how Inuit women entrepreneurs of Iqaluit have coped with their decolonization to overturn misconceptions of Inuit ways from the private sector perspective. During this journey, they have created a new business culture.

Key Words: Inuit, women, business practices, Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit, decolonization


Introduction

Inuit women entrepreneurs in Iqaluit have rarely had opportunities to be represented or united as a business community in the past. Although *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* (Inuit traditional values, sometimes abbreviated to IQ) have been granted official approval in the Nunavut Territory since its creation in 1999, exactly how those values play out in practice is still evolving. That is particularly true in business, where practices, including the profit motive, may conflict with traditional Inuit values. This research has taken advantage of recent developments which have enabled Inuit women entrepreneurs in Iqaluit to unite and represent themselves as a distinct group to explore how they incorporate traditional knowledge into entrepreneurial practices. Research participants critically looked at their approaches in business management and client relationship practices. Participants also integrated their approaches by balancing their western education with their upbringing. Although how abstract it is to what extent *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* (IQ) principles are and can be applied in the private sector, this research investigated four participants to learn approaches that are used in the capital of Nunavut. This report focuses on two of the participants responses’ due to time constraints. We have started with defining what IQ means and how they have been incorporated into the private sector by these women.

*Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* is traditional knowledge of the Inuit. Peter Irniq and Frank James Tester explain it well stating, “Definitions of IQ parallel those of traditional ecological knowledge (TEK), indigenous knowledge (IK), and traditional knowledge (TK)” (2008, p.1). As Arnakak (2001) says, “Taking time off from work to go berry picking, or to participate in other ‘traditional’ activities like hunting are all fine and well. But the emphasis in IQ development should be to study and incorporate the operating principles behind what makes an Inuk an Inuk.”
This research has supported this IQ development concept as the real IQ principles are not the superficial day-to-day practices, but rather the deeper relationships to the world and to other people that underlie them. The guiding principles are outlined in the Government of Nunavut’s mandates, *Pinasuaqtavut* (n.d., p.3-4) and *Tamapta* (n.d., p.7). The following are identified:

- **Inuuqatigiitsiarniq**: respecting others, relationships and caring for people.
- **Tunnganarniq**: fostering good spirit by being open, welcoming and inclusive.
- **Pijitsirniq**: serving and providing for family and/or community.
- **Aajiiqatigiinniq**: decision making through discussion and consensus.
- **Pilimmaksarniq/Pijariuqsarniq**: development of skills through observation, mentoring, practice, and effort.
- **Piliriqatigiinniq/Ikajuqtigiinniq**: working together for a common cause.
- **Qanuqtuurniq**: being innovative and resourceful.
- **Avatittinnik Kamatsiarniq**: respect and care for the land, animals, and the environment.

In this study, we have singled out the principle “**Tunnganarniq**” as an example, because it is an important ingredient for private businesses to apply in their practice to maintain and improve services to the clientele by having a positive climate. It is through this approach a business can survive and maintain their cashflow. Another critical relation to business practices were memorable experiences growing up and learning. As such, a diagram has been drawn up to explain this in more detail later on. I demonstrate one personal memory that I relate to as an entrepreneur.

**My Background as an Entrepreneur**

My entrepreneurial spirit came early, in grade two while I was attending the Pond Inlet federal day school. I must have recently heard the German fairy-tale of Rumpelstiltskin when our
teacher, Mrs. Hamburg, encouraged us to draw a picture of what we wanted to be when we grew up on what looked like a huge newsprint. Being very shy, I could not express myself, nor did I have enough English vocabulary to explain the concept of what I wanted to be to my teacher, so I drew a picture of myself spinning straw into gold. That’s what I wanted to be, independent and self-reliant in doing what I like to do. I was pretty happy with myself because it was different from any of my classmates’ drawings. Most of the girls wanted to become cashiers at the local Hudson’s Bay store. Most of the boys wanted to become water delivery guys or be honey bucket collectors.

I grew up mostly in Mittimatalik (Pond Inlet) situated in North Baffin Island when our territory was part of the vast Northwest Territories. Apparently, I was born there in an RCMP staff house. Both sides of the family were special constables, so my father was groomed to be one. His stations took us to different parts of north Baffin and Ellesmere Island. I have memories living in the Clyde River area and Igloolik before my father’s retirement took us back to Mittimatalik. I started school in Igloolik, continued on in my home community until school sent me to Iqaluit, then called Frobisher Bay, at the age of 15. I lived at the Ukkivik Residence for five years while attending high school and teacher training.

I have resigned as an educator with the territorial government three times to tend to my business interests and seek other managerial positions in the public sector. My educator positions have included Student Support, Regional Program Consultant, and school administration as vice-principal, co-principal and principal. As a program consultant in the first Teaching and Learning Centre for the Baffin Divisional Board of Education, I gained experience developing curriculum and supporting materials. We developed theme teaching kits, so I have authored and illustrated over twenty school books throughout the years. I enjoyed those years immensely, and one of the
highlights was fundraising as secretary-treasurer for the planning committee for the first regional Inuit educators’ conference I named, “Sivumut.” That was my contribution to move forward—sivumut—with our issues as Inuit educators. During those fruitful years, I developed a passion for editing and am still at it now as Editor-in-Chief as well as President and majority owner of Innirvik Support Services (2003) Ltd. Through contracts, I have been editing since 2006.

Today, Innirvik Support Services is in its 16th year. After merging with our other translation company, we incorporated it in 2003 as a new entity, bringing both companies under one name. Innirvik specializes in providing services for translation, interpreting and transcription as well as audio provision in rental and sales, print shop and temporary staff placements. In the past after gaining teacher certification, I studied fashion arts in hopes of becoming a contemporary fashion designer and open a boutique to sell clothes with an Inuit touch and run occasional fashion shows up here.

My experience as an entrepreneur and educator sparked my curiosity in the topic of this research and reinforced my need to relate to other Inuit women who strive to promote their culture and language in their places of business. I refer to this as the ‘identity text’ which I learned from Jim Cummins (personal communication, 2012) and transferred to the corporate context. Entrepreneurs have taken a big risk to invest their identities in their businesses; I believe by taking ownership, active learning takes place. I have often felt isolated without having active sharing until recently, first through this research and second through the ‘Inuit Women in Business Network’ through the national Pauktuutit Inuit Women’s Association. My yearning to network with other Inuit business owners tempted me to do this research study, as well as the fact that not much has been written about Inuit entrepreneurs. Since 1995, as a business owner, I felt like I was out of touch with other agencies even though I have been pretty busy. On and off, I
did have active involvement in Chamber of Commerce activities at the local, regional, and territorial levels, but that search for belonging as an equal was missing until recently, when I made attempts to connect with my peers, either at trade shows or via the “Inuit Women in Business Network.”

**Method**

This study is a qualitative action research project in which the researcher was a participant. It was done in a kitchen table talk fashion. I searched through the internet, telephone book, advertisements, called around and had discussions with some business owners I knew before narrowing it down to Inuit women in Iqaluit. (Budget limitations kept me from travelling to meet with Inuit women entrepreneurs in other communities.) From a list of various types of services they specialized in, I decided to approach these role models I saw and would go down to the next in line if there was no interest. Surprisingly, the first four individuals that I approached verbally consented as they were keen to support my findings and an area they felt had to be explored and read about by researchers. The four participants are successful entrepreneurs and have a voice they share with the public. They have also been featured in various media like magazines and news through radio and television sharing their accomplishments in what they do. It is what and how these strong Inuit women do successfully that I wanted to find out. After verbal confirmation, interview questions, project summary and consent forms were shared and reviewed prior to the interviews.

Interview questions were adapted to each participant to incorporate the specifics of their individual companies. Interviews took place at their homes and were recorded digitally between Christmas holidays and spring 2012-2013. They were conducted in both Inuktitut and English and transcribed. I settled to report on two of the participants who are emerging business owners
for this paper because of time constraints. I chose the two participants who have not had as much public exposure as the other two participants. But I have hopes of compiling the interviews into one document and to have it published if funds can be secured for the next phase. The chapters have been shared with the two participants with opportunity for feedback prior to the presentation of this report. In the next phase of the full document intended for publication, all participants will have had input. The following sections are findings from two of the participants.

Alethea Aggiuq Arnaquq-Baril

Filmmaking as a “powerful communication tool”

As we sat down for an interview, I noticed Alethea’s youthful face close up. It bore bluish grey tattoos. I started to understand this young woman’s passion and journey to reclaim her cultural traces. Starting from the top of her forehead, two symmetrical lines drooped down and met right above and in between her eyebrows in a “V” shape. There were five dots arched starting from each nostril and framed her cheekbones. They were complemented by wrist motifs that cradled her hands like bracelets. I found her captivating in the light of the sun.

Tunniit are traditional Inuit tattoos displayed on facial and body skin areas for decoration. These markings were considered attractive and were gradually extended to honour women’s maturity, according to what I have heard from Elders. Alethea made a documentary film titled, Tunniit: Retracing the Lines of Inuit Tattoos (Unikkaat Studios Inc., 2012b). In this film, she documented the history of this almost lost art before she and a few other women from Iqaluit got tattooed themselves.

Unikkaat

Alethea started Unikkaat Studios Inc. about six years ago to document Inuit culture, history, and present-day issues as related to Inuit values. During the interview, she expressed that
she felt the name *Unikkaat* (stories) was a logical choice, as it would encompass film and educational video games and/or visual arts that have Inuit content. In her estimation, all these different art forms did have storytelling involved, so that was the name she chose for her company. In the context of the meaning of *unikkaat*, it is understood that storytelling can be in many forms as long as they send a moral message. Alethea would like to include interactive digital media like websites in the near future. As she said, whatever media it is, it is about storytelling, and that is the meaning of *Unikkaat*. She did just that in her first solo documentary of *Tunniit* in 2010. This is what she said in her feature film announcement:

A young woman is on a journey to revive the ancient Inuit tradition of face tattooing. Inuit tattoos have been forbidden for a century, and almost forgotten. Alethea Arnaquq-Baril struggles to find out all she can before she is tattooed herself. She has met some serious resistance from her fellow Inuit. However, a number of brave elders are willing to talk about the tattoos and the massive and sudden cultural changes that caused their decline. (Unikkaat Studios Inc., 2012b)

Alethea explained where she was coming from by mentioning the cultural clashes that have happened in one generation through the effects of colonization and the journey for many to search for their identity and towards healing. She has chosen to give voice to Inuit through telling stories in film because she believes documentation through this medium is a powerful communication tool. Alethea, as young as she is, has produced compelling films in both documentaries and animations. She started her film company in 2005 the same year she graduated from Sheridan Institute in Ontario. Alethea chose filmmaking to document the rich oral tradition that Elders possess. She has written more about where she is coming from and why she has chosen filmmaking; it can be found on her website along with the other award-winning
projects she has documented. More information is provided further about her national accomplishments later in the chapter.

“Tunnganaqtuq” to the Audience

In the early part of the interview, Alethea said that she tries to cause people to think and discuss things, even to the point of shaking things up a little bit, so that they are forced to not just think about everyday issues. She may challenge the audience’s normal opinions so they can reconsider and debate certain issues, but tries to do it in a way that is respectful and is not going to deliberately offend anyone. She explained that one can be thought-provoking without being disrespectful and her purpose with films is to inform people and engage them in thought. She said she tried to take the attitude that the best thing you can do is lay out information and ask people to think of different angles to a story.

Alethea felt that how one is raised may determine how one relays a message, but that it was also interesting to try and understand from different perspectives. Alethea elaborated that as long as one does not try and force one’s point of view, one shows empathy towards another person. This is called tunnganaqtuq in Inuktitut, that is, to be seen as approachable by the audience. It shows respect in how one processes one’s actions to be most acceptable to humanity.

I found it comfortable, or tunnganaqtuq, to navigate through her website and relay back the message she reinforces there that documentary filmmaking is a powerful communication tool to give Inuit a voice in the outside world. I commended her with her use of words and the nominations and awards that honour her (Unikkaat Studios 2012a). The short animation of Lumaajuuq is very much like Alethea herself explaining a traditional story she has heard growing up from those around her (Arnaquq-Baril, 2010). These animations can be viewed on her website (www.unikkaat.com).
Originality

In my interview with Alethea, she elaborated that documentary and any kind of storytelling media are really very powerful tools to do the two things that she tries to do in her career: one is to encourage discussion and dialogue amongst Inuit, and the other is to encourage discussion and dialogue between Inuit and the non-Inuit of the outside world. The Tunniit film has created dialogue and discussion as per Alethea’s testimony referenced above, which describes how a number of brave Elders expressed their knowledge behind the history of Tunniit, custom tattoos. As she has documented in the film, it created controversy between those who experienced residential schooling and other colonization efforts and these brave handful of women who decided to get tattooed themselves with Alethea in their journeys to search for identity. Some of their stories have told that individuals have approached them to share that tattoos can actually be removed nowadays if they ever changed their minds (A. Peter, personal communication 2012)\(^1\).

*Lumaajuq* (Arnaquq-Baril, 2010) is a seven-minute animation film that won two national Canadian film awards. It tells an Inuit legend about a blind boy that was helped by a loon to regain his eyesight. Alethea said it was kind of difficult to keep the story short. The film won Best Canadian Short Drama at the ImagiNative festival (Arnaquq, 2010), followed shortly by a Golden Sheaf award for Best Aboriginal category at the Yorkton film festival (Yorkton Film Festival, 2013). When I viewed this film, I found it calming and dreamlike, like it was being told by an Elder telling the legend. It is creatively told and made with resonating and erotic sounds. It was captivating and the animation is gracefully done. Alethea has been in production

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\(^1\) Aaju Peter was one of the participants interviewed for this project.
teams in other films that can be learned about in particular a feature documentary film titled, *The Experimental Eskimos*.

*The Experimental Eskimos* tells the story of three 12 year old Inuit boys in the early 1960s who were sent to live with white families to be educated in white schools in Ottawa. The boys were subjects of experimental social engineering in an attempt to assimilate them into the dominant society. The Canadian government initiated this experiment without regard to the consequences it would have on the boys and their families and the anticipation of the outcomes. The boys became prominent leaders and “thorns” in the side of the federal government who fought for aboriginal rights in Canada and towards the creation of the Nunavut Territory. These boys who became leaders for Inuit are Peter Ittinuar, Zebedee Nungak, and Eric Tagoona. This documentary went on to win three national and international film awards in 2009 and 2010 (White Pine Pictures Inc., 2013).

Between 2010 and 2012, Alethea’s solid and gifted language of media has earned her six film awards that range from her film features to her achievements in writing and directing. Her professional roles include director, producer, co-producer, and executive producer, as well as writer.

Alethea’s remark that what she tries to do in filmmaking is create discussion of Inuit issues in a respectful way and from a different perspective is an incorporation of her traditional knowledge. Inuit traditionally did not show anger but tended to offset it with humour, just as she has shown in her films. Alethea is now working on *Angry Inuk*, a documentary about protesting against the anti-sealing groups from the Inuit point of view (Unikkaat Studios Inc., 2010). I anticipate that headed by this award-winning young Inuk artist, this film will educate people at the world stage to the point of jolting their thinking from the juxtaposition of perspectives and to
emphasize the contrast between the different views. I also believe it will create decolonizing
eyes, as Inuit explain that they have relied on the subsistence of seal to feed and cloth
themselves, and to survive for thousands of years.

Karliin Aariak

“Tunnganarniq is not just a smile in the face” (K. Aariak, personal communication, 2013).

Inuit knowledge is this way and Qallunaat knowledge is that way, and they don’t
necessarily marry. Well, we’re living that way, we have the wealth of the Inuit
knowledge, but we are also living in the wealth of the Qallunaat knowledge. (K. Aariak, personal communication, 2013).

Miqsurvik – Sewing Room

A collection of sewing machines, sealskin swatches in vibrantly dyed colors neatly
displayed on Karliin’s bulletin board along with sewn pattern samples contributed to a
comfortable atmosphere. There was a life-sized mannequin modeling a white fabric amautilq
trimmed with black bias tape in bold contrast. This is an Inuit women’s parka to carry a baby in
the back pouch with a hood to cover the baby when needed. The style is an akuq known for the
tails that drape on the back and front. This style also eased for more room when a woman had to
crouch down on the land.

Some designs have been created here and many more inceptions of designs will be
created on the cutting and drawing table centered in the middle of the room. The height was just
right for Karliin, if she had to reach further or shift around the corner to pivot her pattern work.
There was a folding rack on a nearby wall that carried several fabrics of different kinds neatly
draped over bars. There were hues of appealing colors and textures ready for the next project. Many notions of needlework tools were handy for the creative designer and seamstress nearby.

**Malikkaat is the Name**

As we warmed up for the interview with a cup of hot tea, I asked Karliin what *Malikkaat* meant and how together with her mother, she chose to name this, “All things Inuit” (motto on signage) store. She explained that *Malikkaat* is a plant, a flower that bloomed in the summer:

It is a beautiful off-white coloured flower that follows the sun like a sunflower does following the sun. So, in the days we have the longest daylight, when it follows the sun, it kind of twirls. In the fall what it ends up doing is twisting in a way that it folds its petals and sort of forms this cone, a cotton cone. At that time, Inuit knew that it was time to prepare for fall and move to a fall camp, so it was like a time teller for Inuit because obviously Inuit lived nomadically and would move to different locations. (K. Aariak, personal communication, 2013).

Karliin explained with compassion that preparing for fall meant the hair of the caribou skin was ready, so these skins were in perfect condition to be crafted into women’s and children’s parkas, pliable enough to sew and wear for the winter. This would include *kamiiit* (boots) and *pualuit* (mitts). The skin would have moulted and short hairs have formed. This phase is also known as *suggaarut* in Inuktitut. The word *suggaarut* was used for the season around the month of August in north Baffin. When the petals opened later in the fall, it was an indicator that the fur of the caribou skin was ready for the hunter’s winter *qulittaq*, a caribou parka.

The *malikkaat* flower, also known as Mountain aven, was a useful seasonal tool. She explained that in different regions, *malikkaat* was mixed with different plants to use for a wick
for the *qulliq*, women’s lamp. So the store carries useful tools that Inuit depended upon to survive. Karliin listed that they carry clothes, tools like *tasiuqtirut* (skin scraper), *kammaksaut* (bottom sole stretcher), specialty *ulu* (women’s knife) for skinning animals, and jewelry in different media—bones, antlers, ivory and stone. When her staff had to explain what they were made of to southerners, they took the opportunity to educate them about fisheries and how involved Inuit are with the environment, naturally. They engaged the people on the level of their knowledge and interest about Inuit culture. This way, the customers were able to develop a greater appreciation for the Inuit culture as they shopped at her arts and crafts store.

Karliin won top prize in a fur fashion competition for a luxurious sealskin jacket that was worn in Montreal in 2009 and the runways of Milan, Italy in 2010 to represent Canada. She has since held fur fashion shows, including in Vancouver, BC, at the 2010 Olympics. Even though she admitted that it was actually the first time a sealskin designer was in Milan for the international fur exhibition, media mentioned it was also the first time Inuit sealskin designers’ garments were modeled. This was significant in the context of the European Union ban on imported seal products.

**Tunnganarniq**

During the interview, Karliin explained that in retail, you have to be *tunnganainnaujariaqaravit* (always be prepared to welcome people) in customer service. Further in this industry, you have to be welcoming, friendly, and approachable. For the artists, you welcome them and embrace their art so you can showcase their pieces:

That is what I find about *tunnganarniq*. It’s not just a smile and say, “Welcome.” It is actually getting to know some of your customers and knowing how to welcome them or
nurture their needs. It works out for both of us where we sell products but they are also in turn learning a little bit about Inuit. (K. Aariak, personal communication, 2013).

We both agreed that the concept of tunnganarniq was like a living element. It is also the atmosphere, things that are tied to culture like approachability and being open. It is a process. This happened naturally for Karliin as she said in *Up Here Magazine*, which featured her as one of the Whiz Kids of the North, “For me a bigger accomplishment than winning a competition is teaching other people about Inuit and how we use the sealskin” (Up Here Publishing, 2010).

Karliin elaborated on her strong connection to her language and culture through family exposure. She felt that all the cultural activities she experienced every day helped her to share what she learned, and still is now reiterating, passing it on. Growing up and having had to adapt going to school knowing math, science, or reading and writing well, this was instilled in her. She wanted her children exposed to that as it was also part of a coping mechanism. She has a firm grasp of her culture and language, and it is cultivated in her contemporary designs of garments.

During the interview, Karliin recollected and shared fond memories of her paternal and maternal grandparents in pristine environments during spring and summer camps. She described the delicious aroma of seal meat simmering over embers and flames as it is fed qijuktaaq, a plant also known as heather. It was during these settings, she remembered certain terms that complemented memorable settings. She often used these words and referred to them as “reiterated knowledge from our Elders.”

Karliin’s personal attachment to seal was evidenced by a contemporary trim of sealskin and fabric pattern which she had sewn on the top of her rubber boots. She insisted that she felt a little naked without sealskin on her apparel. In her store that carries most by-products of animals
that Inuit consume, she clarified one misconception about how Inuit have traditionally and still do use the seal today:

   We eat it. We use the bones, and we still use the claws. For example, there’s jewellery made out of seal claws. There are different things made out of their bones. Seal oil is and was used for the *qulliq*. As Inuit, we use the by-products of what we need. We are very environmentally conscious people. (K. Aariak, personal communication, 2013)

She wanted to be able to enjoy seal meat, and if she were going to eat the meat, she may as well use the seal fur.

   Karliin wanted to see a culturally and linguistically friendly business operating in Nunavut, so she explained that she tries to meet those in her operations. The signs used at the store are in Inuktitut, are just as large or bigger than the English signage, and are done in Inuktitut first. Inuktitut should not be given a secondary place (or “second thought”) in businesses, she advocated. Karliin added further that as a person who felt strongly about it, she believed it is important to try and keep the language as an underlying priority because that is who she is. She hoped other businesses, privatized or not, would take that into consideration and do business, with Inuktitut first in publications because it is still a form of *tunnganarniq*. *Tunnganarniq* means “welcoming” but she added that it also contains exposing and making sure the Inuktitut language is being seen and heard.

   We reached consensus that we both understood as businesspeople that we would like our businesses to reflect our beliefs, who we are, and our pride in our language and culture. Karliin felt even though it was still good to do marketing, ultimately how we treat people and how we welcome and present ourselves to other people, is just as important as doing advertisements. It
was having that personal connection, whether it be with a customer or client bringing in goods. She shared this thought:

*Tunnganarniq* is not about smiling faces to mean you’re welcome. It is more than that. It is being able to listen to artists and customers. You are not going to have every day twice, so business is the same thing. It is constantly evolving and that is because of knowing how to adapt to people’s needs or customers. This translates well in Inuktitut and English, the mindset anyway, that we have to adapt like the Inuit culture has to adapt, a business has to adapt. (K. Aariak, Personal communication, 2013)

Karliin hoped anyone who wanted to start a business would keep that in mind in order to grow, noting that, “Business and entrepreneurship is not working nine to five. You are constantly living, breathing, and eating it. (Personal communication, 2013”

**Finding Commonalities**

“We have the wealth of the Inuit knowledge but we are also living in the wealth of the Qallunaat knowledge. What is the commonality between the two and how can we embrace it?” (K. Aariak, personal communication, 2013).

Karliin explained Inuit were nomadic and moved to different places after different seasons, but today Inuit have houses and bills to pay, as they have adapted that way. She felt in business it was also a matter of recognizing and embracing the traditional Inuit thoughts of living but still being able to pay bills. She provided an analogy that business is like children growing up, and as a parent you want your children not to be obnoxious but firm and grounded as well. She stated a business was like that, that they would learn where that fine balance was and somewhat like you want your kids to be good kids and help others but not overdo it. Karliin felt
that concept could be used in managing business. She also felt that some Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit principles that the Nunavut Government practices applied too for businesses.

Karliin explained that she believed tunnganarniq is the biggest thing and that avatittinnik kamattiarniq (stewardship) and ilippalianginnarniq (life-long learning) were also important. Included in that is adaptation which goes back to evolving; Inuit culture adapted and evolved in the business worldview. She explained that you might find that when operating a particular business, there are other venues or things that people were looking for. So you end up changing your business a little bit to accommodate what is needed out there. Karliin stated that being open as in illinniarniq (learning) to that worldview and again tunnganarniq is applicable to any business whether you are in consumer industry or tourism, it is applicable to anyone and any business. Again Karliin stressed the thought that tunnganarniq is good for business but again being firm has to be an ingredient as you have expenses to pay and a business to run. She added that in the arts and crafts industry, it was kind of harder to do when negotiating prices but that it was another balancing act.

Results

The participants were genuinely excited to be able to contribute what they know and have learned. Even though responses were very positive, some responses touched on other issues of being misinterpreted, which I thought may be related to rippling effects of colonization from the generation before. The participants expressed high respect and admiration for their culture and language and the passion they have to educate the outside world about the Inuit way of life. They relayed that Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ) principles are fine ethics to use to run business practices. Participants also explained the importance of combining their traditional upbringing with western education in their work. Tunnganarniq, the IQ principle of ‘being welcoming’ was
identified as an important element for successful entrepreneurs. It was viewed that developing this atmosphere was positive and important for any establishment.

Inuit entrepreneurs, particularly women who may have nurtured their business to be successful, as they would raise a child, have firmly embraced this basic principle. Leena Evic (2010) describes this principle as a realization which “expands out to all these women from the four corners of the earth, who are cradles of strength, healers of the dispirited community, creators of authentic designs, transformers of social change, innovators of the workforce, caregivers of those in grief, courage builders for the young, keepers of the sacred power” (p. 47).

Figure 1 illustrates some elements of IQ I have come to understand with my fellow business people of Iqaluit:

![Diagram of Inuit principles vital to the entrepreneur](image)

Figure 1. Diagram of Inuit principles vital to the entrepreneur

Although Inuit entrepreneurs may tacitly incorporate their traditional knowledge in their business, I think they are creating a new form of a business culture. The participants remembered their childhood memories in order to draw connections with their business practices. Support systems were vital in business planning. The fond memories of support systems in their
childhood were from their role models who gave the words of advice that are part of their foundation. If there were a new Inuit corporate culture, as I think we collectively and tentatively found in this project, I have thought that it is based on the influx of traditional knowledge and western education combined that make it work for the entrepreneurs. They have integrated both cultures and their education to create new thinking. Participants mentioned their childhood memories of being taught and the words of advice they have received from Elders in their lives. Even as young as they were, they had dreams and role models to become what they are today. With these elements in place provided with support systems, they were able to get where they are through trials and persistence. Business plans required support and confidence from people or family to have belief in your aspirations. The community and economic development initiatives have been part of this support system for some.

Nunavut youth can gain from their message that with self-determination, vision, and hard work, they can do it too. Participants’ stories could be incorporated into the Aulajaaqtut strand of high school career and program planning modules and shared at school career fairs. This study supported the Government of Nunavut’s mandate to base Inuit societal values by encouraging communities to be self-reliant and be more economically active (Tamapta, 2009-2013).

Discussion

Inuit underwent unrelenting colonization over the past three or four generations. For example, personal experiences are told amongst family about the dog slaughtering in the fifties. As other minorities in the world were affected similarly by the ‘dominant society’ over a longer length of time, I find Paulo Freire’s words very relevant: “No pedagogy which is truly liberating can remain distant from the oppressed by treating them as unfortunates and by presenting for
their emulation models from among the oppressors. The oppressed must be their own example in the struggle for their redemption” (Freire, 1970, p. 54).

Even though Freire was referring to education, I have applied it to the business entrepreneurship because a business is a form of identity text and that an aboriginal business could possibly be a force for decolonization if approached with IQ principles equally relevant as profit (S. McAuley, personal communication 2013). Inuit have to be the ones to empower each other to overcome the pain as we have felt it from our fathers and mothers and have felt discrimination ourselves in the past and even today occasionally. We have to do this for our children and grandchildren. We have our journeys to give us our voice.

Before we got there, we as the oppressed had to realize we were colonized and some residential school survivors even indoctrinated in their way of thinking. Linda Smith noted from her readings of Fanon the three levels or phases the oppressed go through. First, there is a phase of proving that intellectuals have been assimilated into the culture of the occupying power. Second comes a period of disturbance and the need for the intellectuals to remember who they actually are, a time for remembering the past. In the third phase the intellectuals seek to awaken the people, to realign themselves with the people and to produce a revolutionary and national literature (Smith, 1999, p. 70).

John Amagoalik assigned responsibility for change and frustration not with the white people but the government. There were a lot of feelings of helplessness, of not being able to do anything about it, because everything was already written down in law, and that was just the way things were. There was a feeling of frustration. It was in the early sixties that we started to feel anger, not for the first time, but we started to express it openly (McComber, 2007, p. 42). As that generation started to receive a Western education, they became the emerging leaders who would
start the land claims negotiations with the federal government in the early seventies. Much has been documented about that era as shown in Alethea’s involvement in film production of, *The Experimental Eskimos*. That generation also developed influential power to turn things around at the national level.

I found strength in reading Sheila Watt-Cloutier (2010) about some of the cultural loss we have endured. She stated, “Loss gives you a sense of perspective; it shapes and makes you. I don’t want to intellectualize loss, and you certainly must grieve when you need to, but learning to continue and be strong in the face of those curveballs is part of the larger picture” (p. 165).

Even as entrepreneurs, we have been trying to strengthen and revitalize our language and culture because we have felt that sense of helplessness and frustration. We try to turn it around because the richness of it does not deserve to be looked down upon. We have made efforts where we now have practised through combining our knowledge and education at the corporate level. Our businesses can thrive based on what we learn and try at the economic level. An ingredient referred to earlier as ‘identity text’ is being part of the picture where personal investments and ownerships are made and active learning kicks in. This is backed up by one Inuit principle of *ilippallianginnarniq*, being life-long learners. Change has been good.

Mary Simon was an influential leader as President of Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK), the national Inuit association, giving Inuit a national voice behind the *First Canadians, Canadians First: The National Strategy of Inuit Education*, and to its launch in 2011. She explained that the power of parental involvement in education is very important. I found that the participants had mothers or influential individuals as strong role models and that they showed them women could do anything. As a mother, the late Martha Michael expressed her feelings about giving up her children to full-time schooling. She encouraged all mothers to spend as much quality time as
they could with their children before school and further (M. Michael, personal communication, 2012). The strategy has stressed that parental involvement will be essential to support this implementation.

I also found in my theoretical readings that many of the theories developed were very similar to Inuit philosophy, to be humanitarians in order to survive for thousands of years. *Tunnganarniq* is an ingredient used for efforts to reverse dehumanizing efforts, as in Freire’s conception that learners are not empty-minded but are co-creators of knowledge (1970). I also add the importance of *ilippallianginnarniq*, which means life-long learning in Inuktitut, that bell hooks (2010) wrote about and supports in her critical thinking work.

One element of practical wisdom that comes with critical thinking that is mindful and aware is the on-going experience of wonder. The ability to be awed, excited, and inspired by ideas is a practice that radically opens the mind…effectively using knowledge in and outside the classroom we develop an organic relationship to critical thinking and we use the resources it brings in every sphere or our lives. (p. 187-188)

**Learning does not stop.**

Inuit women entrepreneurs in Iqaluit, Nunavut, have made strides towards equalizing power structures through socioeconomic development, as they fostered traditional knowledge in their corporate practice. This balance has created an emerging, new business culture, as they connected between the self-determination one requires to become a successful entrepreneur and that which contributes to a more balanced approach between the two cultures, Inuit and Western. One interviewee participant from this research described it as a balancing act of having the wealth of Inuit knowledge and the wealth of Western knowledge; one subsumes the other in an embrace. Successful entrepreneurs can pass on their self-determination that they fought for, for a
more balanced or equitable power between the two cultures as contributions to future business owners and/or executive officers. The programs are in place already and this will enrich those programs.

I leave you with an inspiration from Paulo Freire. Likewise, the oppressors must also be willing to rethink their way of life and to examine their role in oppression if future liberation is to occur; “those who authentically commit themselves to the people must re-examine themselves constantly” (Freire, 1970. p. 60).

Only recently have women entrepreneurs been given opportunities to get together to share their common ground. Getting together has been rewarding and helpful even for the few of us as we shared our journeys. Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada (2013) opened an opportunity for business women to connect with each other through a website called, “Inuit Women in Business Network.” I had the pleasure of participating in the working group to plan what it should look like and its purpose. This is a push that Inuit ways of being could be incorporated into all aspects of society, including the private business. I found the interviews to be gratifying and encouraging as I finally connected with local business colleagues. It was essential and influential to have bridged this gap. The findings will help show people to be active and responsible participants in the modern economy.
References


