

Stories of Resurfacing: The University and Aboriginal Knowledge

Adam Pulpan
York University

Mina Rumbolt
University of Prince Edward Island

This article originates from the attempts of Adam Pulpan, a graduate student whose research dealt with traditional Inuit knowledge education in a particular Inuit community, to have Mina Rumbolt, an Inuit woman and teacher from that same community, admitted to his thesis examination committee. The fact that Rumbolt did not have a formal university degree became a hindrance to this process. Both found it intriguing that university-based academics studying Aboriginal Knowledge, culture, and ways of knowing could appropriate knowledge, write about their findings, (re)present them to other Western-based academics, and earn doctorates in the subject, whereas an Aboriginal person living his or her life through Aboriginal Knowledge, culture, and ways of knowing are often not similarly recognized for his or her knowledge. Although Rumbolt was eventually accepted for the defense in recognition of her expertise in her own Inuit culture, the process exposed some of the underlying assumptions, philosophies, and foundations of academe. We examine the tenets of university-based research of Aboriginal communities and the subsequent values placed on formal academic knowledge over Aboriginal ways of knowing. This article, a collaboration between a university-based researcher and an Aboriginal community member, explores diverse stories that arose from instances where Aboriginal communities and University institutions collided. Although the accounts represented center on a few of our personal experiences, we believe that these stories, when shared, have the power to reveal truths. By sharing these narratives with others, we hope to show how personal stories can cause underlying values to resurface.

The truth about stories is that that's all we are. (Thomas King, 2003, p. 32)

The surface story was not as important as the underlying examples of cultural protocols broken, values negated, small tests failed and key people ignore. (Linda Smith, 1999, p. 3)

It takes a lot of work to delete the emotional and passionate self from story, to de-humanize story into "theory." So we don't do it. We humanize theory by fusing humanity's need for common direction-theory-with story. (Lee Maracle, 1992, p. 89)

The personal stories and subsequent questions with which this article engages emerged during Adam Pulpan's (a non-Inuit university student whose graduate research was situated in an Inuit community) attempts to have Mina Rumbolt, an Inuk teacher and mother from that same community, admitted to his master's thesis examination committee. This process became difficult as Mina did not have a university graduate degree.

Questions about the foundations of research and the types of knowledge valued by institutions arose in our conversations and stories. This article began as a personal dialogue over thousands of kilometers between Toronto and Sanikiluaq,¹ an Inuit community located on the Belcher Islands in Nunavut. During our conversations the stories that we shared bridged these two distant areas and became the middle ground where we worked. Although we speak from different positions and have two distinct voices, we collaborated on this journal article to share these stories with others. Although the accounts represented here center on a few of our personal experiences, we believe that even small stories when shared have the power to reveal truths. By sharing these narratives with others, we hope to show how personal stories can cause underlying values to resurface.

Like Maracle (1992), we also believe that

There is a story in every line of theory, not in our capacity to theorize. It seems a waste of words to dispassionately delete character from plot line, tension and conclusion. It takes a great deal of work to erase people from theoretical discussion. (p. 88)

We begin our story when Mina and Adam met in Sanikiluaq.²

Adam: Who is the Expert?

As a non-Inuit, white researcher I feel the ever-present need to reevaluate my research and research methods. My past research in Resolute Bay, Nunavut involved studying hydrology and climatology. Working with instruments designed to gather data on changing weather and water patterns did not require me to think about research in terms of its power or colonialist history. During my four-month stay, I was fortunate to spend time traveling the Arctic lands and sea with friends from the local hamlet, which made me appreciate Inuit culture and life in the Arctic.³ As a new teacher at the time, I was interested in the role of Inuit culture in a Euro-Canadian school system and was advised by a number of sources that the hamlet of Sanikiluaq had an excellent community-centered school. Three years later, when starting my MEd, I was invited by various Sanikiluaq community representatives such as the community council and school principals to do research on how traditional Inuit knowledge is passed from Elders to students through the Sanikiluaq school (Pulpan, 2006). At this point I realized that I needed to rethink my role in the research and reflect on my responsibility as an invited researcher to the Sanikiluaq community.

During the few months that I lived in Sanikiluaq, Mina became an important contributor to the research, and a lasting friendship developed between us. As an Inuit teacher in the school, Mina is familiar with the community outside the school walls in addition to the people within them. Mina's mother Louisa is a respected Elder who works in the school occasionally. Louisa was also an important contributor to the research. She

told stories of past hunting experiences on the islands and the current importance of passing on this sort of traditional Inuit knowledge to students in the school. Mina acted as a translator between English and Inuktitut to facilitate conversations during my thesis research. It is important to note Mina's intimate insight into the research area. Mina's knowledge of her community was based on life experience and connections with the land and its people. Although our story begins with the struggle to have Mina recognized by the university as a knowledgeable expert in Inuit education, we found that even in the remote Inuit community of Sanikiluaq, Inuit Knowledge was often devalued by southern institutions.

Mina: Our Own Knowledge

I was named Mina after my Atsa (meaning aunt in Inuktitut). It is traditional Inuit practice to name babies after someone in the community. Rumbolt is my last name, but my maiden name is Ippak. When I was born, I was given a first name and a last name, unlike my parents and grandparents who were not given last names at birth. I was also given the name Opik, which means arctic owl. Today I am proud of my name Opik. I was born the year the government stopped labeling Inuit with tags. My mother still has the tags that belonged to my father and my older brother and sister. It was only during my later years that I learned about colonialism and how it began not too long ago.

Apart from the time that I spent in residential school in another community far away, I grew up on the lands of the Belcher Islands. I am a mother and an elementary school teacher in my community of over 700 people. I am married to Allan Rumbolt, and we have a son named Garry. My job as a teacher allows me to learn every day, and it allows me to be fully active in our community. The name of the community itself, Sanikiluaq, is the name of my grandfather who lived here three generations ago. Sanikiluaq was well known, especially for how fast he could run. It is said that Sanikiluaq could run so fast that he could follow running rabbits and kick them. We could share many more tales of my grandfather Sanikiluaq, but the stories we share here are others. They are stories that have underlying values that would remain unheard by most people if articles such as this were not written. Such stories continue to go unheard in many Inuit and other Aboriginal communities.

Qaujimajangit⁴ is the word Inuit use to describe our knowledge or knowing. A similar word, Qaujimajatuqangit,⁵ refers to our way of knowing things that we have known for a long time and things passed down to us from our Elders. I have always been interested in the Inuit ways and Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit. I feel that I have lived through Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit, but I also believe that I have more to learn and that I have a responsibility to pass on the disappearing knowledge to younger generations. I have a story that highlights how Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit is not always recognized as important knowledge.

Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit and the Doctor

One day my mother and I went to the health center in our community. My mother is proud of her past as a midwife, and she has the knowledge of many traditional medicines. She has put her knowledge into practice many times. She helped deliver babies and offered medical attention and advice to our community. My mother has a sound knowledge of medicines and she used it to help others. She is alive today as a result of her knowledge of the traditional Inuit ways and her practice of them throughout her life. This knowledge has helped the Inuit for many years.

My mother was also a hunter on the land even though she was a woman. Her gender did not stop her from hunting. Some of the Elders here still remember that she was a good hunter, and my mother enjoys talking about these things of her past.

One day we went into the local medical center to talk to a doctor who had come to our community from the South. Sometimes we call people from the South southerners or Qallunaat,⁶ the Inuit name for white people. Because he was a southerner and did not speak Inuktitut, I acted as translator between my mother and the doctor. My mother spoke of her knowledge of medicine with this doctor. She is interested in traditional medicines, so she mentioned that she had taken a traditional remedy, but the doctor said that it would not help her. He said that only his knowledge could help her. I did not translate what the doctor said because I did not want to hurt her. This is an example of how the knowledge of our community is not always recognized. Why cannot both the knowledge of the doctor and the Qaujimajatuqangit my mother has gained during her life be seen as important?

Legitimizing Knowledge

Is Mina's story an isolated account of misinformed doctor? For us there are underlying values in this story that come to the surface. It is a story about what is viewed as legitimate knowledge. If one were to dismiss the doctor's knowledge as nonsense, one would be dismissing the doctor as well: a person and a person's knowledge of life are innately tied. Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit is strongly tied to Inuit life. Although Louisa has successfully lived her life through Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit, by dismissing the Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit of an Inuit Elder as unimportant, the doctor also dismissed Louisa as being less knowledgeable and lesser than himself.

The Nunavut Government states that Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit "embraces all aspects of traditional Inuit culture including values, worldview, language, social organization, knowledge, life skills, perceptions and expectations." Inuit scholars Evaloardjuk, Irniq, Puqiqnak, and Seroak (2004) helped compile a book of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit from many Inuit across Nunavut. They explain, "Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit means knowledge that has been passed on to us by our ancestors, things that we have always known, things crucial to our survival—patience and

resourcefulness" (p. i). Rasmussen (2001) points out that the "print-based, age-separated, isolation-tank form of instruction favoured by Euro-America has not necessarily been the universal model for cultivating wisdom throughout human history" (p. 101). For example, Inuit did not use a print-based school education, but obviously cultivated successful means of passing on wisdom for living in an Arctic environment for thousands of years. Stories were one method of passing on this knowledge.

When sharing stories like the one about Louisa and the doctor, it is apparent that Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit is not always recognized by southern institutions and their representatives. The story that first linked Mina and Adam started with an invitation for Adam to do research in Sanikiluaq and continued with sincere attempts to rethink the underlying assumptions of research in an Inuit community.

Adam: "I Make no Pretense"

Adam: I have to admit the history of university research and Inuit communities is embarrassing.

Mina: Yes. That's true. But it's not all bad right? (Personal conversation, November, 28, 2006)

As Mina and I spoke to each other, we recognized that the relations between university institutions and Aboriginal communities have an unsettling history. Research with Indigenous peoples has been fraught with issues of power, appropriation, and mistrust. As a non-Native researcher representing a university, I recognize that research is an act and position that should be understood historically, institutionally, and self-reflectively.

As one of many non-Native researchers, I "work in contexts where our predecessors have violated trust, misrepresented, and declared reality for others" (Haig-Brown 2001, p. 21). As a researcher of Maori descent, Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) emphasizes that while growing up in her community, "stories about research and particularly about researchers were intertwined with stories about all other forms of colonization and injustice" (p. 3). Research and its uses have a dark history of appropriating Indigenous Knowledge and denying the right of self-determination.

As an example of appropriation, Smith (1999) describes how researchers who were studying the infiltration of environmental pollutants into breast milk sought to measure the amounts of heavy metals in Inuit mothers' breast milk. Researchers traveled to a northern community and extracted samples of breast milk from nursing mothers. These samples were analyzed in a laboratory, and the results were written up. Years later, when community members were reminded about this study, it was found that no one in the community had heard from the researchers again or seen the results that had been published in an academic journal. This example of appropriation demonstrates how research has served to take knowledge, information, and experiences from communities for academic

purposes with little regard for the benefits or effects experienced by people in the community of study.

I make no pretenses. With my research I join a long list of white, Western-schooled academics studying in Aboriginal spaces that are not their own. My hope is that my work will be added to the list of research that is both "respectful and useful" (Smith, 1999; Haig-Brown & Archibald, 1996) to those involved in the research and that my work is of benefit to the community (Inuit Tapirisat, 1998). My role and responsibility to do respectful research are something that I take seriously. As a non-Native, I have made serious consideration to "acknowledge the oppressive nature of much previous research with First Nations people and ... avoid similar pitfalls" (Haig-Brown, 1992, p. 97). Although I compiled and wrote my thesis research, I cannot claim to be an expert on Inuit culture or traditional knowledge as I am not an Inuk and have not lived my life on Inuit land. I consider the experts in my research area to be the community members from whom I learned: those people who have lived their lives in the Sanikiluaq community and surrounding lands. Bishop and Glynn (1999), in another Indigenous context, state, "if one lesson is clear from the history of our country, it is that imposition of a model of change from outside of the experiences, understandings, and aspirations of the community group is doomed to failure" (p. 12). As a researcher I could not agree more.

Accounts of researchers appropriating Aboriginal Knowledge have led Indigenous scholars to start their own research agendas from Aboriginal perspectives (Smith, 2002; Bishop, 1996). The benefit of Indigenous scholars to their communities is clear in that they can speak about and from Aboriginal contexts.

Increasing numbers of Indigenous academics and researchers have begun to address social issues within the wider framework of self-determination, decolonization and social justice. This burgeoning international community of Indigenous scholars and researchers is talking more widely about Indigenous research, Indigenous research protocols, and Indigenous methodologies. (Smith, 1999, p. 4)

Recognizing the exploitive, oppressive nature of some research does not mean that non-Native researchers cannot be of use to Indigenous communities (Bishop, 1996). Aboriginal researcher Charles Menzies (2001) also believes that "non-Aboriginal social science researchers can continue to research and write about Indigenous peoples" (p. 21) if the researchers are willing to work in Aboriginal protocols and Aboriginal control. Maori researcher Russell Bishop (1996) also believes in the potential usefulness of non-Native researchers. By positioning oneself in a Maori research agenda, also termed Kaupapa Maori, non-Maori researchers can contribute to Maori research interests. Walker (Bishop, 1996) states that in New Zealand,

Maori as a minority ... cannot achieve justice or resolve their grievances without Pakeha [Maori description of people of non-Maori descent] support. For this reason, Pakeha are as much a part of the process of social transformation in the post-colonial era as radical and activist Maori. (p. 18)

Both Mina and I believe that the same notion holds true for Canadian Inuit.

The Inuit Tapirisat of Canada (1998), a group formed to look after Inuit political interests, note that non-Inuit can conduct respectful research in Nunavut. The Inuit Tapirisat document *Negotiating Research Relationships* states, "Research has the potential to be very valuable both to researchers and the communities involved" (p. 2). I believe that if the research brings no benefit to the community involved, I should not be doing such work there. A direct educational research objective of Nunavut is to "provide leadership in developing, facilitating, and promoting traditional knowledge, science, research and technology as a resource for the well-being of people in Nunavut" (Nunavut Research Institute, 1997, p. 7). This objective is inclusive of both Inuit and non-Inuit researchers.

Celia Haig-Brown, a non-Aboriginal researcher whose work focuses on conducting respectful research with First Nations peoples in Canada, and Jo-ann Archibald (1996), an Aboriginal university-based scholar, collaboratively write that "knowledge gains power as it is shared. This sharing of knowledge and understanding has been and still is an important cultural responsibility" (p. 251). Researchers like me, who hope to conduct what Haig-Brown and Archibald call respectful and useful research in Indigenous communities cannot hope to achieve this unless their methods reflect a reconsideration of these outstanding issues and a genuine concern for the culture, the people, and their knowledge. As a non-Inuit researcher and an outsider to the community, it is important that I understand, define, and make clear what my role and intentions are (Smith, 1999). It was the consideration of my role as a researcher that helped to form the methods of my research.

Precautionary measures such as checking back with members of the community with a one-page write-up of similarities found in people's answers helped to ensure that I was not making any assumptions about the knowledge gained. Sending copies of my work to various members of the community and asking for feedback ensured that what I wrote was not out of context. Mina was one such community member who spent countless hours reading over the research to ensure that what was written reflected her experiences as an Inuk teacher and mother in the community. As a concluding step in this process, I asked that Mina be placed on the examining committee for my thesis. Although I believed that I had changed my research methodology to be respectful and useful, it was at this point that some underlying assumptions of what is considered knowledge by university institutions and who holds the credentials to that knowledge began to appear.

The fact that Mina did not have a university graduate degree became a hindrance in this process. The university requirements for an examination committee stipulated that all members must be faculty of a university or must have earned a doctorate in their respective subject areas. Although Mina was finally accepted for the defence in recognition of her expertise in her own Inuit culture, the process allowed some underlying assumptions, philosophies, and foundations of academe to surface. Both Mina and I began to ask ourselves some serious questions. What types of knowledge are valued by institutions? Who are the holders of these forms of knowledge?

Mina: "You Can't Learn Inuit Qaujimaqatuqangit in University"

I thought it was a little unfair that I could not help Adam directly while he tried to challenge the university examination policies. It was difficult to persuade the university to allow me to sit on his examination committee. Although I do understand that you need to have people with degrees on the examining committee, I felt there was something unfair about this. Not many Inuit have titles or PhDs yet. Because not many Inuit have these degrees, can you ever have Inuit sit on such a committee? I think you need someone from the community who really knows what the research topic is about. There is a difference between someone who knows the community and someone who reads about it. I think it is a good idea to have Inuit on an examination committee of research in Inuit communities. Inuit Elders or anyone my age could sit on that committee.

I felt worried when Adam was trying to have me appointed to the committee along with the university professors. I thought that if they decided I could sit with the committee, I was going to look so small, and I would probably feel just as small because I am not a professor. Although Adam kept reassuring me that I had a right to participate, I knew that it might be impossible and that I would have no power to back him up if the university said No. We talked about this and shared stories about research and Aboriginal Knowledge. In these conversations and stories, similar themes kept creeping to the surface.

Resurfacing of Research Institutions

The far-reaching control of institutional knowledge over local knowledge became visible when Mina thought she might feel small while sitting next to professors on an examination committee, even though she was an expert in the research area of her culture, community, and school. Frequent telephone conversations between Mina and me continued for three years in addition to the two visits Mina made to Toronto after the research was completed. Through our recurrent conversations, ideas began to emerge about what we wanted other people to know about our experiences. The concept of *resurfacing* took on a dual meaning during one of our conversations and later became a theme of this article.

Mina: It seems like these stories all have something in common—these issues of the values attached to Inuit knowledge keep coming up every now and then.

Adam: You mean how Inuit knowledge is not always recognized?

Mina: Yes exactly.

Adam: You know, with Nunavut it really should be the other way around. Isn't Nunavut supposed to be built on Inuit values?

Mina: Yes, that's how it should be. The Elders are often asking on the radio why we don't have [degrees] showing the wisdom we have. Everyone talks about how important Elders are in Nunavut. Even the government says that Elders are important because they are wise. But sometimes they are not recognized for what they know. Why is that?

Adam: You know, it seems to be only on the surface that these issues are dealt with. They only change on the surface.

Mina: But they are not really changed.

Adam: That's what I mean. These issues are only dealt with on the surface. But underneath they are often left the same. That's important for people to know—that it sometimes looks like a resurfacing of an old building, but what is inside remains the same.

Mina: Yeah I like that. That's a good way of thinking of it—the idea of resurfacing.

Adam: These same issues of power keep coming up in the stories that we tell. At the same time we need to change not just the surface, but beneath it as well. Change our views of knowledge from the inside. (Personal communication, January 11, 2007)

This concept of resurfacing took on a double meaning as we talked. In one sense we have the resurfacing of institutional assumptions and values that continually emerge where they can be seen and felt again. Inuit have a word *Nuigialiqqituq*,⁷ which is similar to this concept of resurfacing. This word means to appear again or to appear more. In another sense of resurfacing, Mina identifies that institutions such as the government often show an outward appearance of being accepting and accommodating of Aboriginal Knowledge and Aboriginal people. This appearance is often merely a superficial change—a so-called new skin or new surface to an otherwise unchanged institutional value system. Just as one can resurface an old building with a new coat of paint, adding a new outward exterior to an already established institution can also be conceptualized as resurfacing.

We present our story of struggle with the university institution as an example of this concept of resurfacing or *Nuigialiqqituq*. A university that has outward markers of being a place where Aboriginal Knowledge is valued, indicators such as an Aboriginal Services Department, Aboriginal initiative access program, even campus Pow Wows, found it difficult to accept an Aboriginal person as an expert in Aboriginal Knowledge because she did not have a graduate degree.

This difference between outward appearances and inner policies highlights an essentially unchanged institutional bias that has remained hidden while these other changes have taken place on the surface. The appearance of the university as a place that values Aboriginal people and Knowledge seemed to be a mere resurfacing of the university: an altered outward image of the university as a space inclusive of Aboriginal Knowledge. We both find it intriguing that white university-based academics

studying Aboriginal Knowledge, culture, and ways of knowing can appropriate knowledge, write about their findings, represent them to other Western-based academics, and earn doctorates in the subject. In contrast, the knowledge of an Aboriginal person living his or her life through Aboriginal Knowledge, culture, and ways of knowing is often not similarly validated unless that person has an institutional degree. How can university institutions still have these biases imbedded in them today?

Asad (1973) offers an answer in his assertion that the institutional research of "culture" emerged along with colonialism. University institutions have been built on colonial assumptions of research and non-Western cultures.

The colonial power structure made the object of anthropological study accessible and safe—because of its sustained physical proximity between the observing European and the living non-European became a practical possibility. It made possible the kind of human intimacy upon which anthropological fieldwork is based, but ensured that intimacy should be one-sided and provisional. (p. 17)

These early principles of research on which the university was founded, the specification of who is the researcher and who is researched, still remain imbedded in institutional processes. Over time, researchers have often viewed the subjects of their studies as precisely that: subjects. These *subjects* begin to look more like *others* in the eyes of some academics. Edward Said's (1985) concept of what Western researchers and academics conceptualized as *Other* and what was then subsequently represented to a Westernized audience is described as *Orientalism*. It follows that research was used as a tool to describe "exotic cultures" that were clearly differentiated from European standards.

When non-Inuit researchers conduct research in Inuit communities, Said's (1985) notions of the Occident studying and having authority over the Orient are translated to southern institutions studying and ruling over the north. Is the purpose of research still to take Aboriginal Knowledge and represent it to a Western audience? (Haig-Brown & Archibald, 1996). The story Smith (1999) retold about breast milk being taken by researchers for the purposes of their own research is an example of such appropriation based on the principles of Orientalism. The results of the study were for the benefit of accumulating knowledge for university scholars living in the south, and the northern Inuit were seen as subjects of study rather than equal partners against world pollution.

Similar notions of Orientalism resurface in the overarching story that we are telling here: the university found it difficult to allow an Inuit community member to examine the integrity of a thesis based in that community, while allowing a Western researcher to earn the degree while being examined by Western outside scholars. Although these accounts are of isolated incidents, they share a common theme of underlying values

resurfacing. Sanikiluaq has its own stories of such misrepresentation and appropriation.

Mina: "They Just Took it"

I can tell a story from my own community of how universities used to view Inuit. Back before we became a community, people lived nomadic lifestyles all over the island in various hunting areas. During this time researchers were always coming here to visit and study us. Some researchers came and asked us to build a kayak for them. Doing what they asked, some of the Inuit men made the kayak frame, and the women cleaned the skins and sewed them onto the frame. Then the kayak was taken and shipped out, and we never got anything for it, even though kayaks take a long time to make. A lot of things were taken by researchers for universities and museums. If someone asked us to make something, we would immediately do it and give away what we had made without a problem. So Qallunaat would take advantage of us because they could get what they wanted. Another example was my mother's eiderskin Amauti. An Amauti is a coat that is mainly used by women for carrying their babies or infants around. It takes a lot of skill, patience, and a long time to make. We have a picture of my mother in the Amauti with my older brother on her back. One day a researcher came and took the Amauti right when she was using it. This man asked for it, so she took it off and gave it away. We have no idea in which university or museum it ended up. My mother says that she always thinks about it; she wonders where it is now. This incident happened not too long ago, around the 1970s.

Resurfacing of old Research Principles

Mina's story highlights an important point. If members of the Inuit community are not included in the full research process, are researchers not simply taking knowledge just as other researchers took kayaks and Amautis from the people of the Belcher Islands? When a researcher such as Adam goes back to his or her university and only has Qallunaat on his exam committee, these old principles of research are resurfacing where items, customs, and knowledge are taken from Inuit communities to be showcased before a Western audience. Where do these assumptions of university practice have their roots?

If we look deeper into the history of academic research, we find stories of Inuit people who were taken from the north like specimens to be showcased before a southern audience. The story of Minik, a young Inuk from Greenland who was shipped along with his family members to the United States, comes to mind. In 1897 Robert Peary, an early Arctic explorer, brought a meteorite home to New York from the Arctic. Minik, his family, and another Inuit family were also brought back by Peary. Like the meteorite Minik and his family were transported to the south from the Arctic, and they were literally displayed as artifacts of Peary's conquest of

the north. The Inuit family was taken to the American Museum of Natural History for the audience's viewing pleasure. When Peary's boat arrived in New York, "twenty thousand people visited the vessel to see the long-sought meteorite and to get a glimpse of the Eskimos. The authorities were prepared for the crowd—admission was by ticket only" (Harper, 1986, p. 29).

After arriving in the US, Minik's father Qisuk died of tuberculosis, and Minik asked that his father be given a proper burial. The museum provided a ceremony and fake burial, while in secret Qisuk's body was stripped of its flesh and his skeleton displayed in the American Museum of Natural History. When the remaining adult Inuit in Minik's family later died as well, young Minik was ironically adopted by the same museum curator who had mounted Qisuk's skeleton. The orphaned Minik later discovered that his father's remains were exhibited in the museum and demanded their return. The museum refused his request, and Minik died in 1918 without ever having his wishes fulfilled.

Minik's story provides an early example of the foundations on which research practice is built, and it gives a glimpse into the underlying principles that still resurface in university institutions today. Qisuk's skeleton was displayed above a plaque reading "The Polar Eskimo": a museum exhibit to showcase "a skeleton of a distant people" to a Western audience. Said's (1978) notion of Orientalism is clearly visible here in that Peary, representing Western power, could "conquer" these distant lands and their people not only by studying them, but also by bringing back live specimens to research and showcase in Western institutions of study. Whereas at one time Amautis, kayaks, and people were the artifacts taken for the benefit of the university, today knowledge is often the loot plundered. Whereas a ticket was once needed to see the spectacle, today a university degree provides similar access to view, discuss, and conquer appropriated knowledge.

This is not to say that university institutions and Aboriginal Knowledge are mutually exclusive entities or that institutions cannot be changed to become more inclusive and respectful of Aboriginal Knowledge. After much pressure from Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal allies such as Kenn Harper (1986), Qisuk's body was returned to his homeland and given a proper burial in 1993, nearly 100 years after he was taken. Institutional change often happens slowly through great struggle.

Allies for Change

We both acknowledge those people before us whose efforts to change universities have helped us, as well as those who will continue our struggle into the future. Numerous Aboriginal scholars and non-Aboriginal allies are working in institutional spaces and continue to reshape how universities work with Aboriginal communities and Aboriginal Know-

ledge.⁸ People such as these have cleared enough institutional space to allow us to speak today.

In our letters to deans at the university, we made sure to note that precedence for having an Aboriginal committee member without a formal university graduate degree admitted to an examination had been set at other universities in Canada. We cited one case that occurred in 1997 when Chief Simon Baker was admitted to the defence committee of Jo-ann Archibald. Baker did not have a formal doctorate in education, but was admitted due to his cultural expertise in the defence topic. Jo-ann Archibald went on to become the Associate Dean of Indigenous Education and Research at the University of British Columbia. Archibald's and Baker's efforts to change an institution from within provided a map that guided our own efforts. Their story helped to change how we think and in turn has shaped our story.

Our personal struggle to have an Inuit person without a graduate degree recognized as an expert resurfaced an institutional bias that was so ingrained that it took numerous meetings, letter-writing, persistence, and dispute to change the committee selection process. Mina was formally admitted to the examination committee as a "special external" examiner in recognition of her ability to contribute to the examination as non-Inuit academic scholars could not. Although the committee consisted of well-respected faculty, Mina was the only person on the committee with first-hand knowledge of teaching Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit in the Sanikiluaq community. As a result of our efforts, how the university selects committee members with Aboriginal Knowledge and ways of knowing was changed, and we hope that others will follow in the path that we made. Although other Aboriginal groups may have had a chance to participate in changing universities, the precedent we set was important to us because Canadian Inuit have for the most part been excluded from the dialogue of change in these institutions.

We offer another story from Sanikiluaq that sheds light on how academic credentials can undermine Inuit Elders' knowledge of their own lands. Degrees, which are the institutional equivalent of recognized wisdom at the community level, are often appropriately referred to as *papers* in Sanikiluaq. The fact that Inuit Elders feel that their knowledge is not recognized in *paper* may seem like a misguided notion of what degrees entail. However, Mina's story gives evidence that Elders' knowledge is being undermined by *papers*. This story is short, yet it highlights many of the underlying assumptions of academic credentialism that reach far beyond the university walls.

Mina: Where Are Our Papers?

The principal of our school, who is not Inuit but does a lot of work for our community, had heard through the local radio that Inuit community members had been out on the land collecting eggs from Arctic birds. He

asked for a few eggs to be brought to the school so that we could display the various eggshells in our local school museum. People responded and happily brought in the diverse types of eggs. For those students who do not have the opportunity to leave the community and explore the surrounding wilderness, teachers could point out the eggs and say, "This one is a seagull egg, and this is a ptarmigan egg." Our community did not think that it was a big deal because they agreed that it would be a good idea to share this knowledge with the children because many of them did not have the opportunity to go out on the land. We did not, however, realize that it was a big deal for our wildlife officer.⁹ After the eggs were delivered, our principal was charged by the wildlife officer for breaking a law involving the collection of eggs by non-Inuit. Although we explained that Inuit had collected the eggs for our community museum run by an Inuit community organization, the principal was still charged and we later learned that he had to appear in court. Although the eggshells were already identified by our Elders and other Inuit community members who collected them, they were confiscated and flown to a southern research location for "proper" identification.

Although the legal charges against our principal were later dropped, the community was upset with the action that the wildlife officer had taken. Why did they ship the eggs to a university? Ironically, when the eggshells were flown south, the university was unable to identify them all. The Inuit who had collected the eggs knew how to identify them and the birds that had laid them. Was our knowledge overlooked because our Inuit did not have papers? This upset some of the Elders. What about Inuit knowledge of the land? Where is this recognized? If they say that Inuit Elders, who have lived their life on the land, are wise and important to the Inuit community, then why do these types of things happen?

Institutionalization of Knowledge

How can marginalized groups participate in the dialogue of legitimizing knowledge? We believe that there are ways of shifting the dynamics of power so that excluded groups can be included in the confines of who is heard and whose knowledge is deemed to be true knowledge. This shift must be made from within the university by those who have power to make it. An example of such change is offering degree programs to Inuit living in Nunavut. Community-based teacher education programs have been running in First Nations communities in southern Canada. McGill University in Montreal, for example, has provided a special Bachelor of Education degree program for Inuit teachers such as Mina so that they can earn degrees without having to leave their communities and families and travel great distances. By holding courses online and having professors teach in Nunavut, the university institution has bent toward the needs of Inuit living in small communities such as Sanikiluaq. This change in how universities service Inuit students has set a precedent in Canada, and just

this year the University of Prince Edward Island explicitly created a Master of Education degree program for Inuit teachers in Nunavut. Like small seeds blown in the wind, these changes can spawn more change elsewhere.

As this article was being accepted for publication, the same university where Mina and Adam set a precedent in examination committee member credentials proposed a motion to change its regulations. With increased pressure from Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal members at the university to have Aboriginal knowledge and language recognized, theses and dissertations can soon be submitted in any language Aboriginal to Canada. It would seem that for Mina and Adam, the winds of change do not blow only in one direction. Through our attempts to change the university institution, we have both been changed. Apart from being brought closer together during our efforts, we have both changed our views of how research, institutions, and Aboriginal Knowledge can interconnect. Writing this article together has also changed our ideas about who is heard in powerful academic circles.

Mina: What About in 50 Years From Now?

Collaborating on these stories about universities and Aboriginal Knowledge has given me more understanding about what needs to be reconsidered to make sure Inuit are part of the world dialogue. Right now we are having problems because not many Inuit have degrees, but later there will be more. Universities should understand that many Inuit do not have graduate degrees yet, and they should make changes so Inuit can be heard too.

I have seen many changes in our communities—we have gone from having honey buckets and no running water to modern-day lifestyles. It is not only education that has changed, it is everything. Everything has come to us so quickly like a bullet that has hit us with cultural shock. As I learn the new challenges that face Inuit in becoming known people, I sometimes feel that I am helpless in trying to aid Inuit needs. Some Inuit face obstacles as they try to incorporate Inuit ways of life into today's modern thinking. I also understand that today's Inuit are adjusting to modern ways of life. It has been a journey for some Inuit Elders who have lived in tents, qammaqs (sod houses), and igloos. I feel that it is taking a while for some of these Inuit to get used to modern systems. Inuit are not dominant in this world's society, but we are a percentage of people on this earth. More voices must come from the Inuit, and these voices need to be heard. Thinking of all this has made me think about myself as well.

It is not only the Inuit who should change. Universities need to change as well. If I went to a university in the south, I do not think I would survive. First of all, it is a city where everything is moving faster than it does here. There is traffic, and everyone is caught up with time: everyone is always in a hurry. The diet of people in the south is different, and I

would miss my traditional food. This sort of lifestyle would be challenging for me. As well, having to listen to the professors when they talk in southern academic language would be hard. That experience would be overwhelming for me.

I am now working toward getting my master's degree with the University of Prince Edward Island, but I am doing it here in the community. In one way I am trying to get my degree so that my community will look up to me—sort of like passing on knowledge. I am also trying to get my degree so that I can have a better understanding of the academic world and where real Inuit voices fit into the academic studies of their culture and their ways of living.

I think that universities should recognize Elders as knowledgeable because they know the past and have lived it. I believe that we can still recognize the Inuit living today, like Elders, and that we should do it soon because they are dying and their words are disappearing. Fifty years from now, who are the people in my community that others will look up to? Will the Inuit still have their own voices, or will the writing in studies and papers replace the Inuit Knowledge that was once truly our own? Years from now I hope I will be able to take part in preserving Inuit Qaujimaqatunqangit by speaking out. Right now we still have Elders who have lived on the land, and they should be recognized because they are still here. But I do not know what the story will be like 50 years from now. People like me will have grown up in a house that is not on the land, but near the land. I still have some knowledge. Traditions are still passed on. Years from now my community can look up to me. I will be able to help others. Researchers will have people like me sit on academic committees for them because I will have my knowledge and papers. And perhaps I can make changes to the university as I go, just as Adam and I did in our story.

To be Continued (and Passed on)

This article, written in collaboration across distance and cultures, is now a story itself. All our stories consist of is our personal truth, and all that we know is a mix of our own truth and what we learn from others' truths through their stories. About the power of stories, Basso (1996) writes,

In short, historical tales have the power to change people's ideas about themselves: to force them to admit social failings, to dwell seriously on the significance of these lapses, and to resolve, it is hoped once and for all, not to repeat them. (p. 60)

It is our hope that the tales shared here will also be passed along, grow old, and be learned from along the way.

We both acknowledge that what universities represent as knowledge has often changed only on the surface. We must recognize that although the outward appearance of institutions has been resurfaced, the institutional principles of research and knowledge have remained intact since researchers first set foot in Aboriginal spaces. It is up to us, those who have

connections to the university institution—whether Qallunaat, Inuit, white, Aboriginal, researcher, collaborator, southern, northern, western, or eastern—to pay attention to the small stories such as those presented here to see what changes still need to be made. To truly recognize other forms of knowledge in the research process, the route to changing ourselves and the institutions we work with must take place from within.

Notes

¹Pronounced San.ē.kill.ū.ack.

²We locate ourselves in our stories to convey our backgrounds to the reader and position ourselves in our writing. This locating of self "is integral to issues of accountability ... and knowledge creation" (Absolon & Willett, 2004, p. 5).

³I thank Debbie Iqaluk and Paddy Aqiatasuk from Resolute Bay for their friendship and generosity during my stay.

⁴Pronounced How.yi.ma.ya.neet.

⁵Pronounced How.yi.ma.ya.du.kha.neet.

⁶Pronounced Ha.lune.at.

⁷Pronounced Nui-jya-liq-he-tuq.

⁸We acknowledge some of the work of earlier scholars such as Annahatak (1994), Barnhardt (1999), Battiste (2002), Battiste and Youngblood Henderson (2000), Cajete (2000), Cruikshank (1990), Bishop (1996), Bishop and Glynn (1999), Dei (2000), Graveline (1998), Haig-Brown and Archibald (1996), Hodson (2006), Jamieson (1989), King (2003), Lipka and Moffat (1998), Maracle (1990), Rasmussen (2001), Smith (1999, 2002), Toulouse (2001), Kawagley (1995), and Kirkness (1998).

⁹Administered centrally in Nunavut, most communities have a wildlife officer to help maintain wildlife hunting quotas and assist in habitat management. In Sanikiluaq only one wildlife officer has ever been an Inuk.

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