When Cultural Competence is Inadequate: An Opportunity for a New Approach to Child Welfare in Nunavut

by

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ABSTRACT

This research explores Nunavut’s child welfare system through a review of research on child welfare in rural Aboriginal communities, the experiences of social workers who have worked in Nunavut’s child welfare system, and a discussion of social work theory and Inuit traditional knowledge. Through data analysis the role of Qallunaat child welfare workers as colonial agents with particular attention paid to the employment of and power held by Qallunaat social workers, colonialism and the imposition of southern Canadian ideology are examined. Child welfare in Nunavut is then discussed in light of the values and beliefs built into the territory’s mainstream model of child welfare and the contrast between Inuit culture and world view, with that of the dominant culture in southern Canada. This study looks at the development of Nunavut’s child welfare system, the direction of Inuit self-government and the need for increased Inuit control and decision-making power over child welfare. This research determined that child welfare in Nunavut, as in the rest of Canada, is not meeting the needs of children and families. Culturally competent child welfare services were also found to be inadequate in providing culturally specific child welfare services to Inuit families. In addition, this study also came to the conclusion that a new approach to child welfare is needed for Inuit communities and such an approach must be created out of Inuit traditional knowledge and an Inuit perspective of community needs.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Since April 1, 1999, when the territory of Nunavut was created, there have been significant challenges for the Government of Nunavut to overcome. One of the most complicated challenges has been to provide health and social services in the territory. This challenge has been partly due to Nunavut’s small population, of approximately 31,000 people, which is spread over a territory that comprises more than 20% of the landmass of Canada. Since the 1950’s and prior to the “division” of Nunavut from the Northwest Territories in 1999, social workers have played a primary role in the provision of social services to Nunavummiut or the people of Nunavut.

As well as being a physically challenging place to deliver social services, the territory’s situation is complicated further by significant social issues. For example, since 2001, although Canada “has seen an upward trend in the number of births, with the mean age of mothers at 29.3 years,” Nunavut’s mean age of mothers is much younger at 24.6 years (Statistics Canada, 2008). In fact, in 2006, 24% of all births in Nunavut were born to mothers between the age of 15 and 19 years old, while in the Northwest Territories only 10% of births were to mothers between these young ages and nationally these young mothers made up only 4.1% of the births across Canada (Statistics Canada, 2008). In addition to this, Nunavut also has the fastest growing population in Canada, as the number of births between 2005 and 2006 were 24.6 births per 1000 people, an increase of almost 7% over the year, while throughout the rest of Canada the average births were 10.9 births per 1,000 people, increasing less than 4% per year (Statistics Canada, 2008). As well as the highest fertility rate in the country of 2.84 children per woman, Nunavut was also reported to have the youngest population in Canada with 59% of Nunavummiut being under the age of 24 years old and only 15% of the population over the age of 45 years old (Statistics Canada, 2008; Nunavut Bureau of Statistics, 2008). Although population increases, particularly in developing nations, are known to have large implications for social services due to the subsequent rise in poverty (Ahlburg, 1996), the situation in Nunavut is further complicated by alcohol and drug abuse, suicide, and domestic violence (Kral, 2003; Tester and McNicoll, 2004; Irniq, Rowley and Tester, 2006b; Statistics Canada, 2006e). The current situation in Nunavut has left the territory to be described as “rivaling many so-called ‘third world’ countries” (Tester, 2006b). These large social issues have also lead to challenges for social work, which currently requires working in the face of staff shortages and other challenges that most jurisdictions in
Canada do not face, such as extreme weather and flight conditions, the potential for family homes to “run out of water,” and “the highest rate of overcrowding in the country” with respect to housing (Thompson, 2008; Irniq, Rowley and Tester, 2006b). In Nunavut, social workers provide a range of services and are hired by the Government of Nunavut (G.N.) as generalist Community Social Service workers, providing both social services to families, the aged, and those with disabilities, as well as partaking in community development work (Government of Nunavut [G.N.], n.d.b). The bulk of a social worker’s employment, however, is focused on child welfare and ensuring the safety and well-being of children under the age of 16, yet it is this role that has yet to be explored by researchers. Therefore, this research explores the perspectives of Nunavut’s social workers, regarding their work in child welfare, and their experiences, perceptions, and views of child welfare work in Canada’s north. The overall goal of this research is to begin a dialogue about child welfare in Nunavut, particularly surrounding the roles of child welfare workers, in light of the lack of research in this area.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to “begin from the bottom up,” or to discuss what social work in Nunavut is like for those who work there with the hope of laying a foundation for future research with more specific foci. Historically, research has been conducted in Canada’s north with very little benefit to Inuit, often not being provided in final form to the northern communities or made accessible to them (Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami and Nunavut Research Institute, 2006). This has lead to distrust by communities towards researchers and has also deprived communities of the documentation of their own valuable information and the opportunity to discuss the researchers’ conclusions (Oosten and Laugrand, 2002). Through my own experiences as a social worker in Nunavut, I have learned a great deal from Nunavummiut and it is important to me to be able to encourage a dialogue regarding the territory’s child welfare work that could be available to every community in the future.

Social work students at Canadian universities are required to learn many theories, examine different practice approaches and work with an enormous range of issues. Inherent in the work are the overlapping and complicated aspects of human life and this creates the need for a wide range of skills. Nunavut’s Community Social Service workers (CSSW), or social workers as they will be called for the purpose of this study, perform a wide range of services, from counseling and addiction support, to working
with those impacted by violence (G.N., n.d.b). Given the numerous roles and responsibilities attributed to social workers in Nunavut, it would be ideal to study the entire position and all of the roles social workers play, but due to size and scope of such an undertaking, I have selected to isolate and look solely at the role of child welfare worker. Therefore, a large limitation of this study is this inability to examine this role of child welfare worker within the context of a social worker’s additional roles and work requirements.

Social workers were chosen as participants for this research because their role places them in a position for providing detailed insight into the child welfare system, the policies and practice of child welfare, and the social issues most affecting Inuit communities in which they work. To do this has been difficult, as it required the collection of often isolated voices from very isolated places within a field known for its confidentiality. Nonetheless, social workers provided their thoughts on those things they believed impacted their practice, from policies to community practice, and from regional to territorial issues. By examining previous research studies relevant to social work in Nunavut, highlighting the views of social workers through the use of interviews, and examining the emergent theory, this study provides topics for consideration, further research, and recommendations regarding the direction of child welfare in Nunavut.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

It is possible for social workers to incorporate many theories into their practice based on the situations they encounter. I have had five years experience in Canada’s high Arctic as a social worker, living and working within isolated communities, often as the only social worker in a community. Regardless of this experience and the understanding I have gained from this employment, I remain an “outsider” as I am from Vancouver, not Nunavut, I speak English, not Inuktitut, and I am Caucasian, not Inuk (Zapf, 1985). Where I situate myself within social work, but also where I situate myself in this study, takes this background into consideration. It is important to me to be consistent in both my professional and private lives and because of this I attempt to weave structural social work theory through my life, as it is the platform on which I sit and the basis for how I understand others (Mullaly, 1997). I believe this is important to this paper so the reader is able to both know the theoretical concepts that inform this research as well as be provided with the direct comments of participants in the context of which their thoughts were given. Over my years of employment in Canada’s Arctic, I have learned that most important to child welfare in Nunavut is the use of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ) theory or Inuit traditional knowledge as it “can bring
together generations of Inuit” (Arnakak, 2001; Tester and Irniq, 2008, p. 59). IQ has also been described as “a spiritual and intellectual home, a safe place from which elders and youth alike can practice resistance through stories, art, music research, writings, and very many forms of practice” (Tester and Irniq, 2008, p. 59). My ability to practice in accordance with IQ and in a culturally specific way, however, is limited by my understanding of it, but more importantly, I am limited by my Euro-western paradigm and southern Canadian world view or perspective. Therefore, it is important for me to ensure that the definition of the terms “culture,” “ideology” “paradigm” or “perspective” and values” are also clarified to limit confusion as well. The use of word “culture” throughout this study is used generally to refer to what people do, from their activities, practices and overall daily life, so that “cultural” practices are repeated behaviors. This “culture” or behavior is deeply rooted in “ideology,” a belief system, or manner of thinking that causes people to do certain things, have certain behavior, or do certain activities. For example, spirituality (beliefs) may lead some people to attend church (activity) or capitalism (ideology) may lead some to seek out great wealth (behavior). Finally, one’s paradigm or perspective is also deeply intertwined with their beliefs and ideology, as it connects their values (and belief in what is “right” and “wrong”) to their ideology and paradigm. Therefore, “the core of a culture is formed by values” and the “‘right way’ is almost always ‘our way,’” which consequently means, “that ‘our way’ in one society almost never corresponds to ‘our way’ in any other society” (Choudhury, n.d.). Both through my Euro-western perspective and the use of structural social work theory, my southern world view or way of viewing the world includes particular values and beliefs, and therefore, has created the lens through which I understand the world. Since the use of the word “southern” is very common in Nunavut and it is regularly taken to mean all the practices, behaviors and thinking connected to a Euro-western and Canadian world view, the term “southern” has also been used throughout this paper. Also directly linked to European ideology, the term “southern” in this text refers to scholars, practitioners and laypersons that, whether consciously or unconsciously, have absorbed a liberal European-based understanding of the world, now typical of the dominant “white” culture of Canada. A perspective that is “southern,” therefore, within this paper is also used to make reference to a way of interacting with the world based on the many values and beliefs commonly associated with liberal Euro-Canadian culture, such as capitalism and individualism.
I have always aimed to be a “culturally competent” social worker practicing within cross-cultural settings. IQ, however, challenges this and has led me to question whether a trained “culturally competent” Qallunaaq\(^1\) or non-Inuit social worker from the dominant “white” culture can practice child welfare in Nunavut in a way that is aligned, and consistent with an Inuit value and belief system?

**TERMINOLOGY AND DEFINITIONS**

As a unilingual English speaker, the importance of Inuktitut to Nunavummiut has been made exceptionally clear to me. Unfortunately, as I did not have access to a translator, this research has been conducted and created entirely in English despite Inuktitut being the primary language of Nunavut. Inuktitut is also the official working language of the government of Nunavut, and for most Inuit, daily interactions are often entirely in Inuktitut and English speakers regularly require translators to work in Nunavut (GN, n.d.a). There are many things that do not have English names or words to describe them; for example the “qamutiik,” or sled used to pull belongings in the snow, and the “amauti,” or traditional garment used to carry children on a person’s back, are only some of the many items that only hold Inuktitut names\(^2\). The plural term “Inuit” (meaning “the people” in Inuktitut) and the singular form “Inuk,” are used to describe the Indigenous population in the Canadian Arctic (Johnson, 1999). The term Aboriginal will also be used within this study to broadly refer to Inuit as described by the 1982 *Constitution Act* (Constitution Act, 1982).

In addition to the use of Inuktitut, there are also terms common to the territory that are not so common across the rest of Canada. For example, the use of “north” and “south” primarily refer to the 60\(^{th}\) parallel or line between the southern provinces and the northern territories. The term “south,” however, can even include the United States. And “southerners,” therefore, are people from anywhere in North America below the 60\(^{th}\) parallel but commonly refers, as previously explained, to anyone from a Euro-western southern Canadian background and the dominant liberal culture of southern Canada. Consequently, if something is “southern,” it generally refers to something being a part of European or western ideology, practice, culture or life and includes the values and beliefs of this background. For the purpose of this paper, the term “southern” and “southerner” will be used to describe people, ideology, practices, values and

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\(^1\) *Qallunaaq* is the singular term and *Qallunaat* is the plural term for people who are non-Inuit.

\(^2\) I understand that these words can have many different spellings and or pronunciations depending on where the Inuktitut speaker is from in Nunavut. These spellings have been found within the Inuktitut Living Dictionary available at http://www.livingdictionary.com/main.jsp
beliefs of those of the dominant Caucasian or “white” southern Canadian culture. “Northerners,” however, is a term used to describe those who are born and raised in Canada’s northern territories. It does occasionally include those people who have been resident in “the north” for a long time. It does not, however, refer to the northern communities of the southern provinces. Similar to “northerners” is the term “local” referring to someone who is from a certain community. However, even if someone is a northerner, this person may not necessarily be considered a “local” if they are in a different community and away from their “home community.”

As in all cultures, language and culture cannot be separated in Nunavut because language and the use of language in Nunavut goes beyond words. Facial movements are used for “yes” and “no,” as are the use of one’s eyes to indicate emotions, such as anger and frustration. Sounds, such as “eee,” can indicate agreement or recognition of what someone else has said and touching someone’s face can indicate thanks and or approval. These are just a few examples of the Inuktitut language but they clearly represent an obvious part of Inuit culture.

CONTEXT

Researching any aspect or phenomena in Nunavut is not without its challenges. Due to the territory’s size, it can take considerable time to physically get to a research site. Nunavut’s communities are accessible all year by plane only and by boat for a short period of time in the summer. This means the financial cost associated with traveling to and within Nunavut is enormous and it is not uncommon for plane tickets to cost thousands of dollars, making the trip between southern Canada and Nunavut unrealistic for most people. Nunavut is made up of 26 communities, including the city of Iqaluit, which had over 6,000 residents in 2006 (Statistics Canada, 2006a). The other 25 communities in Nunavut range from 150 people to a couple of thousand people, with the entire population of the territory being 31,000 people (Statistics Canada, 2006a). Nunavut’s population has also been increasing dramatically at almost 20% over the past ten years (Statistics Canada, 2006c). Based on my travels, I have some knowledge of the 26 communities; however, there are many fishing and hunting outpost camps “out on the land” that do not have social services. The size of Nunavut means that people living in Kugluktuk (the western Arctic) are closest to the southern city of Edmonton, while those living in Iqaluit (the eastern Arctic) are closest to Ottawa and or Montreal (See Appendix A for Map of Nunavut). Despite the territory’s size and the cost of travel, many
Inuit are accustomed to traveling by plane, due to the lack of certain medical services available in each community, yet there are also many others who have never flown out of their own communities. Nunavut’s communities provide a range of medical services through a community health centre where nurses manage the daily medical needs of community residents. Typically doctors and certain specialists attend communities every couple of months, but for emergencies and specialized services, patients are flown to Iqaluit, Yellowknife, Ottawa, Edmonton and Montreal. Nunavut’s communities are also provided with police services through the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), elementary and high schools for children, general store(s) that sell food and items such as clothing and hunting equipment, a post office, an airport, and a hamlet or community administration office among other buildings and services depending on the size and location of the community. The majority of residents in Nunavut are Inuit (85%) and over 90% of them speak Inuktitut (Statistics Canada, 2006d). Although there are concerns that this Inuit language is “in serious trouble” as many Inuktitut speakers, particularly the young people, do not speak the language well, it still remains the primary language spoken at home for the majority of Inuit (63%) in Nunavut (Tester and Irniq, 2008; Statistics Canada, 2006d). Despite some young people not being able to communicate in Inuktitut, family and kinship bonds are very important to Inuit in Nunavut (Kral, 2003). Community residents know each other for their whole lives and interact within the community based on these long standing relationships (Arnakak, 2001). In addition to this, religious faith is important in Nunavut with the largest religious group belonging to the Anglican Church of Canada comprising almost 60% of the population of Nunavut (Statistics Canada, 2003). There is also a large Roman Catholic congregation of approximately 40% of Nunavut’s population and the Pentecostal congregation has been steadily increasing and in 2001 it included over 4% of Nunavut’s population (Statistics Canada, 2003). Although Iqaluit is the territory’s capital, through a model of decentralized government, the territory has been divided to hold three additional regions; the Baffin, Kivalliq, and Kitikmeot. This organizational structure was agreed upon during the creation of Nunavut in 1999 and it has provided the benefits of employment throughout the territory through administration offices for each region (Nunavut, n.d.a).

Nunavut social workers address a number of social issues on a daily basis. Some of these issues range from the highest suicide rates in Canada (120/100,000)(Tester and McNicoll, 2004; Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK), 2008; Kral, 2003), the highest teenage birth rates in Canada (31.9 per 1,000 girls aged 15
to 19 compared to the national average of 2.6 per 1,000) (Ahlburg, 1996; Rotermann, 2007), the highest rates of youth smoking in the country (46.3% of Nunavut youth aged 12 to 19 compared to the Canadian average of 18.7%) (GN, 2002), the highest rates of household overcrowding in Canada (estimated at 50% of the homes being overcrowded as compared to 7% overcrowding in the rest of the country) (Tester, 2006b), the highest rates of spousal homicide in Canada (10.9 deaths/100,000 compared to 1.3/100,000 nationally) (Statistics Canada, 2006e), sexual assaults are 7 to 14 times higher than the national average (982/100,000 in Nunavut compared to 82/100,000) (Statistics Canada, 2006e) and Nunavut possesses the highest rates of domestic violence in Canada (13.6/100,000 compared to 4.3/100,000 in Manitoba) (Irniq, Rowley and Tester, 2006b; Statistics Canada, 2006e). In fact, according to Statistics Canada (2006b), Nunavut ranks highest in Canada on most of the issues of concern for social workers while the territory’s living conditions, as previously mentioned, have been described as “third world” (Silversides, 2007). In addition to this, close to 60% of the population of Nunavut is under the age of 24 years old (Nunavut Bureau of Statistics, 2008). This young population lacks the personal financial resources to obtain enough food due to unemployment. In fact, over 60% of Nunavummiut receive income assistance or “welfare” and similarly 60% of the territory is unemployed (Government of Canada, 2006; Nunavut Bureau of Statistics, 2009). Many young Nunavummiut also lack either the skills or the resources (snowmobile and ammunition) to hunt for “country food.” Therefore, the lack of finances, skills and resources have left two thirds of Nunavut’s children without enough to eat (Tait, 2006). This grim context for research, however, is not intended to overwhelm, rather it has been included to set the stage for examining the complexity of Nunavut’s social context in arguably the most challenging environment to provide social services in Canada.

OVERVIEW OF THE PAPER

This research regarding Nunavut’s child welfare system aims to bring greater understanding of the current child welfare model and its inadequacy in addressing Nunavut’s complex child welfare issues. It should be noted, however, that one major limitation of this study is that it proceeds from the “white” dominant culture of southerners and not Nunavummiut themselves. Unfortunately, of the 10 interviews held with social workers, only 1 was Inuk, leaving this research study to essentially provide a Qallunaat

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3 I have worked with families of 10 and 12 people that live in 2-bedroom houses with no running water.
perspective of child welfare in Nunavut. I have attempted to include articles and information from sources that have sought out Inuit perspectives, however, it is clear that further research in the area of child welfare requires interviews and discussion with Inuit social workers, families and communities.

Chapter 2 provides a brief overview of Nunavut’s history, a summary of the historical aspects of child welfare in Canada that pertain to Nunavut’s development of child welfare services, and a discussion of how the territory’s history has been shaped by colonialism. This chapter will also briefly look at the development of Canadian Aboriginal child welfare agencies and the creation of Nunavut’s current child welfare system. Chapter 3 provides a review of the current literature that pertains to social services in Nunavut including research conducted regarding the experiences of social workers and studies that speak to child welfare in rural Aboriginal communities. In this chapter, the need for research regarding child welfare in Nunavut will be made clear.

Chapter 4 explores the common theories employed by both child welfare practitioners in Canada and those who work within Aboriginal communities. A selection of theories will be further examined in the context of child welfare in Nunavut. This is followed in Chapter 5 by a detailed description of how this study was designed and the qualitative method chosen. Chapter 5 also includes a description of the sampling, data collection and measures, describes how the data was analyzed and coded, discusses demographics and credibility as well as the limitations of the research. Chapter 6 outlines the study’s results and the categories that emerged from the interviews with participants. Finally, Chapter 7 discusses the findings in light of the literature review and explores the implications for social workers, the territorial government and Inuit communities. The final summary and conclusion are provided in Chapter 8.

**RESEARCH QUESTION**

Although there are many aspects of social work in Nunavut that would be interesting to explore, this research has aimed to create a foundational or ground level discussion of child welfare in the territory. Based on this and the intent to develop grounded theory from the data, open-ended questions posed to participants were general in nature, providing them with the opportunity to take the interviews in the direction they felt was important.

This research is different from existing research studies in child welfare as the focus of this study is specifically on child welfare in Canada’s youngest territory, which as previously described, has very high
rates of social problems, such as suicide and teen pregnancy, in addition to some of the most remote and isolated locations for social work practice in Canada. As well, much of the current research of child welfare in Aboriginal communities has neglected to look at the power differentials between non-Aboriginal social workers and the Aboriginal community or at the impact of colonialism and post colonialism and its effect on child welfare practice. This research will also examine the imbalance of power in Nunavut’s predominantly Inuit communities, which provides Qallunaat social workers with decision-making power over Inuit child welfare. Additionally, this research will explore Inuit self-government and the potential for self-determination in the context of child welfare, as well as the employment of Qallunaat social workers. Most importantly, however, no existing research studies have looked at whether the cultural competence of Qallunaat social workers in Nunavut’s child welfare system is adequate in the provision of culturally specific social services. Overall, this study had one main question: What kind of experiences have Nunavut’s social workers had regarding child welfare practice and how have these experiences shaped their practice? The information provided by social workers is believed to contribute to a better understanding of how child welfare is currently operating in the territory and where if needed, its future of Nunavut’s child welfare system should be headed.
CHAPTER 2: HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The history of Nunavut is, in my view, one of the most interesting parts of Canadian history, yet it is also one of the least well known by Qallunaat in southern Canada. Today, there still remains history of the territory, the land, the people and the culture that can only be accessed by sitting down to learn through conversation with an elder. There is, however, an ever-increasing amount of information on the World Wide Web that has made more of Nunavut’s history available to more people. The historical aspects selected for this study, however, are not inclusive of all the historical events that have shaped child welfare in Nunavut. For the sake of the reader and the focus of the study, only small pieces of historical events have been chosen. In particular, I have included brief summaries of the certain parts of Nunavut’s history that have been described to me during conversations with community members and elders. As they were explained to me, I believe these historical events play an enormous role in the shaping of Nunavut’s communities, child welfare issues and overall development of the territory’s child welfare system.

NUNAVUT HISTORY

Inuit history goes back thousands of years and can best be described by elders through stories passed down through generations (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples [RCAP], 1996). Oral history is an exceptional way to learn about the territory and its people and I have been fortunate to have elders share their past with me during my work in Nunavut. The history of Nunavut has been described as “a history of culture contact and cultural conflict” in that prior to archeological information gathered, much of the written history begins with contact between Europeans and Inuit in the 1500’s (Harper, n.d.). One of these first recorded contacts was by Martin Frobisher in 1576 when he arrived to Baffin Island during his search of a Northwest Passage. Frobisher Bay, now known as Iqaluit, and other Nunavut locations were commonly named by European explorers, such as Henry Hudson in 1610, Lieutenant William Edward Parry in 1818, Charles Francis Hall in 1860, to name a few (Harper, n.d.). During the 1800’s, whaling in Nunavut by Europeans and Americans became popular as Nunavut’s waters were filled with bowhead whales. Unfortunately, the impact on Inuit from European whaling in Nunavut and then in 1911, the developing fur trade through the Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC), was large (Tester and McNicoll, 2008). Inuit changed their hunting and settlement patterns as “traders offered Inuit strong material incentives- such as supplies, equipment and other goods- for items such as white fox pelts” (Hicks and White, 2000, p. 20).
Trade for goods with Europeans eventually led to Inuit changing “their whole lifestyle” in order “to meet the traders’ demands,” which further led to their lives being tied “to the vagaries of the international commodity market” (Hicks and White, 2000, p. 20). Inuit also “died of starvation as a result of many congregating in the vicinity of whaling ships and investing their time and energy working for whalers, thereby limiting their efforts to store food for the harsh winter months” (Tester and McNicoll, 2008, p. 4).

Following the arrival of the whalers and the fur traders came the Anglican and Catholic churches to Eastern Arctic as well as the arrival of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) but unlike the whalers, these southerners arrived to stay permanently, bringing with them European values, beliefs, and culture (Roth, 2005). The arrival of these southerners to Nunavut had a negative impact on Inuit culture and “their social systems, [which] were designed to maximize resilience through mobility, flexibility, networking and adaptation” (Irniq, Rowley and Tester, 2006b). RCMP posts were created for a variety of reasons, one being an attempt to create a greater northern presence as the Canadian government was becoming increasingly fearful of the interest foreign countries had in the Arctic (Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, n.d.).

Although unadvertised as a benefit to the Canadian government of the movement of Inuit from hunting camps and nomadic life to community settlements surrounding the RCMP posts was the creation of a greater presence of Canadian Inuit throughout the Arctic. This was seen to thereby increase Canadian sovereignty by establishing permanent communities so “the Canadian government [could] be seen enforcing Canadian law on islands over which the United States had never acknowledged Canadian jurisdiction” (Tester, 1993, p. 119). In the 1950s, the government encouraged the relocation of Inuit to centralized villages, but for those Inuit who were not interested in moving from their traditional camps to live in the newly created settlements, the government:

“coerced [them] into settlements through the use of a large number of considerations...Children were ‘forced’ to attend school and in some cases, RCMP and other government agents used the threat of removing the right to social assistance and family allowances as inducements to get Inuit parents to send their children to schools, often located hundreds of miles from traditional camps. Inuit parents often followed their children, locating themselves around settlements. Catholic and Anglican churches further encouraged this relocation, wanting Inuit to be ‘in town’ at special times of the year – Christmas and Easter celebrations among them” (Tester, 2006b, p. 6).

Other “incentives” to community life included employment opportunities often associated with the Distant Early Warning (DEW) Line sites or Hudson Bay Company stores that were being set up in many of these settlements and although the government claimed this move was to provide increased “prosperity,” it
created Inuit dependence upon the government by obliterating their previous social and traditional structures for living (Government of Canada, n.d.; Tester, 2006b). The incentives provided by the government to community life also involved “ignoring the traditional nomadic lifestyle of the Inuit” because the “well-intentioned but paternalistic federal government felt they would be better off living in permanent settlements” (Johnson, 1999). With the collapse of the fur trade and the movement into communities, however, “welfare and family allowances had become the only means by which Inuit could survive” creating poverty, unknown to the Inuit, and enormous health problems, due to the lack of housing and sanitation facilities (Tester, 1993, p. 119). The Second World War and Cold War led to even further exploration and travel throughout the Arctic by southerners, which subsequently also led to increased attempts to further assimilate Inuit into Canadian society (Tester, 2006b). This exploration was accelerated when the United States Air Force constructed the airstrip in Iqaluit, the present day International airport and constructed the DEW Line, a joint project by the Canadian and American militaries, which increased travel even more throughout the territory (Harper, n.d.). This increased travel in Nunavut “exposed the Inuit's [sic] economic situation to many in the south for the first time and other nations [began to] criticize Canada for not providing enough assistance” to Inuit families (Government of Canada, n.d.). As a result of this pressure, the Canadian government, through a 1939 Supreme Court ruling Re: Eskimos made Inuit “wards of the state” or “children of the state” (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples [RCAP], 1996; Government of Canada, n.d.; Tester, 2006b) and “declared them in effect to be equivalent to Indians in that the federal government has a fiduciary responsibility to them” (Hicks and White, 2000, p.25). However, the forced assimilation of Inuit through the settlement policies was “in many ways misguided, inappropriate and therefore ineffective” (Johnson, 1999). This was followed by the federal government’s sale of “matchbox” houses to the Inuit, a program introduced in 1959, which only created further problems and essentially created “slums” in the north (Tester, 2006b). In fact, from 1955 into the 1960s, “the most dramatic process of social change ever experienced by any group of people in the world occurred in the Canadian eastern Arctic” (Tester, 2006a, p. 237). This “predictably, [led to] further outbreaks of tuberculosis and infectious disease,” which were largely connected to living in the community “slums,” which further threatened “the social fabric” of Inuit families as many Inuit died or were sent to southern hospitals (Tester, 2006b, p. 24; Irniq, Rowley and Tester, 2006, p 3). For many Inuit, the southern hospitals
were strange and lonely experiences and the return to their home communities even more surreal.

Eventually:

“the realities of being monitored and controlled within the confines of settlement life, took its toll. And this in turn has taken a toll on the children of those who made the transition from garmaq, tents and igloos, to settlement living. This suggests, among other things, the likelihood of parenting problems originating in colonial relations of ruling and that, in turn, are being passed from generation to generation, reflected in the rising rate of youth suicide in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s” (Tester and McNicoll, 2004, p. 2627).

Quickly, Inuit were “overtaken by overwhelming social, economical and cultural changes, their status as autonomous self-governing people disappeared as they lost control of their land and resources to governments imposed on them without their consent” (Hicks and White, 2000, p. 19). Despite the quickly changing social context, however, Inuit displayed resistance to Qallunaat imposing southern ideology on them by using “the clergy as a means of getting the message to public servants” (Tester, 2006a, p. 243) and community councils, such as the Baker Lake Inuit Council, among other means to “represent their views to Qallunaat but also to negotiate among themselves” (Kulchyski and Tester, 2007, p.232). This resistance, even in the 1960’s, was understood by Qallunaat social workers who attempted to advocate for “a greater Inuit role in community decision making” (Tester, 2006a, p. 245). Qallunaat social workers, however, were:

“caught in an impossible situation- helping Inuit to help themselves become good Canadian citizens (as defined by the colonizing culture)...[meant] their initiatives were intended merely to extend liberal democratic decision making to northern communities and, eventually, Inuit councils. Ultimately, however, they were to give impetus to new forms of resistance and to practices that contributed to Inuit demands for self government” (Tester, 2006a, p. 245).

This advocacy is particularly interesting as it followed on the heels as some “colonial regimes were beginning to concede in the 1940’s and 1950’s that Indigenous leaders were capable of running states and organizing economics” (Stoler and Cooper, 1997, p. 13). Unfortunately, the recognition of Indigenous leadership was only understood “in terms of ‘modernization’ and ‘westernization’- and a European-based concept of how states collected and used knowledge” (Stoler and Cooper, 1997, p. 13).

It is likely, however, that the greatest attack on Inuit culture was by way of Qallunaat “teaching” Inuit through residential schools and the child welfare system, which were rooted in the view that European

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4 I sat with an elder in the Arctic one day as she showed me family pictures. She explained that she spent a number of years as a child in a southern hospital and that she was never told why she was taken from her parents or where she was going. She now retains her memories and the photographs of herself with nurses in white uniforms on birthdays and holidays. She described it as the loneliest time in her life.
beliefs and values were superior to those held by Inuit. It was this imposition of European values and beliefs on Inuit life, both socially and culturally that directly lead to the “significant erosion of their cultural identity” and Inuit “suffered profound, long term negative psychological consequences that continue today” (Gough, Blackstock and Bala, 2005, p.2). Southerners’ desire to “teach” Inuit of the European “right” ways of living and raising children, such as the European belief in discipline, was imposed through the development of education programs and child welfare practices, not recognizing their “ideas and views [were] shaped and informed by a Eurocentric world view that held British culture and society [as] superior” (Green and Baldry, 2008, p. 397). One explicit example of this is the description of:

“We Jesuit Father Le Jeune [who] lamented such ‘problems’ as ‘the excessive love that such savages bear their children.’ The ‘savages’ refused to allow the Christian educators to use corporal punishment and the women were so outrageously independent that the ‘natives’ had to be instructed that the man ‘was the master’ and that in France women do not rule their husbands” (Alia, 2007, p.51).

The deep damage done to families through the Qallunaat desire to “teach” is only just beginning to be understood.

During this time of great southern expansion into the north, over 3500 Inuit children were sent to residential schools run by missionaries as part of the Canadian government’s colonialist strategy to assimilate Aboriginal people into mainstream “white” culture (“Mention Inuit,” 2008). Schools in Churchill, Inuvik and Chesterfield Inlet were built in this same desire to “teach” Inuit (Hicks and White, 2000, p. 22), as “the primary objective of these schools was to eliminate any vestige of Aboriginality, replacing it with a Euro-western culture, knowledge and spirituality” (Blackstock and Trocmé, 2005, p.14). Even when children attended schools within Nunavut’s newly formed communities the “education” continued to take a negative toll on Inuit culture as it involved “the daily shift of authority from parents and elders at home to teachers in school…resulting in a loss of respect for their parents, elders, language and traditions” (Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, 2005, p. 2). This “education” increased during the 1950’s and 1960’s, with the increase in southerners who went north to provide services. However, the increase of southerners and their “moral values” was further accompanied with the assumption of dominant society that “white people are positioned as the natural holders of these values (in their role as educators) who, as part of the ‘white man’s burden,’ must benefit Aboriginal people with their greater moral achievements” (Augoustinos, Tuffin and Every, 2005, p. 323). Ultimately, the “teaching” of dominant culture values
through child welfare by social workers and later the notion of “community development” by southerners were “used as a euphemism for oppression, domination, colonialism, racism and the imposition of western cultural values” at the expense of the territory’s Inuit (Campbell, Wunungmurra and Nyomba, 2005, p. 152). This was because “those who operate within the child welfare system do so out of their own set of preferences, values and expectations, and this will impact on the nature of the services they provide” (Litwin, 1997, p. 327).

As previously mentioned, however, Inuit resistance to the imposed dominant culture has always existed even if not easily recognizable, as it “was passive and most commonly took the form of simply ignoring the law” (Tester and Irniq, 2008, p.54). Inuit resistance to the imposition of southern values and beliefs was done through a number of means, including “resistance to totalizing power in writing” (Kulchyski and Tester, 2007, p.239). In addition to Inuit resistance, there were some Qallunaat who attempted to understand the Inuit way of life and attempted to work in a manner that was consistent with this northern culture. One example of this is Justice Sissons’ decision of 1961 Re: Katie’s Adoption, in which he determined Inuit custom adoptions were “valid even though they did not conform to the new NWT child welfare ordinance” (Eber, 1997). Although this court decision clearly outlines that there were exceptions to southerners who operated from the dominant culture’s set of preferences, values and expectations, Justice Sissons remained “appalled at the ignorance displayed by those who legislated for the Arctic” (Eber, 1997, p. 109). Unfortunately, despite Inuit resistance to southern practices and beliefs and the certain Qallunaat who worked to practice in a culturally specific manner, “every time a Qallunaat was ‘helping’ Inuit by making a decision for them, he or she was doing damage to their sense of self” (Kulchyski and Tester, 2007, p. 211).

By the 1960’s Inuit “increasingly recognized that protecting their culture and lifestyle required Inuit control of Inuit lands and institutions” and in the 1970’s a discussion of a separate territory by Inuit leaders was underway (Tester and Irniq, 2008, p.54). Although it took over 20 years to do, in 1999, the territory of Nunavut finally became a reality (Hicks and White, 2000). Throughout this time, families struggled to maintain their traditions and culture despite continued pressure to assimilate into southern Canada’s dominant culture. Some communities took this concern for southern influence into their own hands, such as the community of Igloolik, which banned television that had been available through satellite
in other communities since the 1970’s, until programming was available in Inuktitut (Bergman, 2003). Nonetheless, Inuit have struggled against dominant culture since their initial contact with southerners.

**CHILD WELFARE IN CANADA**

The history of Canada’s child welfare policies and programs have been described as falling into four different phases: the preindustrialization social welfare-patriarchal care phase of up to 1890; the transition to a welfare state, when children were viewed as adults, 1890-1940; the welfare state, when children were recognized and now viewed as deserving of a childhood from 1940-1970; and the erosion of the welfare state, which includes child welfare services from the 1970’s to today (Hick, 1998). It is important to examine Nunavut’s child welfare history through these phases, since social services and child welfare initiatives largely began in Nunavut following World War II within the era of the welfare state and the erosion of the welfare state (Aboriginal Justice Implementation Commission [AJIC], 1999). As the history of child welfare was changing shape in southern Canada, the impact of this was felt throughout the north.

The first legislation regarding the welfare of children in Canada came out of the creation of the *British North America Act* (BNA Act) in 1867 while at the same time the *Constitution Act* of 1867 provided all provinces responsibility for legislation concerning health, education and welfare services (Gough, Blackstock and Bala, 2005). Following this was Ontario’s *Act for the Protection and Reformation of Neglected Children* in 1888, also known as the *Children’s Protection Act*, put in force five years after the first established residential schools in Canada (Child Welfare League of Canada [CWLC], 2007; Libesman, 2004). Despite the original child welfare legislation being “designed to intervene with the growing numbers of neglected and abandoned children in urban centers” (CWLC, 2007) it evolved into the 1953 *Protection of Children Ordinance*, which came into force in the Northwest Territories and provided guidelines for the assessment of children considered to be “in need of protection” and who, therefore, could be apprehended from their parent’s care. The legislation included European values and operated as another means to force Inuit to assimilate into southern Canada’s growing culture. For example, a child could be taken from his or her parents when “found in a disorderly house,” “found wandering about at late hours and who has no home or settled place of abode or proper guardianship” or if a child “is habitually truant from school and is likely to grow up without proper education” (Protection of Children Ordinance, 1953). This legislation can
be contrasted with the culture in Nunavut, such that the concern for children outside their homes “at late
hours” shows how significantly southern and irrelevant the legislation was, particularly during 24 hour
daylight or 24 hour darkness. Similarly, as Inuit were only just beginning to live in permanent houses in
communities, this legislation’s requirement for children to attend school to receive a “proper education”
was strikingly different from the view of education by Inuit as what was learnt on the land or by elders.
Although at it’s inception, this legislation may not have been enforced\(^5\), taken seriously or even known by
Inuit when it came into effect, however, what remains vital to this research is that the legislation existed
and it provided a form of power over Inuit regarding child rearing. The imposition of this very southern and
urban legislation in Nunavut was especially significant compared to other areas in Canada, for prior to
southerners imposing colonialist practices on Inuit, “grandparents of the current generation of young people
were born and lived much of their lives on the land, in camps with Inuit values and practices intact” (Tester
and McNicoll, 2004, p. 2622). However, with the imposition of child welfare legislation and the ability of
southerners to now enforce southern standards on Inuit families, came an:

> “enduring fear of Qallunaat authority figures, particularly the RCMP who often, along with school
administrators, removed children from families and camps to attend school, interfered with
cultural practices (i.e. Drum dancing), treated welfare recipients harshly, arrested Inuit for
behaviors they did not understand as criminal, etc. The result was to develop a fear of authority
and doubt about beliefs and practices binding Inuit culture together for generations…In fact, Inuit
culture was most often misrepresented and portrayed in ways that served to degrade and humiliate
young people who were left to struggle with the notion that their culture (and parents) were
primitive, backward, immoral and irresponsible” (Tester and McNicoll, 2004, p. 2623).

Hence, the colonialist task of making Inuit communities conform to a European sense of time, idea of
 guardianship, western education, and generally to southern beliefs and values was underway through this
imposed southern child welfare legislation. Although such beliefs and values were both foreign and
oppressive to the Inuit, they were, nonetheless, spread quickly throughout Nunavut, working to destroy
Inuit culture, by the “well intentioned” southerners in the territory. It was through this attempted
assimilation of Inuit traditional culture and social structure into the dominant culture of southern Canada
that the need for child welfare was created.

Child welfare as it is understood today, however, began with the development of government
programs and services. When the Canada Assistance Plan of the 1950’s provided federal funding to the

\(^5\) It is unlikely that the legislation was initially enforced as the first social worker (Walter Rudnicki, Chief of Welfare) hired in the
Arctic was not until a couple years later in 1955 (Tester and Kulchyski, 1994).
provinces for social services, including financial costs associated with providing child welfare services, an
everseous increase in children “rescued” from their families across Canada, particularly within Aboriginal
communities, commonly known as the “60’s scoop” followed shortly after (AJIC, 1999). With the
 provision of financial resources now available for children and families, services to children and families
became available in most urban areas. For those families in rural locations such as Aboriginal communities
and reservations, where services were not available, it was not unusual for child welfare services “to be
devoid of prevention and family support, relying instead on removal as the only response to child
maltreatment” (Blackstock and Trocmé, 2005, p.11). In Nunavut, although the Department of the Indian
and Northern Health Services Branch was developed in the early 1940’s, the first Qallunaat social worker
from southern Canada did not arrive in the Eastern Arctic until 1955. Interestingly, the initial reason for
hiring social workers in Nunavut was not to provide child welfare services, but instead to coordinate the
“movement of people and dealing with rehabilitation and repatriation to home settlements” of patients in
southern sanatoriums being treated with tuberculosis (Tester, 2006a, p. 237). The development of a role for
social workers in Nunavut was closely connected to the creation of “nursing stations” or healthcare clinics
throughout Nunavut from Kugluktuk in 1947 to Coral Harbour in 1962 (Damas, 2002), as the spread of
tuberculosis and the “disruption of family and community life caused by this epidemic provided the state
with additional reasons for intervention- with humanitarian intent” (Tester, 2006a, p.242). Despite the
humanitarian intent and “consistent with the ethic of high modernism, the role of northern social workers
was to bring all of the benefits, rights, and privileges of modern civilization to a ‘primitive’ people”
(Tester, 2006a, p. 247). Although teachers, school administrators and RCMP had previously “performed
some welfare-related functions,” social workers “were to play a key role in the efforts to integrate Inuit
with mainstream Canadian society” (Tester, 2006a, p. 239). In 1958 “northern service officers” had also
been stationed in a number of the larger communities with the task of “coordinating departmental
programs” through a “community development role” (Tester, 2006a; Damas, 2002). By the early 1960’s
there still were only a “half dozen social workers” in Nunavut, but despite their few numbers these social
workers helped to create “the norm for the new Inuit culture,” which “was to be a nuclear family, wage-
earning husband, and wife who cared for the home and family in a setting with standards of health and
hygiene matching those of middle-class Canadians” (Tester, 2006a, p. 239). As the social worker’s role and
function shifted gradually from organizing the movement of patients, to the provision of welfare, to then addressing social problems developing in the community and finally to child welfare services, social workers “carried with them their own relatively unexamined cultural biases” (Tester, 2006a, p. 239).

The first social workers in Nunavut relied on their dominant values to make the “moral” decisions of what was in a child’s best interests, through their “professional social work ethics [which] are intended to help social work practitioners recognize the morally correct way to practice” (Delaney and Brownlee, 1995, p. 40). Unfortunately, these same ethics were born out of the dominant culture as well, leaving the best interests of Inuit children up to the values and “morals” of southern workers and their dominant culture beliefs. Historically, an example of this can be clearly seen in the view a social worker held regarding Justice Sissions’ decision regarding the legality of Inuit custom adoptions as “it is hoped…when we have adoptions of children needing homes [that they go] through the hands of the Welfare Officer to approved adoption home[s]” (Tester, 2006a, p. 241). It is clear in this statement that this particular social worker desired increased control over the placement of children and displayed a “cultural bias…to inform her practice among a group of people whose practices were grounded in another- and collective- tradition” (Tester, 2006a, p. 241). By the 1980’s, as southern ideology shifted towards “children’s rights” and concerns for attachment and family bonds began being recognized in social work discourse (Child Welfare League of Canada, 2007), the communalist notion of communities raising children was further demeaned as the focus was again placed on the western concept of child’s “best interests” being a nuclear family structure (AJIC, 1999).

Even today, the Canadian Association of Social Workers’ (CASW) Code of Ethics (CASW, 2005) only makes reference to culture once and does so, not with respect to the culture of the client, but rather to remind social workers to recognize their personal culture in order to further “be aware of any conflicts between personal and professional values and deal with them responsibly” (p.2). The suggestion that such awareness of one’s own culture can provide social workers with a sort of cultural neutrality and that by “clarifying what our values actually mean ensures that everyone is using the same value to describe the same thing” (Delaney and Brownlee, 1995, p. 39). This, however, was not true then and continues to not be true now, as the beliefs of what constitute the best interests of children remain very different depending on different perspectives and different value systems. Despite current provincial and territorial programs that
“acknowledge culture,” Aboriginal children continue to be overrepresented in the child welfare system (Trocmé, Knoke and Blackstock, 2004). Although this is due to a range of reasons, such as living in more “precarious socioeconomic conditions;” it also shows “there is a certain degree of racial bias affecting decisions about the substantiation of reported cases” particularly regarding “neglect” of Aboriginal children (Lavergne, Dufour, Trocmé and Larrivee, 2008, p.74). Looking at neglect is crucial to discussing child welfare in Nunavut, particularly because 46% of substantiated child welfare investigations in Canada are regarding neglect (Trome, Tourigny, MacLaurin and Fallon, 2003), “neglect is directly tied to poverty” (Libesman, 2007, p.17) and Inuit are some of the poorest in Canada (Tait, 2006). In fact, although the increasing number of children in care of provincial and territorial governments and the “growing numbers of referrals” involve a “broad array of problems,” the “increase has been driven primarily by cases involving neglect or exposure to domestic violence, while severe physical harm and sexual abuse represent a declining proportion of cases” (Trocmé, Knoke and Roy, 2003, p. 5). The connection between child neglect and families living in poverty has been well documented as the “promotion of wellbeing is often perceived as a luxury for this clientele and they are frequently denied programs and resources in the community. In this respect there seems to be confusion between the target and the strategies” (Trocmé and Chamberland, 2003, p.13). As well, the concept of neglect can be difficult for social workers from the dominant culture to understand as it:

“refers to a caregiver’s failure to supervise or protect a child or failure to meet a child’s physical needs. The distinction between this later category, physical neglect, and family poverty is difficult to draw since most of these families live in poverty, although very few poor families are considered neglectful” (Trocmé, 2005).

Social workers from the dominant culture appear to have difficulty identifying this distinction, as is evident in “the frequency of neglect in the reports of Aboriginal children” as “substantiated and suspected cases among these children were more likely to include neglect, especially a lack of supervision” (Lavergne, Dufour, Trocmé and Larrivee, 2008, p.72). The examination of neglect through “a case-based focus, that is, looking at each child’s situation in isolation from the broader community issues, has [also] not been successful” and has led to many Aboriginal children being removed from their families (Libesman, 2007, p. 18). Since the 1980’s it is commonly understood that many of the criticisms by Aboriginal communities towards the mainstream child welfare system regarding the “best interests” of children are valid, as the application of child welfare legislation remains dependent on the perspectives and paradigm of social
workers from the dominant culture who hold the “moral” decision-making power (Kimelman, 1985).

Despite the now mainstream value of raising children within their families and the view of child apprehension as a last resort, this has been largely ignored in areas where a lack of resources for families lead social workers back to apprehension as a means for immediately resolving issues associated with child welfare (AJIC, 1999). This is the case today in Nunavut, as evident within discussions at the legislative assembly where, “for the last five years, the number of children in protective care has also continued to rise” (Legislative Assembly of Nunavut, 2008, p.2973).

**COLONIALISM AND POST COLONIALISM**

As in many colonized communities around the world, Canadian Inuit are still healing from the pain and trauma of forced assimilation. Inuit culture, language and the traditional way of life, including child rearing practices, were demeaned as families were forced to adopt a European culture and a “white” way of living (AJIC, 1999; Tester and McNicoll, 2004, p. 2633). In this regard, colonialism has created a need for and had a vast role in the development of child welfare. Postcolonial theory, however, also plays a major part of the development of child welfare in Nunavut, as it requires we “incorporate the history of anti-colonial resistance with contemporary resistances to imperialism and to dominant western culture” (Loomba, 1998, p.12) but also because “it promise[s] to give Native people a place at the table” (King, 2003, p.58). Post colonialism also “refers to a process of disengagement from the whole colonial syndrome,” which is important to Nunavut and all Aboriginal people across Canada, as they collectively are currently engaged in “anti-colonial nationalism” (Loomba, 1998, p. 19). However, post colonialism “never promised to make the colonized world a better place for colonized peoples” but it does “through exposure to new literatures and cultures and challenges to hegemonic assumptions and power structures,” hold the potential for lives to “be made better” (King, 2003, p.58). Nonetheless, although it “might seem that because the age of colonialism is over” that it is possible that “the whole world is postcolonial,” yet “if the inequities of colonial rule have not been erased, it is perhaps premature to proclaim the demise of colonialism” (Loomba, 1998, p. 7). This is very much the case in Nunavut where post colonialism could be criticized for its ability to “effectively cut us off from our traditions, traditions which have come down to us through our cultures in spite of colonization” (King, 1990). This has lead to the struggle for many Inuit “to represent, create or recover a culture and a selfhood that has been systematically repressed and eroded.
during colonial rule” (Loomba, 1998, p.217). This struggle may be particularly difficult for women in Nunavut who have routinely encountered southern ideology concerning traditional child rearing and watched as:

“Doctors, district nurses, [and] health visitors assert[ed] their superior knowledge and authority, establishing moral sanctions on grounds of health and the national interest, and denigrating traditional methods of child care- in particular, care by anyone except the mother: neighbors, grandmothers and older children looking after babies were automatically assumed to be dirty, incompetent, and irresponsible. The authority of state over individual, of professional over amateur, of science over tradition, of male over female, of ruling class over working class, were all involved in the redefining of motherhood” (Davin, 1997, p.92).

This southern ideological view of mothers and child rearing is indicative of “the repressive power of colonialism, and especially of the way in which it intersected with patriarchy” (Loomba, 1998, p. 234). It also highlights the direct connection between southern ideology, childrearing and motherhood to the “pronounced lack of confidence in Aboriginal ways of raising children…based on European cultural traditions [as] superior to all other ways of parenting, [which] led to practices such as the establishment of residential schools” (Gough, Blackstock, and Bala, 2005). Thus, due to the imposed colonial beliefs and the oppression that has permeated Inuit society, particularly over the last forty years, one “cannot dismiss the importance of either formal decolonization, or the fact that unequal relationships of colonial rule are reinscribed in the contemporary imbalances between ‘first’ and ‘third’ world nations” (Loomba, 1998, p. 7). Therefore, it remains all the more important to critically examine the structures and systems, such as the child welfare systems, initially organized during colonization of Inuit in Nunavut, for the impact today and the part they play in the process of decolonization.

As previously described, residential school was one of the many Canadian government policies that directly affected Inuit children. In addition to the damage done through the colonialist strategy of residential schools, there were a number of other “social experiments” to be described in the following paragraphs, conducted by the Canadian government towards Inuit families, all with goal of cultural assimilation. Of these “social experiments,” the now commonly termed “Inuit relocations” (Tester and Kulchyski, 1994; Hicks and White, 2000), the imposition of “E-numbers,” the southern naming system (Alia, 2007) and the “Eskimo [sic] experiment” of placing Inuit children in southern Canadian “white” homes, have had similarly devastating effects on Inuit and the aftermath of these policies have had a ripple effect through communities (Pang, 2008; “Inuit group suing,” 2008). Although residential schools and the
relocation of children to southern foster homes are only some of the colonial and assimilationist strategies employed by the Canadian government, the size and scope of this paper prevents the opportunity to examine more.

For many, residential school was a place of sexual and physical abuse, and a place where Inuit language and culture was replaced with European culture, English language and western religion (Dussault, 2007). In addition, “the conditions at the schools were abysmal because they were built of the cheapest possible materials, run by untrained staff, and often overcrowded due to government financial inducements to increase enrolment. Sexual and physical abuses were prevalent, as were preventable deaths from disease” (Blackstock and Trocmé, 2005, p. 15). Although I have met some people who have described their residential school experience as not entirely negative, it is clear that overall, residential school did “extensive damage to: feelings of self worth, family connectedness, the intergenerational transfer of skills and traditions, and the essential core of trust in and respect for others which all people must draw in order to build loving relationships and healthy communities” (Dussault, 2007). The effects that have stemmed from residential schools have been well documented as “many children experienced significant erosion of their cultural identity, and suffered profound, long term negative psychological consequences that continue today” (Gough, Blackstock and Bala, 2005, p. 2).

The “Inuit relocations,” as they are known today, describes a number of different attempts by the Canadian government to relocate Inuit to newly created settlements in different high Arctic locations (Tester and Kulchyski, 2004). One more commonly known example of these relocations was in 1953 when Inuit from Inukjuak (previously called Port Harrison) in northern Quebec were sent by ship to Resolute Bay and Grise Fiord in the high Arctic (Hicks and White, 2000, p. 22). The relocated families were falsely promised that they could return home in two years if this new move did not bring “abundance,” yet the return for many was not until 1989, almost 36 years later (Tester and Kulchyski, 2004). This relocation did not bring a better existence and instead brought sickness, poverty, alcoholism, and hunger. This wound was further deepened by Inuit not being allowed on the Royal Canadian Air Force base in the town of Resolute Bay, described as a policy of “isolation” to keep Inuit and Qallunaat separate (GN, 2002; Tester and Kulchyski, 1994). The “High Arctic Exiles,” as these families are now known, had not been accustomed to the 24-hour darkness that accompanies the winter months in the high Arctic, nor were they familiar with
the food, such as polar bear, so the government then relocated more Inuit families from Pond Inlet to Resolute Bay to help the initial families adjust (Tester and Kulchyski, 1994). These are just some examples of the Canadian government’s relocation of Inuit in the north and to this day, many relocated families are continuing to heal from the events and effects of such policies.

Another example of colonial assimilation by the Canadian government is now known as the “Eskimo Experiment,” which involved sending Inuit children to live with southern families in order to be assimilated into “white” dominant Canadian culture during the 1950’s and 60’s. For the sake of a government experiment where “the goal was to see if Inuit children could perform at the same level as white, middle class children” many Inuit continue to describe these experiences as traumatic (Pang, 2008). These children spent years with southern families, only to be returned to their families in Nunavut at the end of the experiment. For most, this return to Nunavut meant no longer being able to communicate with their families in Inuktitut and now viewing their own communities negatively and their homes as “shacks” (Pang, 2008; “Inuit group suing,” 2008). The culture shock was enormous for these children and again this experience has had devastating effects on those who were taken from their homes as children.

During the 1940’s the government of Canada also came up with a plan to provide all Inuit with “a reference number” (also known as the “E” number) so they could be recorded in Ottawa. The use of numbers were seen as necessary by government agents because previous “missionary naming programmes did not solve everyone’s ‘problems.’ Traders, police, doctors, explorers and other Qallunaat were stumped by the absence of surnames and either unable or unwilling to learn the distinguishing name” (Alia, 2007, p. 49). The Canadian government decided that because fingerprinting people seemed “inappropriate,” all Inuit would be provided with a disc with a number etched into it, similar to the “dog tag” provided to army personnel (Alia, 2007). Each E-number or identifying disc had numbers imprinted on them that read “Eskimo Identification” with a symbol of the Crown, the word Canada and the person’s identification number (Alia, 2007). These discs were provided to all Inuit and the government expected them to be worn around the necks of all Inuit at all times. Alia (1994) reminds us that as the Canadian government was subscribing discs with E-numbers for Inuit so were:

“the tattooed numbers and yellow Stars of David inflicted on Jewish people in Nazi Germany. Although these were certainly more sinister than the disc numbers (which were accompanied by social services, not deliberate decimation), we cannot ignore the historical context: both systems
emerged in the 1930s and 1940s, both involved minority peoples who were publicly relabeled by government” (p.74).

Similarly, although “proposals to standardize spellings” of Inuit names began in 1929, it was not until 1960’s that the government of Canada determined the solution to the Inuit “problem” of identification (Alia, 2007). This “solution” and the “case for Project Surname was argued in terms of the ‘necessity for accurate recordkeeping’ or the ‘difficulty in pronouncing or recording Inuktitut names’” for government agents (Alia, 1994, p. 100). No concern was afforded to Inuit with the requirement for them to learn and pronounce the European naming system, to take on an entirely new name, or the cultural implications that stem from doing so. The government of Canada’s attempt to solve the Inuit “problem” of identification for the benefit of southerners required the RCMP to collect “data” from Inuit and involved giving all Inuit a Qallunaat or “white man’s naming system” (Alia, 2007). The project involved RCMP going to every home and interviewing Inuit families and then asking families to determine a surname for each family member. This was difficult because “in Qallunaaq record keeping, surname equals ‘head of household’ but the father or husband is not necessarily the most powerful person in an Inuit extended family” (Alia, 2007, p.49). The concept of a father being more powerful than a mother within the home was counter to Inuit belief of families and it had an impact on the culture, as traditionally Inuit naming and labeling “were and are very often idiosyncratically constructed, based not on biology but on a person’s name and on the emotional relationship between individuals concerned” (Briggs, 1998, p. 242). The Canadian government’s forceful requirement of Inuit to adopt the western naming system is particularly important to child welfare because of the disruption to the cultural structure within the home regarding power and the subsequent effect on childrearing practices, which were based on the traditional naming system. The southern naming system disrupted the use of “namesakes” or the “name relationships,” which involved children acquiring “relationships- including affective bonds and often rights and obligations – that belonged to the previous name-holder…[as] people were often addressed by terms appropriate to one or more of their names. [For example,] a mother might call one of her daughters “brother” (Inuit names were not gender specific) and another daughter “grandmother” (Briggs, 1998, p. 261). The traditional Inuit naming system also involved the belief that “aspects of a child’s behavior were sometimes thought to derive from her or his name, and contrariwise, attempts might be made to influence childish behavior by reminding the offender that she was
an adult and not a child at all” (Briggs, 1998, p. 261). The contrast to southern naming systems can be seen here, particularly in the weight of history, culture, and emotion attached to Inuit names.

As families struggled to adapt, first to E-numbers and then later to the new names given to them by southerners, the impact of colonization on childrearing was assaulted further through the role social workers held and their “teaching” of southern values to parents, so as to ensure their childrearing was consistent with the dominant culture and counter to the Inuit or Aboriginal world view. As “western theoretical hegemony manifests primarily in educational institutions,” the educational and “teaching” role of social workers within child welfare further served to colonize Inuit in Nunavut and assimilate Inuit families into southern ideology (Sinclair, 2004, p. 51). The differences between Inuit and southern world views and the “divergent ethical foundations within the child welfare arena” are perhaps best described by Briggs (1998) who documented the uniqueness of Inuit childrearing techniques (Hand, 2003, p.36). These techniques and traditional Inuit childrearing are important because they point to the conflicts within world view that southern social workers may focus “teaching” and “education” on during their child welfare work. One such childrearing technique Briggs (1998) refers to as “play” “makes emotionally difficult lessons easier to learn” (p. 258). As a central part of Inuit childrearing, the underlying tenant of this “play” is “to cause or increase thought” by presenting children with:

“emotionally powerful problems that the children could not ignore…done by asking a question that was potentially dangerous for the child being questioned and dramatizing the consequences of various answers: ‘Why don’t you kill your baby brother? Why don’t you die so I can have your nice new shirt?’ ‘Your mother’s going to die- look she’s cut her finger- do you want to come live with me?’ In this way, adults created, or raised consciousness, issues that the children must have seen as having grave consequences for their lives.” (Briggs, 1998, p.5)

These plays often hold:

“motives underlying values, attitudes, and behaviors [that] are not always straightforward and simple. People may behave generously because they fear their stingy inclinations or may act with fierce independence because they fear being dependent. They may reject others because they love them or treat them with warm concern because they fear them—or because they enjoy and fear their own aggressive impulses” (Briggs, 1998, p. 208).

Through her research, Briggs (1979) also describes some key values of Inuit society that conflict with southern child welfare and southern ideology regarding child rearing. For example, Briggs (1979) describes that “the only way to protect oneself is to give away some of what one has acquired, to share, to be generous” (p. 395), which conflicts with the western notion of “saving for a rainy day,” or capitalism and “hoarding” behavior. Also she explains, within Inuit culture, “giving is what is approved” and although this
is also viewed positively in southern dominant culture, the concept of “having” and “obtaining” holds a higher value (Briggs, 1979, p. 395). “Inuit Morality Play” is designed to “create a conflict in the child, which it must resolve,” but when overheard by southerners who lack an understanding of this child rearing technique, the questioning of killing a younger sibling may not be understood (Briggs, 1979, p. 396). Inuit culture allows children the space and freedom to make decisions as “wrong choices may be ignored, tolerated, or smiled at, but are never approved, and the directives communicated through play are confirmed, never contradicted in the other spheres of the child’s experiences” (Briggs, 1979, p. 397).

However, providing a safe place for children to make wrong choices is not typical of western child rearing, which tends to respond to a child’s wrong choices with consequences, such as punishments and disapproval. The use of punishment was not commonly used within Inuit child rearing and although, “parents now and then expressed momentary annoyance when a child was obstreperous or disobedient, they rarely showed anger” (Briggs, 1998, p. 5). This is because “to be angry with a child was demeaning; it demonstrated one’s own childishness…as an educational device, scolding was likely to backfire and cause a child to rebel” and “when anger was expressed toward a child, the community strongly disagreed” (Briggs, 1998, p.5). These values conflict with southern values that emphasize discipline and control, but they are very much aligned with traditional southern Aboriginal beliefs that “place great emphasis on the responsibility of the extended family and the community to ensure the well-being of children” to ensure “the survival of the community as a whole” (Gough, Blackstock and Bala, 2005, p. 1). Qallunaat social workers that lack an understanding of Inuit cultural “play,” which continues to be practiced and is visible today in Nunavut families, may misunderstand the importance and effect of the adult-child interaction in Inuit families. Qallunaat social workers may even suggest to Inuit that such dialogue is “inappropriate parenting.”

All of these examples of colonization have left scars for Inuit families in Nunavut. One of the most damaging results of colonization, however, “has been inter-generational division within a strongly kinship-centered society” (Kral, 2003). Due to colonialism and forced assimilation, parenting and role modeling has been disrupted, and families continue to deal with this on a daily basis all over the territory. I have witnessed many grandparents struggling to communicate with their children and grandchildren, which has caused great difficulty in the transmission of oral history, tradition, and culture from generation to
generation. This intergenerational division has in part created a situation for southern Canadians to point to the need for child welfare. Yet it is through the use of child welfare (a Qallunaat institution) to deal with the problems created by the same colonial system that have only further served to create a self-perpetuating system. As child welfare in Nunavut has been created out of the “good intentions” of colonialism, it is important to explore these when discussing current and future child welfare (Kimelman, 1985). This is in order to move away from the colonial roots of social work and ensure that the direction of child welfare does not just “shift the responsibility for well-being to individuals and local communities [while] ignoring the inherent inequalities among social structures” and cause further trauma in Nunavut (McGrath, Moffatt, George and Lee, 1999, p.17).

ABORIGINAL CHILD WELFARE AGENCIES

The history and development of Aboriginal run child welfare agencies across Canada begins with political change in the 1970’s, leading to First Nations in Manitoba signing a “master agreement” with the federal government to assume control over their Aboriginal child welfare services in 1982 (AJIC, 1999). Unfortunately, the handing over of child welfare services to Aboriginal organizations has led to “some Aboriginal agencies, operating with minimal funding, untrained staff and under intense community pressure, [which] have also failed to protect their charges…[as] social agencies are overwhelmed with the human cost of social disruption” (Dussault, 2007). Since this time Aboriginal child welfare agencies have been working to re-create the child welfare system from the inside out, despite its base in colonial policies, practices and beliefs. Aboriginal agencies have had to ensure they are not operating the same oppressive child welfare system, only this time governed by Aboriginal people, and this has required an increased political, social and educational examination of child welfare service provision to Aboriginal families, including how it should operate and what it should entail (AJIC, 1999). This is a long road and an enormous assignment particularly when “native agencies are bound by the same provincial child-welfare laws as their mainstream counterparts, but must survive on far tighter budgets under a strict federal funding formula that takes little account of provincial legislation” (Philip, 2002). Despite the challenges, the distinguishing features between child welfare authorities and Aboriginal child welfare authorities are ideological, and their foundation and decision-making stems from a different world view (AJIC, 1999; McKenzie, Seidl and Bone, 1995). However, even Aboriginal agencies operating under defining beliefs of
Aboriginal culture and philosophies regarding children, families, and communities, still remain constrained
by the western constructs of child welfare and the colonialism entrenched within social services and social
work theory. This is evident within Canadian child welfare as “the number of Native children being placed
is increasing, [while] placements are dropping for non-Native children” (Trocmé, Knoke and Blackstock,
2004, p. 5). Unfortunately, there does not appear to be another alternative for southern Aboriginal
communities than assuming control of the child welfare system through Aboriginal agencies, as they must
contend with provincial legislation, urban geography, and embedded notions of southern social work,
which are based on the Euro-western policies and practices of the dominant culture. Recognition of these
constraints are suggested by the current attempts to now involve “Indigenous ways of knowing, healing and
teaching to counter balance the dominant philosophy and pedagogy” (Ives, Aitken, Loft and Phillips, 2007,
p. 19). Despite attempts to bridge the dominant social work culture with Aboriginal social work theory and
practice, Aboriginal students of social work continue to describe the profession as “elitist,” as it “connotes
power and privilege” through the use of “theories and practices [that] tend to favor the status quo where
Aboriginal people are concerned” (Christensen, 1994, p. 29). However, in spite of the colonial roots of the
child welfare system, southern Aboriginal agencies are still better positioned to provide more culturally
specific child welfare service to Aboriginal children and families, due to the world view and approaches
taken by Aboriginal agencies. In spite of this, it is important to point out that although most of the writing
on Aboriginal child welfare does not necessarily reflect the realities and culture of Inuit in Nunavut, distinct
similarities can be drawn, particularly regarding a role for community and the communal responsibility for
children. For example, the following comment provided by the Aboriginal Justice Implementation
Commission (AJIC) (1999) described the difference between non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal child welfare
approaches in its report:

“the Aboriginal agencies are more sensitive to Aboriginal culture and the needs of the families. They are sometimes able to find solutions, which those not familiar with the community might not
even consider. While adhering to their understanding of the best interest of the child, they tend to
view child and family situations and problems in a much more holistic fashion than do non-
Aboriginal agencies, and treat the whole family, rather than intercede only when presented with a
troubled or neglected child. The Aboriginal view of the “best interests” of the child takes into
account the needs of the family and of the community. The Aboriginal agencies believe they can
serve the interests of the child best by ensuring a supportive family or, failing that, a supportive
extended family. In many cases, the extended family encompasses the whole community. For
Aboriginal agencies, the health of the community is an important factor in addressing the best
interests of the child. Removing a child from one family in the community can have a negative
impact on other children in that family, as well as on the wider community. If removal of children
occurs on a large scale, the ability of the community to function properly and to retain its cultural traditions with a sense of positive self-esteem are undermined, and social disorganization results. Taking measures on a child-by-child basis that undermine the long-term health of the community puts the entire culture at risk” (p. 20).

Aboriginal world view and Inuit culture differ from the southern mainstream perspective of child welfare and the “best interests” of a child, which does not take into account the Aboriginal community when examining a child’s situation, but instead places the child’s needs for safety and wellbeing above all else as “paramount” (Child and Family Services Act, 1997, s.3). Yet an “understanding of communal identity and a related whole-of-community” is necessary to child welfare in Aboriginal communities (Libesman, 2004, p.24). It should be noted, however, that Nunavut’s Child and Family Service Act, unlike other province’s legislation, does attempt to balance the “best interests” and importance of child safety and wellbeing with the “principles governing the act,” which includes the importance of recognizing the ties children have to their culture and can be interpreted as directly linked to their community for example. Nunavut’s legislation does state that “family’s well-being should be supported and promoted,” “communities should be encouraged to provide, wherever possible, their own child and family services” and that “measures taken for the protection and well-being of children should, as far as possible, promote family and community integrity and continuity” (Child and Family Services Act, 1997, s.2). Unfortunately, even these “guiding principles” are still open to interpretation and do not provide specific direction to non-Aboriginal social workers that arrive to work temporarily in the high Arctic. As well, despite the “guiding principles” in many province’s child welfare legislation, the idea of “best interests” applied by non-Aboriginal social workers “has been wrought with cultural bias in a system dominated by white, middle class workers, boards of directors, administrators, lawyers, and judges” (Kimelman, 1985, p.29). This is in part because Aboriginal communities instead place value and greater “emphasis on connectedness to land and family, resulting in a view of the individual in context” (Libesman, 2004, p.26). The difference in values regarding the “best interests” of children between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal world views of child welfare can perhaps best be seen, however, when discussing child neglect, particularly the lack of supervision of children. For example, an Aboriginal world view places a high value on a “strong sense of community and shared responsibility” in contrast to the “high value placed on independence in the dominant culture” (Liberman, 2004, p. 26). The non-Aboriginal world view may, therefore, view a parent as being “neglectful” when he or she is not supervising a child playing in the community, while the Aboriginal
world view may see the community as supervising the child and, thus, the parent’s direct supervision is not necessary.

Other differences between Aboriginal and “rural values such as sharing, harmony with nature, cooperation, stewardship, and coexistence have been contrasted with values of the dominant urban society such as individual autonomy, private property, and manipulation of the environment for profit” (Zapf, 2005b, p. 3). In Nunavut, the land and “the importance of country foods for Inuit cannot be underestimated” as it “is more than a matter of food provision” (Irniq, Rowley and Tester, 2006, p. 5). This is because, “when inhabitants of a region have been there for many generations, their identity incorporates their relationship to it” (Zapf, 2005b, p. 4). This, unfortunately, is not likely to be understood by southerners or “the urban-based profession of social work, or the dominant society for that matter” because they are unlikely to “embrace a rural perspective, an Aboriginal world view, or a deeper ecological understanding of the profound connections between person and place” (Zapf, 2005b, p. 5). The unlikely understanding of the Inuit connection between person and place by those from the dominant culture may be due to southerners “view [of] environment as separate from ourselves, as an objective thing, as a commodity to be developed or traded or wasted or exploited, as an economic unit, [and] as property” (Zapf, 2005a, p. 636). In social work, “these two worlds can clash in the helping process” due to “the divergent worlds of mainstream providers and Indigenous recipients [as] the former is determined by the powerful tradition of universalism, empiricism and [the] individual, [and] the Indigenous helping mode is based rather on familial and community connections, storytelling and spirituality” (Berman, 2006, p. 99). Also, the use of working with the whole family through holistic service provision in their community is consistent with an Aboriginal world view, but this is quite different from the traditional southern world view of child welfare that has adopted an:

“Overly bureaucratic and legalistic paradigm…[which] has greatly rigidified practice by the introduction of overly specialized roles, top down and fiscally driven policies, increasing disconnection from community, overly prescriptive standards and other trappings of technologically-based approaches that create increasing distance between child welfare practitioners and those they serve” (Lafrance, Bastien, Bodor, and Ayala, 2006).

In summary, “Aboriginal agencies believe it is not possible to ‘choose’ between the best interests of the child and the best interests of the community,” which leads to the conclusive difference that the “interpretations of best interests for children are culturally bound, and not universal” due to the differences
in the dominant culture and the Inuit world views (AJIC, 1999). This also leads to the conclusion that current “social work supports and participates in an unjust society” and suggests the need for research studies that “focus on the ‘hidden agendas’ of social work decision makers by asking whether child welfare decisions are actually based on what is believed to be in the child’s best interest” (Washington, 2008, p. 13).

**CHILD WELFARE IN NUNAVUT (1999 to Present)**

The Nunavut Land Claims Agreement and the Nunavut Act were both passed in 1993 and by 1999 Nunavut was on the map. The new public government, however, was faced with the task of putting laws and policies in place for Nunavummiut and to do this they began with the pre-existing legislation of the Northwest Territories (NWT). Although certain aspects were changed, the current legislation in Nunavut cannot be described as radically different from the Northwest Territories or anywhere else in Canada, and the legislation regarding child welfare is no exception. At the creation of Nunavut in 1999, the government set out to describe its priorities and way of approaching all government functions through appropriate Inuit principles and values. This was done in part with the creation of a document called the “Bathurst Mandate, Pinasuaqtavut: that which we have set out to do” (G.N., 1999). The *Bathurst Mandate* outlines the importance of healthy communities, simplicity, unity, self-reliance, and continued learning as its main goals (G.N., 1999). Within these priorities is also a description of concrete principles for guidance and a plan for the territory’s future through the incorporation of these principles. It remains a very important document that has been incorporated into the development of the territory’s new policies and practices.

Today the four pieces of legislation that govern child welfare in Nunavut include the *Adoptions Act*, the *Guardianship and Trusteeship Act*, the *Aboriginal Custom Adoption Recognition Act*, and the *Child and Family Services Act*. Collectively these serve as the backbone of all child welfare service in the territory, but the primary legislation remains the Child and Family Service Act, which dictates legislated interventions and support for children, youth, and families. Nunavut’s Child and Family Service Act, however, falls in line with its predecessor, the Child and Family Service Act of the Northwest Territories (NWT), which replaced the Child Welfare Act in 1998. Incidentally, the NWT’s child welfare legislation was built from the template of the child welfare legislation of the southern provinces. Therefore, despite a few changes, both Nunavut’s and the NWT’s legislation remains strikingly similar to the rest of southern
Canada’s child welfare legislation. The key differences in Nunavut’s legislation from its southern counterparts is the provision for Child and Family Services committees to be created within communities and the requirement to acknowledge and work within the standards of the child’s community (Gough, 2007). Although these committees can be created as needed, such as following a child being apprehended from its parents, the committees can also exist permanently in the community and be involved in child welfare interventions. Unfortunately, none of Nunavut’s communities have yet to build a formalized committee to become involved in child welfare issues and interventions. The lack of these committees in Nunavut appears to indicate that they are not functioning as they were intended and that they may be understood by Inuit as a Qallunaat attempt to incorporate the Inuit value of community into the child welfare system. Although the lack of Child and Family Service committees in the territory requires additional research and remains beyond the scope of this study, it does point to an obvious disconnect between the legislation and Inuit communities. The other unique aspect to Nunavut’s child welfare legislation is the recognition of community standards and when children are removed from their guardian’s care they will be provided with care consistent with community standards6 (Child and Family Services Act [CFSA], 1997, s. 2, s. 59). Each Child and Family Service committee can also establish their community’s standards to be recognized within child welfare services and “determin[e] the level of care adequate to meet a child’s needs and when a child needs protection” (Gough, 2007, p. 4). The CFSA’s recognition of community standards in Nunavut signals the importance for Qallunaat social workers to gain an understanding of Nunavut community life, including the large-scale poverty, household overcrowding, lack of infrastructure, but most importantly Inuit cultural practices. This understanding includes learning about the importance of hunting and obtaining “country foods,” which may involve taking children out of school to go hunting when the weather is good. The goal of incorporating “community standards” into Nunavut legislation appears to have been intended to reduce the ethnocentrism of child welfare practice in Nunavut by Qallunaat social workers. However, the lack of committees that exist in Nunavut to guide social workers regarding decision-making in keeping with a community’s standards, means social workers are typically on their own to learn and understand community standards. Unfortunately, due to the vagueness of the term,

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6 This term lacks clear description within the Act
and the lack of discussion with Qallunaat social workers of the meaning, one can foresee the potential for Qallunaat to misunderstand the concept.

As Nunavut has just barely recently reached 10 years old, there are few publicly available statistics regarding child welfare in the territory. There were, however, 340 children reported to be in care of the government in 2007 (Gough, 2007). It is difficult to compare these numbers with other provinces and territories due to the small population in Nunavut, but in this same year, 37 of these children were placed in southern Canada for different reasons, such as medical or behavioral treatment (Gough, 2007). Again, this is difficult to compare in relation to other provinces and territories, particularly when it is not normally required to send children outside of a province for specific treatment. Across Canada the numbers of children in care of the government are increasing, despite shifts in social work practice to more “family centered” approaches and the increasing number of Aboriginal agencies (Trocmé, Knoke and Blackstock, 2004). Since “the vulnerable population of children in need of protection is increasing significantly” across the country, it should not be assumed that Nunavut’s situation is radically different as it relies on similar legislation and a significant portion of its social workers are Qallunaat from southern Canada (Farris-Manning and Zandstra, 2003). In fact, the legislative assembly in Nunavut, as previously mentioned, has recently indicated that the number of children in care of the government has also been increasing (Legislative Assembly of Nunavut, 2008). This in part is discussed in terms of Nunavut presenting as “a very challenging place to deliver health care,” which is further complicated by limited resources (Johnson, 1999). Although the territory attempts to provide child welfare services through social service offices in every community, many offices and social work positions sit vacant, leaving many communities to receive child welfare services by telephone (Thompson, 2008). This practice of providing the southern model of child welfare service to remote northern locations occurs despite long time criticisms that “children cannot be supervised from behind a desk in some distant location” as this can lead to “grocery stores hav[ing] greater control over their stock than the Director of Child Welfare has over children” (Kimelman, 1985, p. 294). Interestingly, the current child welfare practiced today in Nunavut is very similar, if not the same, to that practiced in the Arctic almost 40 years ago despite Nunavut’s government being now supposedly based on Inuit values and beliefs. Paine’s (1971) description of the power-based roles southerners held in the Arctic, as “patrons” and “middlemen” remains strikingly similar to the current structure of Nunavut.
communities today. Patrons or those with “status, power, influence [and] authority” and the middlemen that go between the larger government organization and the community exist much the same today as they did then for currently social workers, RCMP, nurses, ministers, teachers and the managers of community stores, remain almost entirely Qallunaat (Paine, 1971). While simplifying his work greatly, Paine (1971) described how the Canadian government “stands for western culture” and the “middleman” position occupied by Qallunaat social workers is “self-generative” to “represent a particular segment of western values and each especially desires the propagation of his version of western culture” in order to “sow the seed for further acts” (p. 6). Paine (1971) also described how the status and power attached to a Qallunaat in Nunavut as the “non-Eskimo [sic] is categorized with reference to his specified status in the community as policeman, teacher, nurse, missionary, or whatever” and these “Euro-Canadian[s] are likely to assume a leadership role…on account of general powers attached to his white- and white educated-personage” (p. 47). These community positions continue to be held by southerners and continue to retain the power and status associated with their professional designation. It is this designation that provides Qallunaat the authority to act as broker of services and retain the power of decision-making within the community.

It is not surprising based on this continued colonial power held by dominant culture workers in Nunavut, that discussions regarding the lack of social workers is met with the solution of employing more Qallunaat social workers and has lead to an increased reliance on southerners in the Arctic (Thompson, 2008). Qallunaat social workers who have been trained through southern universities and who have participated in courses regarding “cultural sensitivity” and “cultural competence” in order to work in cross-cultural environments are routinely recruited for Nunavut social work. These “culturally competent” southern Qallunaat social workers are trained in “dominant practice models…urban-designed and urban driven,” which has invariably maintained “the social worker as colonial agent” who then “enforces metropolitan requirements on the hinterland” (Schmidt, 2000, p. 345). Interestingly, however, there is a college in Nunavut that provides a diploma to Inuit who are interested in working in the territory’s social services. Although Nunavut’s college can be considered similar to the Aurora College of the Northwest Territories, which “graduates about 12 social workers per year and 85% of them find permanent social work employment within a year of graduation” (Durst, 2006, p. 10), Nunavut only graduates up to five social workers a year (Legislative Assembly of Nunavut, 2007). Despite 10 years of graduating
Nunavummiut as social workers only “half of the social workers in Nunavut are Inuit” and of the 51 social work positions spread among the 26 communities, only 33 are filled (Legislative Assembly of Nunavut, 2008, p. 2961). This leads to the conclusion that there are less than 20 Inuit in social work positions in Nunavut, the other positions are either vacant or held by Qallunaat social workers. These numbers and the lack of Inuit employed as social workers in Nunavut requires in depth examination, but this unfortunately requires a greater capacity of research than this current study can provide. It does also raise questions as to why all of these graduates are not all employed in Nunavut, thereby eliminating the use of southern Qallunaat social workers altogether. This may partially be answered by the prospect for many Inuit of having to complete training and then work outside of their home communities, which likely creates a large barrier to employment. Other Inuit that are interested in social work may feel working in their home community could present too many challenges due to their personal relationships and families within the community. Augoustinos, Tuffin and Every (2005), however, provide another explanation that could be applied to the lack of Inuit social workers employed in the territory as their research has shown “liberal principles such as individualism, merit, and egalitarianism” are “recurrently drawn upon to justify, argue and legitimate opposition to affirmative action” (p.315). Their research also determined that for many in the dominant culture, the view of “Aboriginal disadvantage becomes similar to other situations in which disadvantages and setbacks can be overcome by hard work and application” (Augoustinos, Tuffin and Every, 2005, p. 331). This suggests the lack of Inuit social workers may be due to “new racism” within the government of Nunavut and the high value placed on “the principles of individual achievement and meritocracy,” which consequently “proteces and maintains white privilege and leaves minority groups disadvantage intact” (Augoustinos, Tuffin and Every, 2005, p. 337). The very real “tension between Indigenous Aboriginal people and the predominantly European newcomers” (Schmidt, 2000, p. 341) that occurs within communities and that Qallunaat are likely to be hired in a “leadership role” thereby placing Inuit workers in a subordinate position to a southern colleague, may have much to do with the lack of Inuit workers (Paine, 1971). For those Inuit that do attend Nunavut’s college to become social workers, they are also required to learn southern social work theory and practice consistent with southern universities and colleges (Nunavut Arctic College, 2008b). It is possible that this may be counter-productive to the employment of Inuit social workers who would be appropriate for Nunavut social work without the
imposition of southern social work ideology for “unless we train the ‘natural’ out of their style, it is assumed that they will operate in a culturally-sensitive way and likely to remain in their communities” (Berman, 2006, p. 103). For “even without formal training, villagers can better identify problems and write better case histories” than southern social workers selected for their extensive training and cross-cultural practice (Berman, 2006, p. 102). This is likely because “they have grown up with clients and are better at monitoring situations on a daily basis” and “their work is likely to be compatible with the culture and lifestyles of their clients” (Berman, 2006, p. 102). The life-long Inuit residents in Nunavut’s unique communities throughout the Arctic make the territory an ideal place to critically examine the employment of “trained” Qallunaat social workers and explore the potential for a new approach to child welfare.
CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW

There is a sizable amount of information on culturally specific social work within Aboriginal communities, but unfortunately, there remains little about the actual experiences of social workers or research regarding social services in Canada’s Arctic. In particular, the lack of research regarding child welfare in Nunavut has created a difficult starting place for this study, requiring we look beyond the specific area of child welfare, to social work practice in general, and beyond Nunavut and Inuit communities to rural Aboriginal communities. These research studies are important because they pick up on the key aspects of child welfare work and collectively provide some information that is transferable to examining child welfare in Nunavut. None of these research studies, however, involve Inuit families, nor do they discuss the unique challenges associated with social services in Nunavut, the power inherent in the role of social worker in Inuit communities, or the colonial model of child welfare in Canada’s youngest territory. Therefore, in addition to current research studies of child welfare within Aboriginal communities, studies and reports of social issues in Nunavut that provide perspectives and thoughts of Nunavummiut are essential to providing Inuit perspective to this research as they bring us closer to understanding what Nunavummiut want to see for their communities. It is through previous research and additional relevant literature that a wider view and a deeper level for understanding child welfare in Nunavut is possible.

STUDIES OF SOCIAL WORK IN ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES (CANADA)

Research by Zapf (1993) regarding northern and remote social work practice in Canada provides an outline of what urban trained social workers from the dominant culture may experience when arriving to work in Canada’s Yukon Territory from southern locations. Schmidt (2008) similarly provides a view of northern social work through a study of social workers in remote communities of northern British Columbia. These two studies together provide a glimpse of the challenges associated with southern social work models being practiced in Canada’s northern communities. Both Zapf (1993) and Schmidt (2008) have shown that social work in Canada’s north pose particular challenges for urban oriented social workers, such as retention and turnover, largely owing to a “poor fit between urban-based professional social work training and the realities of northern communities” (Zapf, 1993, p. 694). Southern social workers reported difficulty with “the lack of anonymity, high visibility, isolation, and the poverty of amenities” (Schmidt, 2008, p. 104) and this “poor fit manifests itself in the field as a stressful choice perceived by the worker as
he or she comes to view the requirements of the job as incompatible with active membership in the community” (Zapf, 1993, p.696). This conflict results in what Zapf (1993) refers to as the experience of “culture shock.” Social workers reported issues of personal safety within communities and “personal health being threatened by the stress of the work” as well “the constant challenge of trying to meet standards that are impossible given staff shortages and workloads” (Schmidt, 2008, p. 102-103). These stressors and the culture shock associated with working in remote Canadian communities led Zapf (1993) to determine “everyone who attempts to live and work in a strange culture can expect a negative experience during the first few months,” and patterns in this research “indicate that the stress experienced by new social workers in the north may be connected with the social work role they are hired to perform, rather than the individual characteristics of the workers themselves” (p. 700,701). The overall conclusion of Zapf’s (1993) research “suggests that the difficulty may not be an issue of the wrong people in the north as much as a question of the role of conventional social work itself in the setting” (p.701). Social workers respond by attempting “to understand the community using frameworks from his or her own familiar culture and profession” (Zapf, 1993, p. 702). The southern or dominant world views of these social workers and their use of southern based practice standards inevitably lead to “the futile feeling of trying to do a job that cannot be done according to standards because the human resources are simply not there” (Schmidt, 2008, p. 100).

Although Zapf’s (1993) and Schmidt’s (2008) studies provided useful information as to the challenges and issues associated with providing southern social work to remote Canadian locations by southern social workers, both omitted a discussion of the culture of communities, the power inherent in the role of social worker, colonialism, or the role of social work as colonial agent.

The recent research of Graham, Brownlee, Shier and Doucette (2008) has also examined social work in Canada’s north. Their research involved interviewing social workers in rural communities in northern Ontario and the Northwest Territories regarding the challenges associated with the work and the need for contextually sensitive social work knowledge and intervention. Their research found that as “social work remains a patently southern- and urban- dominated profession” social workers are required to alter their social work knowledge and practice to “meet the needs presented within northern contexts” (Graham, Brownlee, Shier and Doucette, 2008, p.400). This was done by mixing “traditional Aboriginal and western practices to forge a balance between the two,” while also “balancing government requirements
with those of community needs” (Graham, Brownlee, Shier and Doucette, 2008, p. 401). Of the 37 social workers interviewed for this research, participants reported their relationships tended to be informal and involved “a degree of personal relationship with some of their clients” (Graham, Brownlee, Shier and Doucette, 2008, p.402). There was also recognition that “social work practitioners hold power that is more evident here than in more populated areas, and they must understand their power position within a community” (Graham, Brownlee, Shier and Doucette, 2008, p.402). Research participants indicated necessary knowledge and skills for the work including, “training in suicide prevention and trauma,” “practical training areas” such as “basic interviewing skills” and “being empathetic,” “training in community development” and “practice training in cultural sensitivity and awareness” (Graham, Brownlee, Shier and Doucette, 2008, p.403). Although the researchers sought to determine an appropriate theoretical framework for intervention in remote and rural Canadian communities, participants instead “identified a number of areas related to theory and practice that they perceived as being inappropriate to working within northern communities” (Graham, Brownlee, Shier and Doucette, 2008, p.403). This was determined to be due to “mainstream knowledge exchange of social work theory and practice guidelines, [which] suggests they have universal applicability to individuals across all communities” despite it being “widely understood within the literature that social work practice in remote northern communities is characterized by conditions distinct from those of practice in more urban centres” (Graham, Brownlee, Shier and Doucette, 2008, p.404). The researchers also briefly touched on the view by Schmidt (2000), which suggests a new model of social work for northern communities and stated, “it has become evident that understanding the community is a key concept in effective and appropriate practice within rural northern environments” (Graham, Brownlee, Shier and Doucette, 2008, p.404). In addition to this, researchers Graham, Brownlee, Shier and Doucette (2008) conclude that “the role of community development in social work practice seems to be heightened in rural communities” and this suggests “the need for increased interdisciplinary training for social work practitioners” (p. 404).

Although Graham, Brownlee, Shier and Doucette’s (2008) research looks at the experiences of social workers in rural northern Canadian communities, it lacks a discussion of necessary changes that are required to decrease the inflated power social workers hold in the north. Nor does the research look at the use of social workers in the current colonization of Aboriginal persons or the impact of colonialism on the
community regarding child welfare. Interestingly, based on the challenges and complexities of northern social work, the researchers “call for the development of a knowledge base that more appropriately informs social work standards of practice” but they do not provide suggestions as to where this knowledge base is to come from (Graham, Brownlee, Shier and Doucette, 2008, p.400).

Walmsley’s (2004) study of child protection practitioners in British Columbia provides an interesting account of social workers’ thoughts of working in rural Aboriginal communities regarding geographical location, reciprocity in relationships, and their views of the community and its residents. The research determined that “the differing geographical relationships to practice impact the way practitioners view the ‘community’ as well as the community’s understanding of child protection practice” and rural child protection can lead to “informal, non-crisis oriented interactions” (Walmsley, 2004, p. 65). As in the research conducted by Zapf (1993) and Schmidt (2008), the themes of loss of anonymity for the social worker when “the distinction between public/ professional life and private/ personal life becomes blurred” and the social worker as “a distant outsider” within the community were also apparent (Walmsley, 2004, p.65). Walmsley (2004) also determined when social workers are sent temporarily into communities, “the focus of the work is the completion of a task” further creating a “social distance and formality” within the social worker-client relationship (p.65). Temporary social workers from the dominant culture were also found to see the community “as victim” based on a “relationship of powerless dependency to the state and view their practice reinforcing the community’s victimization” (Walmsley, 2004, p.66). As well, in “an absence of community based resources, the child is deemed at risk, and the practitioner sees no alternative to remove the child from the community” (Walmsley, 2004, p. 67). However, the research also determined Aboriginal social workers provided a much different perspective than their non-Aboriginal colleagues. The view “most often expressed by Aboriginal practitioners” was of the “community as protector” with the “child protection agencies playing a minimal to non-existent role” (Walmsley, 2004, p. 69). It is this difference in perspective that shows “the Aboriginal community’s approach” to child welfare by placing the responsibility for the welfare of children on “community members to intervene and create alternative care arrangements for children” (Walmsley, 2004, p. 69). This research also determined that Aboriginal social workers employed in their “communities of origin” felt they had “opportunities for supportive informal intervention outside the office, and the possibility of bringing a lifelong knowledge of the person
to the interaction” (Walmsley, 2004, p. 66). The researcher concludes that communities are only viewed as protectors of children “when there is a relationship of trust” which involves community participation in the work of child welfare (Walmsley, 2004, p. 70). This research highlights the difference in perspective between Aboriginal social workers and their colleagues from the dominant culture. The research further suggests non-Aboriginal social workers’ view of Aboriginal communities is reflective of paternalism and, therefore, a greater examination of non-Aboriginal social workers’ “vision of practice” or world view is required when discussing northern social work, as it is this world view that impacts their relationship to and with the community.

Child welfare and its value-based views of child rearing are researched by McKenzie, Seidl and Bone (1995) in their study of eight Aboriginal communities in Canada. The researchers conducted participatory action research in Manitoba to look at community perceptions of child welfare standards and practices. They determined that “the significance of the extended family and custom adoption” and “the informal placement of children with family or friends” was supported strongly by community members (McKenzie, Seidl and Bone, 1995, p.640). The placements of children with extended family outside of the community were “given relatively equal weight” to placement in homes within the community indicating “the importance attached to community as well as family connections” (McKenzie, Seidl and Bone, 1995, p.644). Although their findings “about good child welfare practice” were “similar to mainstream society” the researchers also determined that “a holistic, family- and community- focused foundation for child welfare services” was desired (McKenzie, Seidl and Bone, 1995, p.633, 648). This foundation for child welfare also included “the importance attached to values like respect, a collective concern for the wellbeing of the community, and decision making by consensus” while perceiving elders “as key elements in the preferred model of practice” (McKenzie, Seidl and Bone, 1995, p.648). The researchers concluded that “a holistic, community-based framework that incorporates the various elements of culture and traditions” is necessary (McKenzie, Seidl and Bone, 1995, p.650). This provides a good deal of valuable information to apply towards Nunavut child welfare practice, but neglects to discuss what a community based framework would entail.
Weaver (1999) discusses some of the skills required by social workers within Aboriginal communities and reviews the importance of culturally competent service provision, through the use and definition of culturally competent social work for non-Aboriginal people working in Aboriginal communities. The research described “culturally sensitive” social work practice as no longer adequate for non-Aboriginal social workers with Aboriginal clients and instead non-Aboriginal social workers should instead possess the “ability to integrate cultural knowledge and sensitivity with skills for a more effective and culturally appropriate helping process” in order to provide “culturally competent” services (Weaver, 1999, p. 217). Weaver (1999) notes, “striving for cultural competence is a recognition of the profession’s ethnocentric foundation” (p.217) and explains that “culturally competent practitioners go through a developmental process of shifting from using their own culture as a benchmark for measuring all behavior” (p.218). It is the knowledge of “power inherent in the practitioner role, [which] is compounded by the status assignment (power) associated with the cultural/social group identity of both client and practitioner” that requires understanding in order to develop cultural competence within social work (Weaver, 1999, p. 218). However, Weaver (1999) admits achieving such competence, particularly for social workers belonging to the dominant culture, “is a long-term, on-going process of development” (p. 218). The necessary knowledge and skills required by culturally competent social workers were identified through research with Aboriginal social workers and social work students. The research found that knowledge of a culture’s history, diversity, the culture itself, and its contemporary reality was required (Weaver, 1999). This knowledge included an understanding of “treaties, the sovereign status of Native American nations, and federal Indian policy,” as well as cultural knowledge including “communication patterns, world views, belief systems, and values” (Weaver, 1999, p. 221). The research also determined that “patience, the ability to tolerate silence, and listening- all skills that require social workers to be less verbally active than they might be with clients from other cultures” were needed in addition to “humility and a willingness to learn” (Weaver, 1999, p. 222). Also highlighted was the importance of decolonizing non-Aboriginal social workers or “shedding the mindset associated with colonial processes by which one culture subjugates another and defines it as inferior” in order to practice social work in Aboriginal communities (Weaver, 1999, p. 222). This research outlined what culturally competent social work practice involves, including the
knowledge, skills, and values required and indicated that cultural competence is more appropriate than cultural sensitivity when working with Aboriginal communities. Yet the research neglected to address whether cultural competence and culturally competent social services are adequate or enough for social workers from the dominant culture to work in remote Aboriginal communities.

Researcher Kalyanpur (1998) also looked at cultural competence of social workers, particularly regarding communication, through interviews with Aboriginal mothers and observations of a parent support group held by non-Aboriginal social workers in an Aboriginal community in the United States. This researcher determined that “professionals may be culturally blind without being aware of it” particularly when it comes to mainstream social workers’ expectations and assumptions of universality in their practice (Kalyanpur, 1998, p. 318). Kalyanpur (1998) also shows the contrast between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal world views and the beliefs of the professional social workers and their desire to “help” compared to the beliefs of the Aboriginal mothers as significantly different and rooted in different value systems. Kalyanpur (1998) explained:

“the professional’s thinking was informed by the framework of the cultural deficit model...they measured the language development of the children by a yardstick of the mainstream culture: emphasis on verbal skills...they assumed that the minority culture deprived children of the opportunity to learn language skills. In so doing they neglected to consider the possibility of alternative culture-specific language development practices...[the professionals] determined because the children ‘weren’t encouraged to talk very much’ that the Native American culture was deficient and needed to be remedied. Implicit in their argument was the cultural assumption that becoming ‘mainstreamed’ was a desired, even necessary outcome” (p. 323).

The non-Aboriginal social workers in this study showed limited thought to their own cultural bias as evident in their discussion of “parenting skills, thereby assuming the term meant the same across the three cultures” and their assumption that “the mothers had poor, even wrong, parenting skills, and sought to use the parent group meetings as a vehicle for remedying the situation” (Kalyanpur, 1998, p. 324-325). These beliefs were rooted in the cultural assumptions associated with “the development of middle-class, [as] Anglo-American children have come to be considered the norm for all children, regardless of their economic or cultural milieu” (Kalyanpur, 1998, p. 324). The social workers also held the “epistemological assumption that professionals are the experts,” which “has allowed the field to determine what is appropriate or ‘right’ practice and to label practices that do not conform as being ‘deficit’” (Kalyanpur, 1998, p. 329). The conclusion of Kalyanpur’s (1998) findings stated that the “mere acknowledgement of a difference in perspective is insufficient without the non-judgmental realization of the world view behind
it,” which further suggests that even culturally competent non-Aboriginal social workers may remain “culturally blind” (p. 329).

**STUDIES OF SOCIAL WORK IN ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES (AUSTRALIA)**

In addition to the North American studies, some international studies are also pertinent in their similarities to Nunavut, such as those from Australia, as many remote Aboriginal communities in Australia are currently provided with child welfare services by non-Aboriginal social workers. Due to colonialism, Australia’s Aboriginal people in rural communities face many similar challenges as Nunavummiut as they work towards self-government and self-determination. Under these circumstances, reviewing studies regarding “community development,” as consistent with the study by Graham, Brownlee, Shier and Doucette (2008), within Aboriginal communities provides us with a wider range of perspectives for the role of social work in Canada’s Arctic. However, despite the seemingly positive and non-oppressive approach of community development, Campbell, Wunungmurra and Nymoba (2007) determined community development also involves the “resistance of non-Aboriginals to relinquish control to allow for true community development to occur” (p. 151). This “resistance,” therefore, “raises questions about the capacity for government departments to practice community development, particularly given the unequal power relations and their reluctance to share power between such departments and marginalized, disadvantaged communities” (Campbell, Wunungmurra and Nymoba, 2007, p. 151). The researchers discuss community development, as a euphemism for the continued imposition of western cultural values “because there is a great need for Aboriginal community development in one sense of the term, yet Aboriginal people have been victims of it in another sense,” as they assess the application of a community development program in a rural Aboriginal community (Campbell, Wunungmurra and Nymoba, 2007, p. 152). The researchers found that despite the community development program appearing to begin “where the people are” with “local people owning and defining the problems and solutions” it became clear that “valuing local knowledge can be challenging for health professionals, who are often accustomed to their own ‘scientific knowledge’ being privileged” (Campbell, Wunungmurra and Nymoba, 2007, p. 153, 154). The researchers involved the Aboriginal community through participatory action research and determined that “despite health professionals committing to a community development approach,” the same non-Aboriginal professionals “were unwilling to share control of health-related decisions with Aboriginal
participants” and displayed this through a “lack of awareness of their power in influencing issue selection, [which] meant they set the agenda” (Campbell, Wunungmurra and Nymoba, 2007, p. 156). In this study, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal participants were seen to identify the problems of poor child health differently, as Aboriginal community members held a “holistic view of health” that incorporated a broader view of problems, including “parents spending their time and money gambling and taking drugs,” whereas the non-Aboriginal professionals focused on the structural issues of poor nutrition of children, due to high food prices and low incomes of Aboriginal families (Campbell, Wunungmurra and Nymoba, 2007). This different view of the problem led to different proposed solutions and non-Aboriginal staff to “repeatedly question the local strategy” and “discount the lay perspectives” (Campbell, Wunungmurra and Nymoba, 2007, p. 159). The researchers also determined that community development was based on the assumption by non-Aboriginals that “poor people should solve their problems without any additional resources” and this led the researchers to conclude that “it is unrealistic to expect active community participation in the occasional community development process when people are routinely marginalized by government-led attempts to solve problems” (Campbell, Wunungmurra and Nymoba, 2007, p. 160, 164). This research creates concern for community development within social work and any role for social workers from the dominant culture within Aboriginal communities due to their inability to relinquish power and their “expert” status.

**NUNAVUT STUDIES AND REPORTS**

Child welfare requires a deeper consideration of culture if progress is to be made towards increased community well being in Nunavut, beginning with input from the territory’s Inuit communities. In particular, the wisdom elders could bring to child welfare would be invaluable as they have been witness to much change in their families, communities and the territory in such a short time. Although the research by Oosten and Laugrand’s (2002) with Inuit elders in Nunavut was not on the topic of child welfare it nonetheless provides this important perspective. The research involved discussing methods of social control and incorporating Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ) into work with troubled youth and community members. Through an unstructured group interview the researchers found elders emphasized, “cultural institutions imported from the south can only function satisfactorily if their relations to Inuit institutions, customs, and traditions are taken into account” (Oosten and Laugrand, 2002, p.18). This is particularly relevant to the
southern institution of child welfare, which in Nunavut has yet to incorporate Inuit customs and traditions, for even today, “Inuit have always perceived it, and continue to do so as a Qallunaaq institution” (Oosten and Laugrand, 2002, p.20). The researchers determined this is because “a social order that only aims at social control and does not involve the relationship to game and the spirits makes no sense to Inuit” (Oosten and Laugrand, 2002, p.21). To lessen the distance between Inuit communities and Qallunaat institutions such as child welfare, the elders provided recommendations based on their knowledge and experiences. They advised that rather than depart completely from the Qallunaat institutions, customs, and culture, they “felt the need for a new synthesis of Inuit and western culture” by incorporating “holistic and collective dynamics” into the process of working with community members (Oosten and Laugrand, 2002, p.25). As well, child welfare in Nunavut currently takes a southern approach to working with those who have abused or neglected a child, in its attempt to maintain confidentiality for the child and the family. The elders, however, point to the incorporation of the community:

“correction of individual wrongdoings as a collective responsibility of the community…[and] the interaction between the community and a wrongdoer was traditionally based on a shared commitment to prevent the community as a whole to suffer from the consequences of an individual action. It required a public confession as well as a shared effort by all members of a community to reintegrate the wrongdoer into society” (Oosten and Laugrand, 2002, p.30).

This custom of community involvement holds interesting and challenging implications for child welfare in Nunavut if Inuit culture and traditional practices are to truly be incorporated. This is particularly challenging as western social work was developed from individualistic ideology, and restructuring the territory’s child welfare practice to reflect communalistic and more holistic practice will require a new approach, or rather going back to a very old approach, such as that which was used prior to colonization.

In research by Kral (2003) the perspectives of Nunavummiut highlight the uniqueness of social work in Nunavut and its difference from anywhere else in Canada, due to the deep-rooted complexity of the territory’s social issues. Although again this research was not regarding child welfare and instead looked at the issue of suicide in the territory, it provided Inuit perspectives to community issues and another glimpse at the desires and needs of Inuit communities. Using participatory action research, the input from community members reflects what should be the key ingredient of Nunavut’s child welfare practice: the importance of family to the health and well being of Inuit. Through interviews it was determined that ‘issues of identity, anomie, and powerlessness in the changing social context of Aboriginals’ lives are the
reoccurring themes in discussion of why this dire situation exists” (Kral, 2003, p.10). Kral (2003) found that “by far the most prominent theme to emerge was the central importance of family and kinship ties. Indeed, family bonds were related to all other themes,” which led him to recommend that future policy and program development in Nunavut must include community empowerment practices (Kral, 2003, p.4). In addition to this, the importance of opportunities for youth and elders to interact was found to be essential and such opportunities were desired by both age groups. Based on this research with Nunavummiut and the research by Oosten and Laugrand (2002), it appears that the role Inuit elders play in communities is essential to address the difficulties of the young Nunavummiut population.

For Inuit youth, the mix of southern values, including money and material items, with northern Inuit life and culture can create a difficult arena for youth to determine their social and cultural identities. Often referred to as the “igloo to ipod” generation, Inuit youth have been sandwiched between two very different cultures and world views (Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, 2009). The result, as described in a report by the Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada (2005) following interviews with highly respected Nunavummiut elders, “is evident in the despair of our young people marked by an increase in the school drop out rate, and tragically, in the number of teen suicides” (p.3). Other community issues that plague Nunavut include alcohol and drug use, physical violence and the sexual abuse of women and children (Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, 2005). The report indicates, “these patterns of behavior are the result of several generations of inappropriate attitudes [that] concern the self and others…these destructive actions are becoming normalized and [are] severely detrimental to Inuit culture and wellbeing, [it] is evident in the despair of our young people” (Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, 2005, p.3). Although the distance that occurs between young and old generations is not necessarily unique to Inuit in Nunavut, Inuit youth “are becoming rootless people, unhappy and unhealthy” (Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, 2005, p.7).

This report further explains that “current southern based philosophies of treatment and predominantly southern mandated treatment centres do not appear to answer the needs of all. There are those who require healing based upon the age old perceptions and understandings of the Inuit world” (Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, 2005, p.3). The implication that current social work is not meeting the needs of Inuit youth is evident in the report, which recommends an increased use of traditional Inuit “healers” as the “frontline personnel” for all community social issues, including child welfare situations.
This is based on the belief that “in crisis, people need what is familiar and comfortable. It is not acceptable that an individual be faced with another culture’s ways in an emergency. When emotionally stressed, Inuit need Inuit, their knowledge and familiarity” (Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, 2005, p.13). This report’s findings are consistent with the two previous studies regarding the need for greater involvement of elders and “healers,” an increased use of tradition, and healing services provided to Inuit by Inuit. Healers also do not practice under southern guidelines based on individualistic ideology and can work with clients from within their own culture. They “have traditionally felt an obligation to be proactive,” something that a southern social worker might not be as able to do for fear of being viewed as being too intrusive (Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, 2005, p. 6). Interventions by Inuit healers also differ from southern social workers regarding the use of the community as Qallunaat southern social workers are bound by southern Canada’s Code of Ethics and due to confidentiality, cannot typically go into the community and involve other community members to enter into a relationship between worker and client (Canadian Association of Social Workers [CASW], 2005), which may help to create the “social distance” Walmsley (2004) had described. The healer, however, can gather “local elders to meet to solve family problems in the community…[such as] a counseling circle to address serious spousal disputes” (Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, 2005, p. 6). This is important to Inuit because “it is very strongly felt that no secrets should be kept within families” (Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, 2005, p. 6). This is not to say that confidentiality is not respected; it is also essential within the healer/client relationship as it ensures the client feels secure with the healer and all conversations are still regarded as confidential among all participants (Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, 2005). As well, the ability for healers to play dual or even multiple roles, such as healer, family member and friend and, therefore, a healer’s ability to become enmeshed within the community on many social levels has been considered “somewhat different from the disinterested role often taken by southerners” (Pauktuutit Inuit Women’s Association, 2005, p. 5).

Interestingly, this ability of healers to hold dual relationships within communities as well as the reciprocal nature of these relationships is something western-trained social workers shy away from due to a desire to be seen as “professional” (Walmsley, 2004; Alexander and Charles, 2009). All of these studies provide very important elements for examining child welfare in Nunavut, but none of them examine the decision-making power Qallunaat social workers hold in Nunavut. The studies make many suggestions related to
Nunavut’s child welfare system, but remain only pieces of the overall picture. In particular, the voices of those who have direct experience with the child welfare system in Nunavut are still needed.
CHAPTER 4: THEORY AND PRACTICE

Social workers regularly select from a number of theories and approaches when working in child welfare in small communities based on each theory and approach’s pertinence or fit to the situation, and the particular needs of families. There are, however, certain theories that social workers tend to incorporate more commonly within child welfare work.

CHILD WELFARE THEORIES

One theory commonly applied within child welfare work is attachment theory as it places an emphasis on the emotional bonds between children and caregivers, which when broken is believed to impact a child socially, cognitively, and behaviorally (Washington, 2008). This theory is most commonly used in discussions of placement of children in foster care and the repeated movement of children between foster homes, which can disrupt the child’s sense of security and affect their ability to form relationships (Washington, 2008). Crisis intervention theories are also often applied by social workers to child welfare work as they are based on the premise that people are able to overcome crisis by increasing their individual and existing coping skills. Critical intervention theories are also used, such as anti-discrimination theories and post-modernism, which require social workers use a critical perspective when examining social inequities, such as the overrepresentation of Aboriginal children within the child welfare system. Anti-discrimination theories require social workers to develop cultural understanding so as to ensure cultural practices are not misunderstood or viewed in negative light by those of the dominant culture. Postmodernism similarly, understands “cultural groups, each with its own system of meanings, understandings, needs and purposes, so that no group…should have a privileged voice over the other” (Noble, 2004, p.291). These theories are closely aligned with strengths based perspective, which entails social workers focus on the strengths of their clients, families and communities (Bernard, 2006), “rather than pathologizing clients for their plight” or “undermining their responsibility for the choices they make” (Dominelli, 2006, p. 25). Working with large extended families that can often encompass a large portion of a community creates room for incorporating elements of family systems theory as well, as it can speak to the communal and interdependent nature of relationships within family structures (Bowen Family Systems Theory, n.d.). As well, in mainstream child welfare there may also be occasions where solution-focused
therapy can be useful, such as when a person’s physical needs require attention and decisions need to be made quickly (Molnar and Shazer, 1987).

All of these theories, however, have been criticized in their application to practice. Attachment theory for example, has been criticized by feminist thought for its indirect focus on women as the critical attachment figures, which has led some to connect it with “mother blaming” and supportive of the status quo (Washington, 2008). Crisis-intervention theories have been criticized for their ethnocentric approach, as they are based on the premise that people need “to acquire adequate coping abilities” and that by not acquiring such abilities, “he or she will fail to handle the stressor” (Washington, 2008, p. 10). Through these theories there is no recognition of oppression for those “who have suffered ongoing sexual, racist, and colonial violence in their lives” (Nadeau and Young, 2006, p. 88). Anti-discrimination theories in contrast do view the power of the dominant culture over minority populations but “it does not, and cannot, do the basic job of readjusting the social order” (Weisberg, 1993, p.151). Postmodernism also has been criticized for its underlying “neo-conservative ideology that creates great discrepancies between rich and poor and undermines traditional social work theory and practice” which requires social work “refocus its attention on exposing global economic inequalities and oppressive gender and ethnicity-based relations across the globe” (Noble, 2004, p. 289). Similarly, even strengths based perspective presupposes the profession of social work as neutral and assumes that social workers will be able to perceive and understand the strengths of others and other cultures through their own, often dominant, world view. These theories, unfortunately, remain inadequate within Nunavut’s child welfare system when applied by Qallunaat social workers, as they do not counter the power, or the “moral” decision-making that occurs within child welfare based on a social worker’s southern ideology and world view. Child welfare and its attention to childrearing require an understanding of culture and colonialism that these theories do not provide. Many social workers attempt to remedy this by meshing these theories with an increased understanding of culture and through reflecting on their own biases in order to practice in cross-cultural settings. The result is often described as “eclectic” or “generalist” social work and perceived by dominant social workers as increasing their ability to practice in a culturally competent way.
CROSS-CULTURAL THEORIES

When working in Nunavut’s communities, cross-cultural theories among others may be applied by social workers in addition to the child welfare theories already described. Most commonly, however, social workers gravitate towards anti-oppressive practice and structural social work, which require a commitment by social workers towards social justice and social change by addressing power inequalities (Dominelli, 1998; Mullaly, 1997). These are important, particularly for social workers from the dominant culture, as they necessitate recognition by social workers of their own capacity to oppress within their work despite their “good intentions” and desire to help (Dominelli, 2006). Anti-oppressive practice is commonly found within cross-cultural practice as it involves empathy and the ability of social workers to develop an understanding of another culture’s world view. It also requires an understanding of how culture impacts human behavior, attitudes and values, and therefore, a specific skill set is needed for working with clients from the non-dominant culture groups (National Association of Social Workers, n.d.; Weaver, 1999). However, as cross-cultural and anti-oppressive social work “form part of western social work’s attempt to deal with difference,” critical theorists “point out the way in which minority and Indigenous voices have been silenced within this dominant discourse” (Grey, Coates and Hetherington, 2007, p. 55). Despite the value in cross-cultural anti-oppressive social work, it “conflates discussions of race, culture, and all forms of discrimination and subsumes it under critically constructed anti-oppressive practice theory, which remains a theory in search of a practice- for these ideas are still highly interpretive and beyond the reach of empirical validation” (Grey, Coates and Hetherington, 2007, p. 56). In addition, anti-oppressive practice has been criticized for “proclaiming an anti-oppressive stance while doing little or nothing to address the reality of oppression” (Sinclair, 2004, p. 52). Often used in coordination with anti-oppressive practice is the use of advocacy and empowerment. Both of these approaches, however, when used by social workers within cross-cultural work environments, place those from the non-dominant culture in a position of the “other” and as they often involve a focus on “healing,” this further “implies a process that often legitimates and maintains victim-oppressor position” (Nadeau and Young, 2006, p. 89).

Despite these criticisms, it is widely believed that through a combination of these theories social workers can develop enough cultural insight to practice in a culturally competent manner in cross-cultural settings (Weaver, 1999). The culturally competent social worker is assumed to have developed a culturally
“open” world view and can now practice through a neutral lens by “being knowledgeable about the cultural group in question, being self-reflective and sensitive to one’s own biases, and integrating this knowledge and reflection with practice skills” (Grey, Coates and Hetherington, 2007, p. 57). The reliance on culturally competent social workers in cross-cultural environments leads to the suggestion that through the use of all these theories, culturally specific social work can be practiced by Qallunaat social workers with Inuit families. However, although these theories are “for the most part complimentary,” they remain western social work theories, born from the minds of western educated and trained, mainstream professionals, often from the dominant liberal culture and reflect “welfare colonialism” towards Inuit communities or “the assumption that these populations need to be managed or changed and require help and guidance” (Nadeau and Young, 2006, p. 90).

Additional problems with cross-cultural discourse include the “dismissal or incorrect reference to Aboriginal colonization, thought, and history,” and have led to the criticism that cross-cultural education, “verges on ludicrous because the cross-cultural or minority ‘client’ is automatically labeled as the ‘other,’” which only “perpetuates marginalization and the constructions of difference, and fosters the internalizing of racism” (Sinclair, 2004, p. 52). This is also due to the term “cross-cultural,” which implies an equal discussion of different cultures, yet it remains “based on the world view, lifeways, and reality of the dominant, predominantly white, and mainstream society” (Sinclair, 2004, p. 53). This connection between world view and the use of theory in child welfare is important because it shows the “importance of culture and local knowledge in the development of genuine and authentic social work practice” in Nunavut (Grey, Coates and Hetherington, 2007, p. 55). Meanwhile it also points to the risk most social workers face of “falling into the trap of believing that just because they are social workers, they are, therefore, non-racist and non-oppressive because the profession has a Code of Ethics to guide practice and because social work institutions proclaim they are committed to this ideology” (Sinclair, 2004, p. 52). In Nunavut, “welfare colonialism” is practiced regularly by Qallunaat social workers and this highlights the need to examine the role of Qallunaat social workers in the territory, regardless of their training or perceived high level of cultural competence.
ABORIGINAL THEORIES

A main part of discussing Aboriginal theory is understanding that Indigenous thinking and practices are in fact a “countermovement to the universalizing movement in social work” and Aboriginal social work can be seen as a movement within social work “to counter these colonializing, westernizing, globalizing, Americanizing forces” (Grey, Coates and Hetherington, 2007, p. 56). Inuit traditional knowledge (ITK) carries similar philosophies to the increasing amount of Aboriginal literature available, which believe “human cultures differ in a number of ways: in their value systems, world views, guiding principles, thinking and learning processes, customs, practices and means for attaining goals” (Loiselle and McKenzie, 2006, p. 10). Aboriginal epistemology emphasizes harmony and balance and is based on the extended relationships shared among all people, but it is also “linked intrinsically to the land, and nature, and hence, ecological survival,” which creates the framework for world view, and therefore, social work practice (Sinclair, 2004, p. 54). Perhaps most important to discussing Aboriginal theory, however, involves the recognition that Aboriginal resistance and tradition existed long before the development of theory. For traditional practices, beliefs and values of Aboriginal cultures and, therefore, traditional knowledge, has presented an “ongoing challenge…to western science” (Tester and Irniq, 2008, p. 51) particularly as dominant culture “experts look for experiences to analyze, but not for the voice of the Indigenous peoples which might offer different- and challenging- interpretations” (Briggs and Sharp, 2004, p. 666).

Spirituality is a key component of this and Aboriginal social workers and scholars continue to point to the need for an “ecospiritual perspective” (Coates, Grey and Hetherington, 2006; Zapf, 2005b) and “philosophy of life which promotes health and wellness through a fully ecological and holistic approach” (Loiselle and McKenzie, 2006, p. 1). Despite this, however, mainstream social workers view spirituality as “something to be used in clinical practice, another intervention technique added to the worker’s repertoire,” which again signals the mainstream social worker’s “misappropriation of theory” within Aboriginal social work (Zapf, 2005, p. 636). Non-Aboriginal social workers appear unable to avoid acting “as an agent of colonization, especially in transferring inappropriate mainstream theory and practice models to work with Indigenous groups” and this is “vividly demonstrated in child welfare where mainstream criteria, values, standards and interventions continue the process of colonization” (Coates, Grey and Hetherington, 2006, p. 381). That social workers today continue to act as “agents of colonialism” speaks to the inability of theory
to overcome world view, which has resulted in the failure of social work to be “inclusive of local contexts, Indigenous knowledge, and traditional helping practices” (Coates, Grey and Hetherington, 2006, p. 395).

The world view possessed by Qallunaat social workers is not something that can be erased or even minimized to such a reduced level that it can understand, or often even truly recognize, Inuit world view. For even “authentic, culturally relevant social work practice involves applying what fits from western social work and discarding what does not fit” because it begins from the southern framework (Grey, Coates and Hetherington, 2007, p. 57). As postmodernists question the notion of cultural competence and whether anyone can truly become competent in something so complex and fluid as another culture, the concept of cross-cultural social work changes (Grey, Coates and Hetherington, 2007, p. 58). This view now places the community in the role of “expert” and the social worker in a position of learning and seeking understanding, which means “there is no thought of competence, instead one thinks of gaining understanding (always partial) of a phenomenon that is evolving and changing” (Grey, Coates and Hetherington, 2007, p. 58). This is a particularly useful stance for social work in Nunavut as Inuit communities have endured being constantly “taught” by southerners. It also leads us to Inuit epistemology and Inuit traditional knowledge, which could possibly provide a framework for all child welfare work in Nunavut.

**INUIT QAUJIMAJATUQANGIT (IQ)**

When discussing Inuit culture and Inuit traditional knowledge it is essential that we do not “as some romantic ethnographers have done, [discuss] the ‘preservation’ of an archaic culture- the tourist’s image of the Inuk in sealskin and fur, singing old songs, living only old ways” (Alia, 1994, p. 94). It is also important to note that throughout this research the term “traditional” has not meant to “generate the idea that IK [Indigenous knowledge] and IQ are classic ‘museum pieces’ with some limited use in completing what is otherwise scientific knowledge” (Tester and Irniq, 2008, p. 56). Instead, traditional knowledge has been used to describe what has grown out of all aspects of traditional culture, values, and Inuit life as well as “a space, a context within which respectful dialogue, discussion, questioning, and listening can take place” (Tester and Irniq, 2008, p.58). Culture needs to be seen as a constantly changing, fluid aspect of people’s lives and “a complete return to traditional culture may not be consistent or appropriate with an individual’s current cultural identification and related aspirations” (Morrisette, McKenzie and Morrisette,
Women in particular are vulnerable to discussions regarding preserving traditional culture as “essentialist portraits of culture often depict culturally dominant norms of femininity, and practices that adversely affect women, as central components of ‘cultural identity’” (Narayan and Harding, 2000, p. 85). Qallunaat social workers, however, will have a more difficult time learning that the “utilization of culture as a method of intervention needs to recognize variations among consumers in their identification with Aboriginal culture” due to their positioning within the dominant culture (Morrissette, McKenzie and Morrissette, 1993, p.97). This recognition, in fact, demands the employment of Inuit social workers to work within Inuit communities, as Qallunaat lack the frame of reference for recognizing this spectrum of identification within the culture. As well, mainstream “social work can be seen as problematic from the perspective of traditional knowledge,” or Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ), “because the person and the environment are still understood as two separate (although interacting) entities, with one (the person) commanding all the attention” (Zapf, 2005a, p 637). This can be most clearly seen in the different “expressions of world image identity” for Inuit, which place Inuit as part of the world and the “western culture’s ‘self image concepts,” which place humans as the center of the world (Zapf, 2005a, p. 637). Inuit epistemology or “ways of knowing,” as a theoretical framework for all Nunavut child welfare practice, therefore, requires social workers to truly understand IQ, which subsequently also requires an Inuit world view.

Although described as traditional knowledge, Arnakak (2001) prefers to refer to IQ as a “living technology” to ensure it is understood as principles that have roots in the past, but exist and are useful and applicable to today. As Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit is described as “a means of rationalizing thought and action, a means of organizing tasks and resources, [and] a means of organizing family and society into coherent wholes” one can see its embedded nature within Inuit world view (Arnakak, 2001). IQ is particularly important to Nunavummiut families today, as “the traditional kinship structure is the means whereby goods and services are transacted and exchanged” but it also is the “means of transmitting ideas, values, knowledge and skills from one generation to the next. In other words, individual, family and society are linked by the kinship structure” (Arnakak, 2001). Therefore, IQ is essential within child welfare so as to not damage the kinship structure, which underpins the transmission of culture between generations. The use of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit, however, has also received criticism within Nunavut. For example:
“Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit as a concept was being used in an entirely different way than what it would be in the Inuit language or culture. It was being treated like a noun and not a process, or a verb the way it would be in Inuktitut. English is much more a noun-based language and the term was re-conceptualized and talked about different in Inuktitut. By developing the concept of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit in government outside of the elder’s conceptual framework, its meaning was lost to an Inuk elder” (McGrath, 2003, p.157).

This comment appears to suggest that by making IQ mainstream in the Government of Nunavut (GN) its conceptual meaning is being altered. This could be due to the large number of southerners in Nunavut’s government and the attempt to incorporate IQ into the southern-based systems and ideology of the public service (Legare, 2008; Tester, 2006b). Although looking at the employment of Qallunaat workers overall in the GN is beyond the scope of this research, the incorporation of IQ and traditional knowledge into government programming is overwhelmingly viewed as a good decision because Inuit values are rooted within all spheres of Nunavummiut life. Inuit recognize Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit as “that of which Inuit have known for a long time” and have indicated that IQ must be the direction for the territory’s child welfare system (Legislative Assembly of Nunavut, 2008).

The GN has reported on how it is incorporating IQ into the government workplace and has outlined the additional principles, values and directives for practice specific to the Department of Health and Social Services (GN, n.d.c). Unfortunately, the priorities were described vaguely, indicating only that an IQ Coordinator should be hired, but did not expand upon how social workers are to ensure their practice is consistent with IQ. This can be understood as very little guidance provided to the current Qallunaat social workers in Nunavut regarding the incorporation of IQ in their child welfare work. The government has stated, “we will maintain positive innovations guided by Inuit knowledge, wisdom, values and beliefs” (GN, n.d.c, p. 44), but has yet to describe how this is to occur particularly when over half of the government workers are Qallunaat and do not possess Inuit knowledge, wisdom or values (Legare, 2008; Tester, 2006b). Fortunately, the Pauktuutit Inuit Women’s Association’s (2006) “The Inuit Way,” describes traditional methods of addressing issues within communities, such as how Inuit may have traditionally addressed issues with child welfare. The traditional methods for example, included the act of ignoring someone, mocking or shaming a person, the use of gossip, embarrassment and ostracizing someone who refuses to change their behavior. These approaches, among many others, historically worked to maintain community order while simultaneously maintaining the family unit by focusing on the behavior of the person or offence, with the basic rule being “that the punishment must not cause more problems for the
group than the initial infraction” (Pauktuutit Inuit Women’s Association, 2006, p. 19). The goals of these approaches were to maintain community balance. These traditional beliefs and practices are also consistent with the values and beliefs that guide many of southern Canada’s Aboriginal child welfare agencies.

However, child abuse and neglect, when it occurred, was also traditionally addressed within extended family camps as Ekho and Ottokie (2000) describe:

“Some of the parents had their children taken away, because the whole camp could see that the child was often very hungry and it was obvious that the child was being mistreated. Sometimes the child would be taken away and placed with another family. There are a few parents who only mistreat one of their children…so we have to show them love…they would tell the parents in a kind way that they would take the child for a while to provide for him or her. They would do this in a way so that the parents didn’t start hating the child” (p. 97).

In Nunavut, understanding Inuit traditional knowledge is essential to understanding how southern Qallunaat beliefs and practices in child welfare conflict with Inuit culture, particularly regarding child rearing practices. As described briefly in Chapter 2, the use of naming within Inuit culture can impact how a child will be raised, particularly if a child is named after a respected elder and subsequently becomes that elder’s “namesake” and, therefore, holds the soul of the deceased. “Since the child is, in a sense, part of the person after whom they have been named, they are deserving of the same respect and treatment as this person received while they were alive” (Pauktuutit Inuit Women’s Association, 2006). For this child “it would not be considered appropriate, under these circumstances, to tell a child what to do, as this would be the equivalent of ordering an elder or another adult about, thus violating an important social rule in Inuit culture” (Pauktuutit Inuit Women’s Association, 2006, p. 16). Through IQ there is a “hint at an idealized Inuit psychology” (Arnakak, 2001) and it is this psychology and “the skills of independence, innovation and patience, which have historically been necessary for Inuit survival on the land, [which] today are proof of the survival of the culture despite widespread colonial and assimilation based policies (Pauktuutit Inuit Women’s Association, 2006). Interestingly, it was “Inuit resistance to the regimes imposed upon them, which were…driven by racist and ethnocentric assumptions…[that] must properly be recognized as the original source for the incorporation of IQ into processes affecting Inuit lives” (Tester and Irniq, 2008, p.55). Unfortunately my understanding of IQ is limited and based only on my experiences and the literature I have encountered. I have, however, learned that regardless of which theories and approaches I select within my social work practice, they still originate from southern thought and are based on my southern framework and world view. Yet the basis for child welfare in Nunavut should not be from such southern
perspectives, particularly in child welfare where this is so much power afforded to social workers, but
instead it should be from a perspective that is deeply rooted in traditional knowledge and Inuit world view.

Inuit are well aware of the positive emotional and social benefits that stem from activities such as
hunting, gathering berries, and spending time at outpost camps and how these activities put them in close
connection with the land, animals and spirits. This is something that Qallunaat have only begun to
understand. The connection between these activities and their “cultural autonomy” is also essential to child
welfare, particularly “with respect to the care of children” as this will entail “the survival of Aboriginal
people” (Walmsley, 2005 p. 6). However, because the ability of Qallunaat to completely shed their
southern world view and truly practice consistent with Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ) does not appear to be
possible, the use of “cultural competence” by Qallunaat social workers, as a result, really only provides a
greater mask of their dominant cultural and southern perspectives. Valuing Inuit traditional knowledge
over southern university training is also necessary but this may only be achieved when the “historical
information about advanced child welfare systems that pre-date European civilization,” are better
understood and it becomes widely recognized that Inuit systems of child welfare existed long before the
Qallunaat social worker arrived in the Arctic in the 1950’s (Green and Dumbrill, 2005, p.176). This may
help southerners to get to “a place where they are ready to challenge the assumption that modern child
welfare practice is the most advanced way of helping families” (Green and Dumbrill, 2005, p.176). Such
recognition, however, will also not undo the southern Qallunaat beliefs in such individualistic and western
ideas as “psychological characteristics of the self—self-esteem, self-development, self-improvement, self-
actualization, [which] have been dominant” and remain apparent within most social work theories being
used today in Nunavut’s child welfare system (Collins, 2009, p.337). Therefore, should Nunavut’s child
welfare system remain managed by Qallunaat social workers through this continued colonization, where
the “day-to-day statutory social work is concerned with work with individuals and families, dictated by the
law, government policy and agency guidelines, procedural manuals and handbooks, in which social
workers assess, ration and control,” the child welfare system will never be consistent with IQ (Collins,
2009, p.338). Although the use of a combination of theories and approaches may be applicable by dominant

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7 “There is, of course, nothing wrong with western ways of knowing, as long as they are identified as “a” way of knowing rather than
“the” way of knowing” (Green and Dumbrill, 2005, p. 171).
culture social workers in southern urban cross-cultural environments, this is far from adequate in such culturally unique places as the Inuit communities in Nunavut.
CHAPTER 5: METHODOLOGY

As the research topic for this study involved exploring the experiences of social workers, it was appropriate that participants be provided with an opportunity to state their thoughts through open discussion, which consequently allowed for a greater understanding of the context in which they work.

Since the information sought through this study was focused on developing a deeper understanding of child welfare, it was essential that detailed information be collected. Selecting a qualitative study was key to collecting this information in order to learn details about the participants’ experiences (Grinnell and Unrau, 2005). The information provided by participants created an invaluable base of data to examine and extract meaning. Qualitative methods commonly require the collection of data, transcription of material, coding of data into themes, and drawing inferences, all of which have been included within this study. Qualitative inquiry was also used for this study because it provided a method to understand how social workers attach meaning to their work and to explore their actions, beliefs, and values associated with the sensitive and complicated nature of child welfare in Nunavut. As there is very little known about social workers in Nunavut, I wanted to directly obtain real thoughts and to do so, social workers were provided with the time and space to describe their experiences through semi-structured open-ended interviews. Qualitative research also provided the means to explore their experiences while maintaining the confidentiality of each participant and ensuring accuracy by including their direct comments. By incorporating quotes and “giving voice” to the participants’ accounts within the research, I aimed to increase the authenticity and validity of the research.

METHOD

A grounded theory approach that drew on elements of phenomenology was selected for this research to better understand the subjective experiences of the social workers interviewed, particularly regarding their relationships, the environment, and the community. Phenomenology seeks to deepen our understanding by delving into the “truths” of the participants’ experience through descriptive investigation, while grounded theory seeks to collect these truths to gain explanation and better understanding (Grinnell and Unrau, 2005). This is an ideal way to explore how social workers experience child welfare in Nunavut, as each participant can provide unique and subjective information based on their work, their personal feelings, values, and beliefs, making up their overall view of child welfare work in Nunavut. Grounded
theory is also appropriate to this research, as it can involve the experience of the researcher as well as the participants. As I have personal experience working as a social worker in Nunavut, and therefore fall within the population group being studied, I am also able to provide my thoughts and reactions within this research method (Grinnell and Unrau, 2005). Using my own experience as a starting place, I have sought out social workers’ experiences to determine linkages, patterns, themes and overall theories that could emerge from the data.

Despite my hope to interview both Inuit and Qallunaat social workers, almost all of the participants within this voluntary study were Qallunaat (9/10 social workers interviewed), which is likely a consequence of the research design as “it was not reasonable to assume that [Inuit social workers] would have unqualified confidence in, or be comfortable with, the methodology, the researcher, or the interview process” (Berger, Ross Epp and Meller, 2006, p. 185). This is likely as research in Inuit communities has left negative feelings between Inuit and researchers as previously mentioned, particularly when researchers have come to Nunavut, conducted interviews and left without providing the information back to the communities. Similarly, when outsiders conduct research in northern communities “without co-creating the agenda with insiders,” or at least inviting Inuit perspective has also led to “doing more harm than good” and has not fostered relationships built on trust and respect (Berger, Ross Epp and Meller, 2006, p. 184). Although this research was not conducted in Nunavut, it still pertains to the territory and to Inuit, and I am, therefore, at fault for not seeking Inuit input and collaboration in the research design. In retrospect it is easy to understand how the lack of “insider” discussion, Inuit perspective and community collaboration into the development and design of this research likely had a large role to play in who volunteered to participate. Therefore, by not involving Inuit in the creation of this study likely led to the final product, which is a study conducted by a Qallunaaq researcher (myself) regarding of, for the most part, experiences of Qallunaat social workers. Consequently, this study does little to reduce the dominant culture discourse regarding Canada’s Inuit people. It does, however, serve to examine the limitations and challenges of the current colonial model of child welfare, as well as the Government of Nunavut’s reliance on Qallunaat social workers as colonial agents of social control.

Although this study focused on social workers’ experiences and entailed encouraging each participant to explore their past and current experiences within child welfare in Nunavut, the research
questions were tailored to ensure the participants provided a general description of their regular daily work
and work situations they believed to be atypical or additionally challenging. None of the questions aimed to
generate or required any community or client-specific details; rather the questions were intended to create a
dialogue of social workers’ personal experience and views of child welfare in Nunavut. In my own
experience, due to many factors, there has been very little dialogue between social workers, between
regions, and generally among all those involved in the territory’s child welfare work. As a firm believer in
transparent practice and working within policies as a means to ensure worker and client safety,
professionally and physically, I believe there is a need for greater discussion about what we are doing to
ensure our policies fit within the work being done. Due the very nature of discussing one’s employment,
additional attempts have been made to maintain the anonymity of all participants. In this way, it was hoped
that all participants could freely describe their thoughts and experiences without reproach. Therefore, this
research serves as an opportunity to begin discussions and share comments in a confidential environment.

**SAMPLING AND RECRUITMENT**

The population of study has been defined as anyone who has worked or is currently working as a
social worker within child welfare in Nunavut. Participants were obtained via convenience, criterion, and
snowball sampling methods. To begin, a recruitment poster written in English (see Appendix E) was
created and sent with a cover letter by fax to every health centre in Nunavut to the attention of the Nurse in
Charge (NIC) or nurse manager of the centre. A non-technical description of the research was also created
and translated into Inuktitut and provided with the recruitment poster. The cover letter requested that the
NIC provide the recruitment poster and non-technical description in English (see Appendix F) and Inuktitut
(see Appendix G) to their Community Social Services worker(s) as well as post it in a public place within
the community health centre, a place in which social workers typically work. The poster, cover letter and
non-technical description of the research were also sent by email to the Union of Northern Workers and the
Association of Social Workers in Northern Canada to be distributed to all of their members via email.
Unfortunately, only two responses were obtained via these methods of recruitment and by the time
interviews were to be arranged, neither participant could be located. However, through word of mouth over
the course of one year a total of 10 interviews were conducted. One of the 10 participants was selected and
interviewed as a key informant, as this person has extensive experience with Nunavut’s child welfare
system. All participants were permitted to forward my contact information to other people they knew or were in contact with that had experience in child welfare in Nunavut.

There are approximately 20 to 30 social workers in Nunavut at any one time, despite over 50 positions available within the territory (Minogue, 2005; Legislative Assembly of Nunavut, 2008). In addition to this lack of social workers, casual staff, rather than permanent workers are employed in many of these social work positions. This means that there are social workers in Nunavut who may work for a short period of time, from a few weeks to few months, creating a large turnover of workers. Most often these are Qallunaat social workers, such as myself, brought up to Nunavut from southern Canada for temporary work assignments. Unfortunately, the lack of permanent workers made the recruitment of participants for this study much more difficult and it became clear early on during the research, that a successful recruitment of participants could include interviews of 25 to 50% of the number of available workers within the territory. Therefore, this study aimed to achieve interviews with between 10 and 15 participants. In order to expand the existing sample population the sample of participants included those who had worked within child welfare in Nunavut previously and now may hold other positions within the community or may no longer be in Nunavut. Unfortunately, there is no central network or way to connect with those who no longer work in child welfare in the territory so word of mouth via snowball sampling was required to reach these participants. Of the 10 participants, 5 (or 50%) were within Nunavut during the interviews and were currently working as child welfare workers and 5 (50%) were physically outside of the territory and had previously worked within Nunavut’s child welfare system. Interviews were concluded when the sample size was reached, once participants ceased contacting me to be interviewed, and when recruitment of participants had been open for one year. This cut off was also due to time and resource constraints as this study was conducted without any external funding.

**INCLUSION CRITERIA**

The participants within this study were not required to be of any age, gender, or ethnicity. They were also not required to be currently working in Nunavut as a social worker. Lengths of employment, positions and experience were not included as criteria within the sampled population. The only requirement was for participants to have worked within Nunavut’s child welfare system. This “open” criterion for selecting of participants was done purposefully to include many perspectives and obtain a wide range of
experiences. All participants were interviewed over the course of twelve months from March 2008 to March 2009. Unfortunately, as I am unilingual and cannot speak Inuktitut and because the employment of a translator was not financially possible for this study, all interviews were conducted in English. Should an Inuit social worker had wished to participate in Inuktitut, it is possible that a translator could have been achieved within their community, however, in hindsight, I now recognize that this was not indicated on the non-technical description or recruitment poster. Therefore, it is possible that some Inuit social workers did not wish to participate or believed they were not able to participate due to the requirement of speaking English. It is also possible, that because the research was designed to use questioning, and because some “Inuit may perceive direct questioning as invasive” some Inuit social workers may have chosen not to participate for this reason (Berger, Ross Epp and Meller, 2006, p. 185).

Additional information was collected from documentation and text, and observations based on social work in Nunavut were accumulated over this same period of time. Web based material and articles from the territory’s newspaper and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation have also been utilized within this research.

INSTRUMENTATION

Once participants were identified, they were provided with the interview questions they would be asked during the interview. They were also provided with the recruitment letter, were encouraged to discuss their experiences freely, advised that they were not required to answer any questions, and that they could discuss what they believed was important to the research. Prior to scheduling each interview a consent form was sent to every participant by email to be signed and returned by regular post (see Appendix C). At the beginning of every interview, participants were again reminded that they were not compelled to answer the questions and were welcome to discuss whatever aspect of child welfare in Nunavut that they believed was important to the research. The questionnaire (see Appendix D) was purposely structured to engage participants through the use of open-ended questions relating to their feelings, thoughts and experiences by providing general examples. During the course of the interviews, it became clear that some of the questions were not as useful or appropriate to the research as others. Questions such as, “Is there a significant aspect of your work in Nunavut that you particularly enjoy or have enjoyed? Why or why not?” were useful and elicited detailed responses from participants. As well, at the closure of every interview participants were
asked, “Is there anything else that you would like to share? Any other aspects of your experience that you believe could be important to this research?,” which tended to produce the most information. Within each interview probing and clarification questions were also used and occasionally questions were omitted to ensure the natural conversation flow was maintained.

DATA COLLECTION

Data for this study was collected over a one-year period from March 2008 to March 2009 and consisted of interviews with participants, observations, including my work in Nunavut, relevant studies and documents, and my impressions and reactions to the data. Telephone interviews provided the best alternative to in-person interviewing and allowed for participants to be interviewed at their convenience. This data collection method was selected due to the large distance between myself as researcher and the participants, as well as the lack of opportunity to meet in person. Each interview took place via an Internet telephone or Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP) software known as Skype so as it could be recorded on another computer software program called Trx Recorder. I conducted each interview while I was physically in Vancouver, British Columbia, with the participants physically in Nunavut or spread across Canada. Interviews ranged from 45 minutes to a little over one hour in length and were scheduled at the participants’ convenience. In two cases, interviews were cut short due to the employment demands of the participants and second interviews were scheduled. All interviews were conducted in English. All participants were offered transcripts of the interviews, but only one participant was interested in this and was subsequently provided with the transcript of the interview. This participant did not make any comments upon review of the transcript.

During the interviews, each participant was asked to provide examples and descriptions of general statements and probing questions and reframing were used for clarification to ensure that that I understood the comments as the participants intended. For example, questions such as “how so?” or “in what way?” were asked of participants following any comments that could potentially have been misunderstood or were general in nature. All interviews were transcribed verbatim using the Express Scribe computer program and securely saved on computer. In addition to the participant interviews, my observations from working in Nunavut as a social worker, the related studies, articles and reports, Web-based material, and media texts have been weaved into the findings of this research to provide a more comprehensive picture of child
welfare in the territory.

MEASURES

Due the exploratory nature of this research, grounded theory was selected to “allow meanings and explanations to emerge from the words and constructs of the informants rather than from the preconceived notions of the investigators” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Grounded theory is an appropriate research method for this study due to its ability to allow for the participants’ experiences and consequently, the research data, to guide the research. Due to my involvement in Nunavut’s child welfare system and my connection to the work, the north and even the participants, it was that much more important to let the experiences of the participants guide this research, so as to ensure that my personal bias did not lead, nor determine, the findings. The data collected was then coded and grouped into categories and themes and from this theories have emerged. This method has helped to ensure that the information collected from all participants, and not my own prior hypothesis or assumptions, was truly the driving force of the research.

DATA ANALYSIS AND CODING

I began by transcribing each interview verbatim and then purging it of identifying characteristics, including names, communities, gendered comments, employment positions, and length of employment. Once purged, all data was uploaded into the new Qualitative Data Analysis Program (QDAP) computer software called Coding Analysis Toolkit (CAT). I used the constant comparative method, commonly known through work by Glasser and Strauss (1967), to develop categories. To do this I began by looking for key issues and recurrent events, such as perspectives or experiences that were common among participants. These became the initial categories or codes that I focused on. However, throughout coding, I also kept in mind the different “dimensions” present within participants’ comments (Grinnell and Unrau, 2005). Reviewing prior paragraphs of text and constantly comparing the last paragraph with the previous ones, I continued to search for similarities, differences and new emerging themes. As new themes were continually being developed, comparisons were made across the data, by comparing how the information being conveyed in one sentence or paragraph fit with the preceding or following sentences or paragraphs. As the CAT computer program allows for the adjudication of coded items by another researcher, I acted as both researcher and adjudicator, which meant I coded all of the data twice. Following the initial coding of all transcripts, I reviewed how each piece of text had been coded via CAT’s validation report application,
where I then became the adjudicator. Through this process of adjudicating the data or checking to make sure it was coded properly all of the data was recoded for the second time. This process determined that I had appropriately coded the data 95.38% accurately as during the initial coding.

After distancing myself from this coding process for one week, I returned to print the coded data and began hierarchical coding by hand. To do this I constructed a list of the themes and sub-themes with descriptions as to how the data was coded (Appendix B). Following this, I moved to second-level coding of all the data by determining the “meaning units” within each text and further comparing the categories of data (Grinnell and Unrau, 2005). This was done through line-by-line scrutiny and techniques to develop themes. The techniques I applied for developing the themes were: sorting expressions into like groups, looking for the repetition within the data such as topics that continued to reoccur, similarities and differences within the sentence and or piece of text, and how language was used to represent a participant’s thoughts. In particular I looked for linguistic connectors such as "since," "because" and "as a result" that signified causal relationships and pieces of text that held relationships to other pieces of text, such as categories that were linked with other categories. Finally, I looked for the emergent theory within the data. I did not, however, look at the conversation transitions between the participants and myself during the dialogue, such as turn taking and speaker interruption because each interview was held by telephone and the majority of them involved a lag in the conversation due to the telephone connection, which resulted in overlapping comments on both ends.

During analysis there were 19 overall categories that had developed through interviews (see Appendix B) with participants, but the categories that generated the most responses included: “description of role and work,” “education and training,” “expectations and first impressions,” “funding and resources,” “concerns with child welfare in Nunavut,” “safety, stress and discomfort,” and “worker turnover and employment.” As each category held a number of themes, which were discussed to varying lengths, only the most prominent themes were explored. Each of these themes will be broken down and discussed in detail for further understanding in the following chapter.

DEMOGRAPHICS

In order to maintain confidentiality of all participants the majority of demographics of participants are being withheld. This is because there are so few social workers that have worked or are working within
Nunavut’s child welfare system that by distinguishing gender, age or even the communities participants worked in could add to the likelihood of their identities being determined. However, it can be noted that the participants were both male and female, 90% were Qallunaat and 10% Inuit, currently 50% were living in Nunavut and 50% were living outside of the territory, and all have worked from short term (less than six months) to long term (many years) within Nunavut’s child welfare system. Participants also held a range of education and experience prior to their work in the territory, all had been employed as a social worker at some time in Nunavut.

**CREDIBILITY AND LIMITATIONS**

In order to ensure this study was credible, transferable, dependable and sound, it was essential that I explored investigator bias, particularly as I have a personal relationship with Nunavut child welfare work. Keeping in mind that data collection is “particularly vulnerable to biases of the data collector,” I was careful to reflect upon each interview and collected content, and note my personal reactions and biases (Grinnell and Unrau, 2005). In order to reduce my biases and ensure the credibility, transferability, and dependability of the research, I have attempted to articulate data collection decisions. Also, my prolonged engagement through participant observation has provided me with access to the culture of the participant population. By conducting interviews to the point of saturation and providing a review of the pertinent literature, I demonstrated a basis for the research. Through explicit and thick descriptions of data I also aimed to bring the reader into the text as much as possible. Verbatim transcripts and memoing were used throughout the coding process, as well as documenting the process of checking and re-checking the data to confirm results.

Unfortunately, there were some significant limitations to this research, most notably the lack of Inuit social workers interviewed, which as I previously mentioned is likely due to the research design. In addition to this, I did not have a way to recruit participants who worked previously in Nunavut and now either work elsewhere or within another profession or position unless they were identified through snowball sampling. In addition, the high turnover rate of workers appears to have impacted the number of social workers who requested to participate. Although 10 interviews were conducted, it is highly possible that a larger sample size, the use of a translator and a greater number of Inuit social workers would have produced a wider range of perspectives and a broader understanding of the experiences of Nunavut social workers.
The significant overrepresentation of Qallunaat social workers from the dominant culture interviewed from southern Canada limits the perspectives from which social work in Nunavut is experienced due to their southern world views. Future research that is aimed exclusively at understanding Inuit social workers and community perspectives of child welfare in Nunavut is necessary in order to gain a true picture of child welfare in the territory.

Additional limitations included the requirement of approval by the University of British Columbia’s (UBC) Behavioral Research Ethics Board (BREB) and the Nunavut Research Institute (NRI). The BREB required all interviews be general in nature to decrease the possibility of workers’ identities becoming known. The NRI required all research to be conducted from outside of the territory. This meant all interviews were to be conducted by telephone, which as is often the case with the northern telephone system, involved a lag in discussion or being disconnected mid sentence. The telephone interviews also prevented the more natural flow of conversation that occurs between two people face to face, possibly creating a reduction in the information collected. Finally, my personal involvement and employment in Nunavut may have presented the largest limitation, for when I am in the territory I am employed as a Supervisor of a number of different communities. It would follow that some participants may have felt guarded in terms of how much information they were willing to share with me due to concern that it could impact our working relationship. In addition to this, I am Qallunaaq from southern Canada, which likely had an impact on Inuit social workers’ ability to trust me to conduct respectful research. As well, some social workers may have simply not wished to participate, due to our current or previous working relationship. As previously mentioned, without access to a translator and all interviews being held in English, may have also deterred some Inuktitut speaking social workers from participating.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Nunavut is a vast land, but it also has the potential to be incredibly “small.” The pool of social workers in Nunavut at any one time can be so small, that the necessity to protect participants’ confidentiality is higher than in most southern research. One the most important aspects of this research has been ensuring the confidentiality of all participants, and for this reason a large portion of identifying information has been omitted from this paper. Many social workers have had to travel to different communities during the course of their work and may be aware of certain workers by name, reputation, or a
description of events. The movement of clients and their families between regions also provides an opportunity for social workers to learn about their colleagues in other communities. Although my social work experience in Nunavut has presented as a limitation in many ways, it also provided me with the ability to ascertain when even small aspects of a participant’s information could lead to that participant becoming recognizable to others. Based on this, community names, particular instances, specific examples and aspects such as community size or recognizable demographics of certain regions within the territory have been omitted. This level of discretion is required due to the potential impact such disclosure could have upon a participant’s current or future employment. Unfortunately, once identifying information has been omitted, certain comments and statements occasionally lose their intended meaning and impact.

**ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS**

This research received approval from the University of British Columbia’s BREB and licensing from the Nunavut Research Institute. As well, the Government of Nunavut’s (GN) Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS), the Union of Northern Workers and the Association of Social Workers in Northern Canada were all advised of the research and were asked to participate.
CHAPTER 6: RESULTS

The following chapter describes the results of 10 interviews with social workers regarding their experiences, thoughts and views of Nunavut’s current child welfare system. Although many categories arose from these interviews, only those that elicited the greatest number of responses have been included.

Category: Description of Role and Work

Participants were asked to describe what they did within their work in Nunavut. Although the topic area was specific to child welfare, it became clear that participants could not entirely separate their of child welfare work from the many other aspects of their generalist social work practice, such as family counseling, support services and mental health work signaling the overlapping nature of child welfare work. It also became clear within the interviews that a conflict existed between how social workers viewed their role and how they believed others, such as community members and professionals in the territory, viewed their role. Unfortunately, collecting information from communities regarding how indeed social workers are viewed within Nunavut was beyond the scope of this study. Nonetheless, the conflicting view of child welfare described by participants was further compounded by their own beliefs about the role, their expectations of the work, and what the actual day-to-day work entails.

Theme: Role

Participants outlined how they viewed their role within child welfare, within the community, and within the organization of the Government of Nunavut. Generally, participants described their role in Nunavut as “one of educator, teacher, which is basically a little bit of the same thing but different,” and “as more of a liaison between the best interests of the child [with] the department to the parent…like a bridge.” These roles were considered necessary because:

“traditionally our mothers were the main caregivers and now over this generation, the traditional relationships between mother and daughter are becoming more distant and sometimes I see my role as for example to maybe teach some mothers that its ok to get angry once in a while, to lose your temper and your patience, but when that happens what can you do to be able to handle it again...My mom was taught by her mother how to be a mother, and she had to do all those things, but now mothers aren't connected enough to be able to do that.”

The disconnection within families was also described as pertaining to the community as well and led another participant to describe their role as a mediator or one that involved “do[ing] the things that the community isn't going to do. They live with each other, they're neighbors with each other forever, whereas
we come and go. We're not from the community, we don't have the family ties and the same connections within the community.” This comment suggests a perceived need for “outsiders” or those not from the community to play a role due to the lack of connections within the community, which appears to also suggest a view of the community as unable or unwilling to address its own issues. This is consistent with the study of non-Aboriginal social workers in Walmsley's (2004) study that viewed the community as not protective, thereby creating a role for themselves through labeling the community as deficient in meeting its own needs.

Despite the seemingly supportive description of the roles social workers played as “bridges” between the community and the government, participants described their daily work under much different terms. Participants explained that they are required to manage “anything that comes through the door- we deal with it” and described their practice as “doing cradle to grave services.” Another participant stated, “The way I try to describe Nunavut to people who don’t really know, is that it is emergency social work.” Although these comments speak to the generalist nature of northern social work, they are also suggestive of the work being crisis oriented. Participants referred to the challenges within their daily duties that required such response-based practice, as one explained “you have one social worker, sometimes dealing with [x]8 hundred people. I think that is a bit of a high caseload! Because you are doing as I said- generic social work, you are responsible for family violence issues, for probation services, child welfare, foster program, dealing with the aged and handicapped, and mental health as well.” The wide range of this work also included “doing all this from a distance by phone” because “there’s communities that are operating with just one worker when there should be two.” These descriptions suggest that the way social workers view their role as supportive can be very different from the actual day-to-day work they feel expected to perform. It seems that despite seeing their role as including supportive functions, the daily work is more emergency-based and driven by a lack of social workers. One participant described, “the job itself is advertised as kind of a community development job and it certainly can be that and there's lots of latitude for that, [but] when you get up here, you see that largely you are seen as the child protection worker and even at times that's how you are seen by your supervisor, because that's what your supervisor tends to supervise you for.” Child welfare was described as the participant’s primary responsibility with community

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8 To ensure the location and, therefore, the identity of participants’ remains unidentifiable, the size of communities has been omitted.
development work much less of the focus, as a social worker in Nunavut is “part child protection worker… part probation officer, part mental health counselor, part school consultant and some social services. So it’s a mixed job. The core job I suppose is child protection worker.” This was reiterated within many interviews where participants described the primary role of social workers in Nunavut as child welfare worker because this role took professional precedence and was heavy with expectations.

For some social workers, their role was also determined by what they believed the community expected of them. Although not a prevalent sentiment, one social worker described the experience in a community as, “people would tell me that I was there to do whatever they told me to do and that there was no need for me to be there, but if I was going to be plunked there, then I was going to do whatever they want me to do as a social worker, not what our policy says or what our law says, you know it was what we want you to do.” Another participant described the community’s expectation of them to be the child welfare worker at all times, “I might understand that this is my job and it ends when I leave the door or when I’m not on call, but the elders, I was that person who did that thing.” This view of child welfare workers by the community was also taken by other professionals in the community as one social worker described:

“While I was in Nunavut, the expectation is that you are going to be the family police. That you are going to be, as far as the other professionals in the community, that you are going to be, that you are going to hold people accountable, your going to scare them, that your going to make them tow the line, that your going to keep them in line. And for me that's really difficult because that is not where I come from, a place where I'm here to help, lets give you as many opportunities as possible and I'm here to help and I've got resources that can help. Lets create, lets try these, lets use these opportunities to help families get over their little hump and I've found more than where I was before, I found that it was more about, [in community x] in Nunavut they wanted you to be the family police. You're the social services police.”

This notion that child welfare workers are expected to “police” families speaks to the power inequities within Nunavut communities, particularly the power held by child welfare workers over families. It also speaks to socialization within the community and maintaining the status quo of power held by Qallunaat over Inuit. However, it also indicates the “other professionals” within the territory as wanting to maintain this power imbalance and, therefore, maintain the status quo. As Qallunaat make up the majority of social workers in Nunavut and are employed as “family police” to control Inuit communities regarding southern child welfare standards and values shows how similar Nunavut’s current colonial child welfare system is to the initial child welfare work of 40 years ago (Paine, 1971). The expectations of participants regarding what they believed they were hired to do, versus what they were actually required to do during their
employment, also appeared to have some incongruities. For the Qallunaat participants that had been hired to work in Nunavut with the expectation that their job would be child welfare work, there was a different view of their role. One participant described how the role involved much more:

“I fully expected that I was being hired to do child welfare. My whole history has been children’s services, mostly child welfare and mostly protection, so I was quite specialized, so it was a real awakening when I arrived and found out that I would be doing some child welfare and then there was family violence, elder abuse, marital counseling, youth counseling, some addictions and some mental health, foster care approvals and recruitment of supports, in some communities there was also clerical, so you also did your own clerical work and as well think half the time I had to organize and clean the office and a couple of times had to set up files because no files had ever been set up.”

This comment highlights a common thread among many of the interviews, which suggested that upon hiring social workers’ believed they would be doing a different job than they actually were required to do within their daily duties and in many cases, were unprepared to do. One Qallunaaq social worker spoke to this difference in perception of what the work would be in the territory with what it actually involved, commenting, “when I go up next time, if I go up next time, if and when, I think I would go in with my eyes open a different way, and be much more realistic about it.” Another participant summed up the issue of role confusion by stating, “roles are so muddied here.”

Theme: Challenges

As participants described their work and their role within Nunavut’s communities, there was one very clear common theme; there are many challenges within the work. The daily challenges at times can be overwhelming and as one participant describes, “you are the only social type of agency there and people come to you for all kinds of reasons. The worst is when they come in and they have no food.” This difficult work scenario is complicated by the physical demands of the work as well, which for one, the “experience has ranged from being quite manageable to being 24-7 kind of job.” Another participant, while describing an enjoyable aspect of the work, again brought the conversation back to the challenges associated with the job, “I like the foster care program, but given the stretch and time limitations you don't really get to enjoy much of anything. Your basically just putting out fires. You don't get to meet foster parents. The problem is time. You don't have time to savor anything, you just going on adrenaline all the time.” The lack of time attributed to the lack of social workers in the territory was described as a large problem, so much so that one participant referred to traveling to another community to “kinda band aid up the situation and leave again.” In addition to the challenges of time and staff shortage within Nunavut’s child welfare work are the
challenges of working with large social issues. One social worker commented, “domestic violence is well, well it just seems like it is the norm. Women are so, every woman gets beat up, no matter where they live.” This appears to reflect on just how overwhelming the work can be; that for this participant it feels like violence is everywhere. Regarding supervision for social workers, one participant described how on one occasion there was “a plan that got approved by one [staff person] in the morning and in the afternoon another [staff person] said no.” Another participant also spoke to the issue of overlapping management as “everybody thinks they are my boss. I have my boss and that’s the only person that I answer to. But often you’re getting calls or direction from other people and it’s a constant battle to tell them to, you know to tell them that they need to look elsewhere.”

Despite these many challenges there was a reoccurring comment of how the actual problems and social issues within the work itself were “no different from any community.” Participants pointed to the strengths of the communities in handling the same social issues that exist everywhere else in the world, but do so in Nunavut with fewer resources. One participant provided the following essentializing attitude in a description of Nunavut by stating, “I don’t think we have any different problems than we have down south except how we have to handle them and the lack of resources.” Participants indicated many challenges within their work and described the territory’s challenges as similar to those faced by Aboriginal people in small communities across Canada. One participant compared the challenges of Nunavut to those experienced by First Nations communities in the Northwest Territories:

“the issues that we are talking about in Nunavut are really fairly similar to the issues in the territories too aren't they? I mean you're dealing pretty much with the community that's in transition, And in many respects the same issues that we are talking about with First Nations communities, I mean are the same issues that are happening for the Inuit people even more so. And have occurred over a far shorter period of time and so your talking about this whole issue of transition and people in conflict, in confusion etc and the whole issue around really self governance and government and what does that mean etc and tied in with that your talking about isolation and your talking about the whole issue of recruitment and retention and your talking about significant social issues. And with limited resources, and limited decision making and I mean it's hard. It's really hard. I mean it really is. It's a tough job and it is it's going to be a hard struggle for the Inuit people I believe.”

This participant views Nunavut’s challenges as overlapping and connected to Inuit self-governance, while references to the “transition” and “people in conflict” emphasize the conflict between southern and northern worlds, ideology and life. However, despite referring to the territory’s limited “decision making” power, which speaks to the continued colonialism of Inuit, the suggestion that due to isolation and the
social issues there will continue to be issues of “recruitment and retention” of Qallunaat from southern Canada. This is interesting because although this social worker recognizes the Inuit struggle towards self-governance, there does not appear to be recognition of Qallunaat social workers as colonial agents. The comment also suggests no alternative to recruiting Qallunaat social workers.

**Theme: Instinct and Creative Problem Solving**

The majority of participants indicated that they often relied on their instinct within child welfare work and creativity was also an important element of their practice. Despite the work challenges, one participant stated, “multitasking. Right and I love, that’s what I love about my job. But your whole thing is going by instinct.” Another participant confirmed, “Instinct is 100% critical at least in my practice because if I am doing a suicide assessment…you have to have some instinct about what's going on with that client.”

Another example of instinct directly related to a social worker’s practice in child welfare was described as follows:

“There's a lady who came in and wants to send her child, she's done, she's tired, she cannot manage and she wants to put the child up for adoption right away because she can't do it, she just can't and upon talking to the lady you find out that she's homeless and she has been dealing with a lot of issues and ok, leave me the baby and go and come back in two weeks from now after you've settled in and after you take a breather. And I could have just taken the surrender of the child and taken the child and put the matter in court but knowing that her background and her situation I realized that she was just overwhelmed and so I made the right choice, I decided to put the child under a voluntary agreement and give the mother some respite and some counseling and let her organize her life and situation. And that was correct. So when you have a small community and you know the people you are dealing with, your instincts are useful.”

Here it is easy to see the link between the actual child welfare practice, including a family preservation approach and attachment theory, with a social worker’s instinct. It is also possibly to imagine how, the situation could have had an entirely different outcome for a family due to the social worker’s instinct, which is founded in their perspective and use of theory. In addition to this use of instinct, participants commented on their use of creative problem solving skills as a necessary aspect of their practice. One participant described: “Everyday you have to be creative in terms of how you handle situations and how you look at things. Creativity comes into play a lot when you use alternative measures rather than take a matter to court. You could maybe bring the elders in to talk and or do something other than an aggressive approach.” This comment shows the connection between creative problem solving and working with the community as compared to a lack of creativity, without community involvement. It also highlights two approaches to child welfare, one that involves elders and another “aggressive” approach that uses court.
Another participant explained that there is a real need for creativity within child welfare “because there is so little provided for us. We have to be creative in terms of how we obtain services and deliver services and we have to because if we weren’t we wouldn’t be getting half of what we get in terms of meeting needs for our clients in general.” Here we see a link between creativity and the need to meet client needs. However, there also appears to be a link between creative problem solving and the need to sidestep policy as one participant described, “You end up not following the rules and not following protocol because you have to get done what you have to get done. Its all that creative problem solving.” This comment indicates that certain policies or protocol may not fit certain situations and instead require a reliance on the social worker’s ability to creatively address difficult situations. One participant explained that it was not possible to follow the child welfare policies required by the role or “you’d be run out of town. You’d be run out of town and there would be a great deal of apprehensions, the government couldn’t afford it.” Although none of the participants interviewed identified specific policies that they believed did not fit with child welfare in Nunavut, most described situations, practices and approaches regarding child apprehensions as requiring increased “creativity.” These comments indicate both a link between creative problem solving and a need to not follow policy, to the number of children in government care. There also appears to be connection in the discussion regarding the lack of resources, including the lack of social workers in Nunavut. This suggests that firm adherence to child welfare policies regarding child apprehension and an increase in social workers in the territory could lead to an increase the number of children in government care in the territory.

**Category: Education and Training**

Just as instinct and creativity were identified as necessary elements within child welfare work in Nunavut, there were additional traits that participants described as necessary for good practice in the territory. Qallunaat participants reflected on their preparation for practice in Nunavut, on the actual orientation and preparation that was provided to them and their feelings of being unprepared for the difficult work required of them.

**Theme: Orientation and Preparation**

Overall participants indicated there was a lack of orientation or training provided to them to prepare them to work in Nunavut, and what skills, perspectives and understanding of child welfare each
social worker brought to their practice was entirely up to them. For some, it was the first time they had ever done any child welfare work and there was a general sense of learning as they went, while others had worked in southern child welfare systems for a long time and brought this knowledge and previous experiences to their work. Despite the range of experience participants brought to their work in Nunavut they were not provided with training at the beginning of their employment. Only one participant indicated that there was training during their entire employment in the territory. Consistently, participants described being provided with little to no orientation, no training and very little information about what they would be doing within their role as social worker in Nunavut. One participant was provided with “about an hour overview” and then was handed a “caseload I would be covering and a couple of the significant cases and what I should start off doing that day.” Another explained, “They pretty well gave me a day to look over the legislation, to look over the policy manual.” One participant was provided with “a tour of the town of [community x] and introductions to the RCMP and a tour of the health centre and introductions there. [This community] also had a [additional resource] so we also went there. So that was my orientation. That was my introduction…and then I was off and running.” This comment suggests the orientation involved a Qallunaaq social worker being introduced to other Qallunaat in the community who held decision-making power, such as the medical professionals and RCMP, thereby reaffirming the status quo. For those participants that were coming from southern Canada, there was no discussion about what they would be doing upon arrival. Consistently, the experience included “absolutely nothing. I was told that I would have [x] amount of weight [in luggage]. The government was more concerned with what I brought up with me and my packing than what I was going to be doing when I got there and I assumed I would be trained but I wasn’t.” Another participant stated, “I sent a resume, got a telephone call and a month later I was on a plane and I had no idea what to expect, knew nothing about Nunavut” which was again similar to the experience of another participant who stated, “there was no information session, there was no training, oh God there was no training, there was let alone any cultural or acclamation or anything like that, you were really like in a sink or swim situation you know, and you have to learn the culture or you don't.” One participant indicated that there was a sense of urgency in the employment offer as “they said they had a job and it just kind of turned around in a matter of days, that I was going to [community x].” One participant who sought out information prior to flying to Nunavut explained:
“The only preparation I got was when I was first going to [community x]. I sent an email you know, “what should I bring?” and what were my duties going to be, where would I live etcetera. And I got a short email back from a person and a phone number for someone who worked in the north that was from [a place in the south], which is very close to [the participant's home town]. So I called [this person] and she was the one who gave me a more expanded idea of what the role was and what I could expect.”

Again this comment shows how the overall preparation, including education of Inuit culture, history of the territory and perspective brought to Nunavut by Qallunaat social workers is entirely up to each individual worker. Also, the link between the importance of having an understanding of the Inuit culture and the lack of training was raised by a number of participants. Looking back to first arriving for work in Nunavut, one participant discusses how a lack of understanding of the culture was evident in an interaction with a child:

“That whole raised eye brows is ‘yes’ and scrunch your nose means ‘no’ and I remember asking a little girl something and…she raised her eyebrows…I [thought] that she couldn't hear me so I asked her again only louder. So she raised her eyebrows again until I was like screaming at this girl wondering if she needs to go the health centre because no one has checked her for a hearing disorder. And she was like ‘I'm saying yes.’ And that's so simple, like that is so basic. That's not even a nuance part of the culture and nobody tells you that!”

The Inuit participant added to this sentiment and described the importance for Qallunaat to have greater understanding of Inuit culture in advance of working in Nunavut. This participant explained that for those working in child welfare an understanding of Inuit culture is essential because, “There are things that maybe a white person or social service worker doesn’t understand [about] our culture or our traditions. [If they] come up here and see some of the things and how we treat or raise our children and you know kind of maybe see it as neglect or but it’s just the way.” This participant’s comments show how misunderstandings can occur when Qallunaat social workers lack an understanding of Inuit culture and operate from a southern world view of childrearing.

Theme: Learning in the North

Most participants described initiating and seeking out informal means to prepare themselves for their job regarding Inuit culture and the history of the territory, but none of the Qallunaat participants indicated they had any solid understanding of Nunavut prior to arriving there for work. “Everything I know about Nunavut, I learned once I got here” explained one social worker. In terms of training, another stated, “I did buy two pocket books at a second hand store years ago and read about Inuit culture.” Reading was a common means for learning about Nunavut as another participant advised “a lot of my introduction and expansion of knowledge of the Inuit is made through reading. I like history so I have a list of all the books.
I keep a list of all the books I have read. I’ve read a lot and I know a lot of it is from the perspective of the Hudson’s Bay and the explorers of the Northwest Passage and all of those adventures.” This comment possibly indicates the social worker’s recognition of different perspectives and world views held by Qallunaat and Inuit. Another participant referred to learning about Inuit culture through “the movie Atanarjuat, [which] had just come out that summer. So I saw Atanarjuat and I thought what the fuck have I done, cause I'd already accepted the job, I'd quit my old job, I'd packed my boxes, I'd done all this stuff. And I was like you've got to be kidding me, what am I doing. Pretty much that movie was [my] training.” It is clear here that participants showed interest in learning about Nunavut prior to working there and attempted to become familiar with Inuit culture through resources available to them.

Despite participants viewing their role as “educator” and “teacher,” most social workers described community members or other staff training them or helping them get acquainted with child welfare work. As one participant explained that during “work in the Arctic, every moment is a learning moment because 95% of your team has grade 8 education and they love learning as long as you teach them on their terms, not yours.” A number of the participants described learning from this same team that they taught, or by “sitting in the coffee room with the clerical staff.” One participant stated:

“the secretary and the [other staff person] fully trained me, and completely trained me very well to the resources in the community and who the people are and that [was] not anything I would have gotten out of a policy manual. And they taught me how to do my job in a respectful way and I really had to listen to the people of the community because they have been doing this for thousands of years and even just the past ten years when you haven't been in that community and they know who the people are.”

Another participant confirmed this reliance on the support staff for this essential training as, “the person with the most experience was the secretary and she quite literally trained both of us.” For many participants their feelings associated with arrival in Nunavut and beginning work “was a bit of the blind leading the blind” and “bottom line being, I had no idea.” Yet the positive associations social workers held to being trained by support staff came through clearly in the interviews. Interestingly, by not providing new workers with training and education, the unintended result included the blurring or exchanging of roles, which involved the southern Qallunaat social workers’ role of “expert” being exchanged for the role of “student.” This exchange of roles, and consequently the power within the role, will be discussed in greater depth within Chapter 7.
Category: Expectations and First Impressions

Throughout the interviews comments by Qallunaat participants' of their first impressions of child welfare work in Nunavut, of their employer and generally regarding Inuit culture and community life in the territory began appearing. By probing into these comments and asking participants to describe their first experiences of child welfare in Nunavut, some very similar themes that began to emerge. Consistent with Zapf’s (1993) research, the Qallunaat social workers in this study commented on experiencing culture shock upon their arrival in Nunavut, while the Inuit social worker commented on experiencing shock in terms of the child welfare work itself. For all participants there was a very obvious need to adjust to the new environment, both within the work and within the community.

Theme: Community Impressions

Qallunaat social workers described similar scenarios as they referred to the “shock” of arriving in Nunavut but then almost immediately referred to a relationship that they formed once they arrived in a community. For example, “It was great. I really enjoyed it there and its certainly not something that I would rule out in the future for sure. I really did. It's amazing how close you get to people in a very short period of time.” Another participant confirmed this, “I found that people came together very quickly in terms of, it was very easy to meet people.” This reaction to the experience appears rooted in the relationships the participant built with community members. As participants reflected on their arrival in the community and how they experienced it, some also commented on how the community in turn responded to their arrival. One participant explained, “You know it really took some stepping back and letting them get to know who I was and trying to understand where their feelings were coming from and the fear.” One participant stated it was “like I was in 1950 or something. It just felt like back in time.” This is interesting because as mentioned previously the same social power structures continue to exist today as they did 40 years ago (Paine, 1971). Another participant described a similar feeling of going back in time regarding the physical aspects of the communities as “they didn't have roads, didn't have street names. It was just like a culture shock because it was just like it was so different than living in [location]. It was just like walking back in time. What [certain town] may have been like 50 years ago.” The Qallunaat expectation that Nunavut should have southern “street names” as in southern Canada and that by not having these were an old way of life, shows the ethnocentrism of place held by social workers. The difference in physical environment from
the south also created distinct feelings of disorientation for Qallunaat as one participant explained, “I remember the day I got off that plane and I realized that I have no idea where I am or what I am doing.” This feeling of disorientation and cultural confusion was consistently described by Qallunaat, as another social worker recalled “that it was like a shock after shock after shock and the kids were so curious and would knock on my door and be like we want to come in your house because we've never been in a white person's house.” One participant describes the arrival in Nunavut as, “a fly by the seat of your pants situation. And I think I would say I was in a daze for about two weeks of just, like sheer culture shock where I was just, like it's almost like a hazy experience when I look back.” Despite the “shock” of arriving and view of Nunavut as “behind” the south, the initial experiences for Qallunaat social workers were for the most part described positively. A sense of amazement and interest in Nunavut was clear as one participant reflected on the physical community, “I mean they are very isolated places and yet you know they are operating with a whole range of services including ATM's and...And it's quite amazing really.” Therefore, the lack of preparation of Qallunaat social workers for child welfare work in Nunavut appears to involve initial disorientation and culture shock as well as the expectation to begin working in a culturally specific way immediately upon arrival. This holds large implications regarding the employment of Qallunaat social workers from outside the territory, which will be further examined in Chapter 7.

Theme: Work Impressions

For some participants, there was an additional experience of “shock” regarding the actual work required of social workers in Nunavut. For example:

“I really didn't know what to expect right so I mean I wasn't operating with a huge amount of knowledge. I hate to say. And so I just assumed that it would be it would be more how can I say it, particularly in light of the fact, that around the whole issue of self governance…I guess I had a sense that there would be more of a focus perhaps on family work and that's really what I'm talking about. I'm really talking about more of an emphasis on wellness and family support.”

Another participant reiterated this lack of focus on community and family support as, “it was a little different than what I expected cause in a sense I thought there would be more of a community development focus but it was, well in [community x] it was more of an investigative approach I think.” The investigative approach to child welfare in the territory appears to have surprised some Qallunaat social workers that had anticipated a child welfare approach that was structurally different from child welfare systems in southern
Canada. This comment also suggests that a lack of focus on family support and wellness is visible in child welfare in Nunavut.

Qallunaat social workers who previously worked in southern organizations commented on the change in work environment in Nunavut, particularly the difference in physical paper work, as one participant explained:

“There's no tracking. You pick up a file that has been open for maybe a year and there's nothing in the file. You don't know what's going on with the family. You don't know. There's no documentation. There's no recording, there's oral history, like you could talk to your worker and they could tell you 25 pages of information in 5 minutes, but written, there's nothing.”

Another participant spoke to this as well, “Like where is the paperwork? Yah, where is it?! Where is it?”

The adjustment from a paper-based social work practice in the south to a practice based more on oral knowledge in the north was clearly uncomfortable for some Qallunaat social workers. The desire and assumption that they would practice as they had in the south upon arrival in Nunavut was indicated by one participant, “I would have left...I would have never stayed. The bullshit that went on. If I didn't have the experience that I already have.” While another participant had a much more positive view of the work environment, “I tell you my first community was [community x in certain location] and it ended up being one of the most positive experiences of my life in terms of the work and the people and it was crazy busy, but I learned everything I needed to learn while I was there- a truly amazing experience. But again I knew nothing about Inuit culture, nothing about Nunavut, or history or anything.” These two very different first impressions of child welfare work in Nunavut appear to be directly linked to the perspectives of the social work role the Qallunaat social workers brought with them to their practice. The first showed frustration with the work being different to what the social worker expected and had experienced previously in the south and consequently led to the social worker describing a negative experience. The latter comment described the social worker in a learning position, leading to a positive experience. Another participant referred to the organization’s political structure and the difficulty in trying “to figure out what's going on, and I found it really difficult just because I was only there for a short time, and who's who in the zoo? Let alone who's the favorite in this zoo? You know who can I listen to and what can I say to who?” This comment highlights this social worker’s attempt to understand roles in relation to a hierarchical structure as in southern organizations and the “difficult” experience this participant had trying to navigate this within a short time. This is interesting because it shows the Qallunaaq social worker’s motivation of politically
aligning oneself within a hierarchical southern system that is based on decision-making power. It also shows the confusion that can arise when southern ideology is applied to northern social work, as this social worker was attempting to make the northern child welfare system fit within a southern world view of positioning and status. This is a significant contrast to the traditionally non-hierarchical structure of teamwork within the principles of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ) (Arnakak, 2001). The adjustment period for all participants took a significant amount of time and patience, as it involved becoming familiar to the new work environment and for Qallunaat social workers, the added adjustment to the physical environment, culture, and the community. For many, there were some important moments and memories regarding their “learning curve.” One participant recalled going to a client’s home:

“the first time I walked into somebody's house and all of their children were running around naked. And like grown children, 7, 5, 6 [years old] and like you know and running around naked and I was like ok I think I need to leave here. I was uncomfortable, nobody else was, but I was uncomfortable. But after a while you just get used to that. The kids run around naked they just do inside the house and it's you. You're uncomfortable so you need to deal with that. That's your thing not a shared thing.”

This reflection on the participant’s experience refers to the difference in cultural child rearing from the dominant culture, of which the participant was accustomed. It also suggests the potential for harm as Qallunaat social workers encounter situations such as this within child welfare work. Although this participant recognized the discomfort as due to cultural difference and ethnocentrism and not deficient parenting, this is an example of a situation that could have been viewed much differently by a social worker with less understanding of Inuit culture. A number of participants also discussed how Inuit culture impacted their work. One participant referred to how the workday itself was different than in the south as:

“The work felt, at the beginning, felt overwhelming a bit, because I was new and they didn't have systems in place and it was just like everything was all over the map. So it was very challenging at first. And then I adapted. Like people didn't come to work. You'd go to work and you'd be the only one. And you have a staff of [x number] and where is everybody, but there's a whale just got beached and everybody is eating whale meat on the beach and that is just the way it is.”

This comment is interesting as it implies a degree of “chaos” or a very southern perception of Inuit communities as “all over the map” because the systems did not present themselves formally as in the south, that, therefore, to this social worker they did not exist. Secondly, working in the Inuit community was difficult for this Qallunaaq social worker until there was a personal change when this participant “adapted.” Adapting to community systems in Nunavut appears to take time and requires openness to other ways of doing things. This comment shows that southerners, however, despite adapting to a northern way of doing
things, retain their ethnocentrism and may not view the Inuit processes and systems as equal or as organized to southern systems and ways of doing things.

**Category: Funding and Resources**

Although participants held different experiences of child welfare in Nunavut, the recurring theme of Nunavut’s lack of resources was clear. This lack of resources, however, could be broken down into a number of different areas that participants spoke to, including a lack of social workers in the territory, the physical needs in communities such as housing or food, and infrastructure in the territory, including territorial treatment centers. Regardless of which resource a participant referred to, the underlying perception by social workers was the lack of resources dictated how they practiced child welfare.

**Theme: Within the Community**

Consistently, when discussing the topic of resources during interviews, it almost always began with the participant discussing client and community needs that were not being met. For example, participants explained that there is a need for additional money in the territory for community members and this “money would be for resources for families.” This was immediately followed by a discussion of “food security is a big problem, because you know a loaf bread is 5 bucks; a quart of milk (a liter of milk) is 8 dollars and unemployment is 90%. Welfare is 291 dollars a month, so you know what do you do?”

This issue of financial resources was reiterated by another participant who stated, “Money, the biggest challenge is that there is no money. And no resources. None.” Closely connected to the lack of food security for families, was the issue of housing. One participant explained the situation as: “You know there is mega over crowding ness. There's 12 people to a house. The biggest challenge? Housing is a giant challenge.” Another participant confirmed this with the example of “trying to get a mentally ill woman to go into cells and nowhere in the south- when I talk about this [with others], people were absolutely horrified about criminalizing the mentally ill, but the woman was going- the woman literally had no place to go and so the only place for her to go was either to the cells or to her grave essentially.” Clearly the lack of housing impacted the client, but it also appears to have impacted how the social worker responded and the social worker’s perception of available options. The needs of clients were closely intertwined with the social worker’s capacity to help was discussed further by a participant who explained that, “in most communities

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9 In fact, the “maximum amount of the grocery allowance is based on the number of people in the household and on the community in which they live” and “welfare” ranges from $280 to $356 dollars per month (G.N., 2005).
you’re the only social worker, there's not a consistent mental health worker so when I talk about resources, what I mean, is what can I or what can we as individual social workers do with the family to help them provide what's necessary, what kind of support can we give them?” Another participant confirmed that “at the community level- you want to talk about resources- those are all human resources simply because that's all that's available and often in the smaller communities, you’re the only social worker.” Being unable to meet client needs in terms of what they personally can provide also appears to impact social workers on an emotional level:

“I have no food for dinner” so it's all usually about how we can get the situation resolved and sometimes there is no solution. Like sometimes I'm sorry we can't, I can't support the community, and sometimes you simply cannot and that's the hard part. And people don't want to leave the office when you don't have a solution for them.”

These comments suggest that social workers view the community as unable to meet its own needs and the social worker as the only resource, which hinges on the view that the community is not seen as a resource in and of itself.

Many participants acknowledged having to work without the required resources while also recognizing that this changed their child welfare practice. Regarding services to children in particular, participants overwhelmingly referred to the lack of needed foster homes, “Well, up here, if you apprehend kids. Where are you going to put them?” Another participant commented, “There's no specialized residential services. There's no special services to children, there's no homemaker services, there's no family support worker services, there's really limited mental health services…So in terms of what's available for the worker. You know, the worker’s really it.” This idea that the social worker is alone in the community and bears the responsibility for families was also referred to a number of times. It also shows a significant contrast to the perspective of Aboriginal social workers that place a higher responsibility on communities for the care of children (Walmsley, 2004). The lack of foster homes in Nunavut may also indicate that the community does not share in the idea of such formalized placement of children, as another social worker commented:

“There are no resources, you’re it man. No, I've got a few foster homes here in town. But also some of them won't take some kids because they are related to them or because they don't like the kid’s parents and stuff like that. We're in the process of trying to find and set up a couple of safe houses. We've had posters up for over a month, but no callers. Nobody phoning at all. We're trying to set up more foster homes- again no phone calls or names at all.”
Another participant also explained, “when you come into a small community in the north, regardless of your clinical skills or lack of your clinical mental health skills- you're it. You've got more than anybody else has, so you've got no one to refer this person onto.” In contrast to the previous descriptions of social workers being trained by community members, this statement depicts the view social workers have of their skills as greater than those possessed by the community. Yet for one participant, their description of the lack of resources was directly tied to their inability to rely on their previous social work practice, knowledge and skills:

“I would say, child welfare, you can't- your practice is hard as it stands especially with the lack of resources, the sheer lack of resources is- you know there are times when I didn't apprehend kids because I didn't have the foster parents and I knew I didn't have the foster parents so I'm not taking these kids and we're going to have to go down another route. Maybe I should have maybe I shouldn't have, maybe should have taken them and put them in another community, but you can't just practice your practice.”

This realization that “you can’t just practice your practice” is indicative of how southern social work is not transferable and may even be inadequate and culturally unspecific to Nunavut. Yet social workers appear to base this on the resources rather than on a different world view or perspective of child welfare. The “lack of resources” and the subsequent impact on service provision were also discussed by another participant who stated:

“people knew exactly what the issues were and what they should be doing, but it seems to me that it wasn't an easy, it wasn't easy to effect change in the way that we're talking about...I think that the [senior staff persons] that were in place, were just basically I mean trying their best to keep standards in place and to keep the ship afloat. You know. And to respond. And that's one of the reasons too that I think that you know it is a child protection act and because with those types of resources you don't have much choice.”

Although this comment by a Qallunaaq social worker recognizes the community possesses knowledge of social issues, the social worker neglects to envision another approach or perspective other than the southern colonial model and keeping “the ship afloat.” This further suggests that the southern world view and model of child welfare, despite not working to meet community needs and only “responding,” is the only way of thinking and that for Qallunaat there is no other “choice.” Although the lack of resources compared to Canada’s south was consistently seen as directly connected to a lack of options available to social workers, there was little regard for alternative perspectives and instead only negative impacts for the community were envisioned. As one participant pointed out, “the lack of social workers in the north leads to the load for each social worker, which leads to less time on each client, which leads to less time on each file or
case,” and “you can't refer them for assessments because there's nobody to do it. You’d have to send them out to a larger centre.” This comment indicates that the less time social workers had with “files” or “cases” was directly tied to the need for services by other professionals. This is far from a perspective that views communities as possessing the resources, the strengths and ability to address their own social issues.

Regarding the lack of foster homes in communities, however, appears to hold the unintended consequence that less children may be removed from families and brought into government care. One participant describes how an increased budget or resources could alter their practice as “there would be a lot of apprehensions, there would be lots of transfers to southern resources, and you just don’t have the money.” This same participant explained how with the lack of resources child welfare is managed within the community:

“You have kids that are just sniffing glue, acting out, on another planet, and the only thing you can do, because you don’t have the money, you can’t send them to a treatment centre, where you going to get the money, you know how much that costs? So you don’t do that. What you do instead is you work with the family. You know you would remove children if that was in [southern city] or anywhere, that child would instantly be in an institution. But because there ain’t none in the north, not one. There’s not one youth centre anywhere, you don’t do that, you let the kid, you know. You work with the family and hopefully the child will change over. Hopefully.”

Although this social worker describes a bleak outlook for children, a positive side also appears because it requires social workers be less intrusive than social workers in Canada’s southern child welfare system. As one participant recognized this benefit as, “You know we don’t have enough foster homes and you see we want to be the least intrusive with family. So if we can pick up the kids from where mom and dad are drinking and transport them over to grandparent’s house with the understanding that grandparents will keep the child until the parents sober up, then we are doing a better service to the community.” Within the interviews, however, resources for children and families, above all else, had the greatest impact on what social workers believed they could and could not do within their practice, more so than the degree to which policy, ability, community interest, and involvement were described as impacting their practice.

**Category: Concerns with Child Welfare in Nunavut**

Every participant in this study mentioned a number of things that concerned them regarding child welfare in Nunavut. For some, it was particular situations or events they had witnessed or been a part of, and for others it was generally accepted practices in the territory. Interestingly, this category created the largest number of responses by participants other than providing descriptions of their work, which is
possibly due to this being one of the few opportunities social workers have had to volunteer their thoughts on the territory’s child welfare system. Many of the concerns with child welfare could be looked at in terms of concerns relating to policies and practice, concerns regarding resources, and finally the reliance of southern ideology in northern social work practice. Unfortunately, due to the constraints of this study, only those concerns that were described most often by participants can be explored and, therefore, not all concerns have been included. Nonetheless, the participants’ concerns highlight significant issues and show a need for deeper understanding and further research.

**Theme: Child Welfare Policies and Practice**

Many participants indicated that they would like community members to gain an increased understanding of the child welfare work and the “rules” under which social workers are required to practice. For example, “One of the things that is missing in this is to bring the [Child and Family Service] Act out into the community.” While another participant commented that, “Our service delivery is too... it’s too intimidating!” This was expanded upon by, “There's no demystifying to the community, because that's not your role and you can't. That's a frustrating piece, I always wanted to go on local radio and have a question or some sort of an anonymous, you know like ask me questions about child welfare practice so the whole community could hear the answers and maybe we might have more of a partnership with the community. We might get more foster parents.” These comments suggest that Qallunaat social workers believe that if the community were more “educated” on the child welfare system there would be greater community acceptance of the current colonial child welfare approach, including the use of formalized foster homes. The need to have greater community involvement was suggested by Qallunaat social workers, yet the Inuit social worker interviewed saw a different situation as, “parents themselves are not being heard enough. We hear them enough when one on one in the office and they make a lot of good points and their points would really help in our child welfare mandate, the traditional upbringing part you know where, that's where we get stuck is our policy and our mandate.” This points to the conflicting perspectives between Inuit and Qallunaat and the difficult situation Inuit social workers can experience by being in between the clients they serve and the policies and practices of Nunavut’s child welfare system. It also suggests a conflict between traditional child rearing, the child welfare mandate and policies, and who really needs to be “educated.”
Qallunaat participants explained the lack of community involvement or community discussion regarding child welfare as contributing to tension between the social worker and the community. One participant stated, “I often wish we could just talk about the process or talk about the practice just frankly, which I understand, but it’s frustrating to then have to feel the effects of that or feel the effects of historical racism.” This comment shows how the social worker has separated “historical racism” from the current model of child welfare and believes that by “talking about [it] frankly” could decrease the resistance to the child welfare system. There does not appear to be recognition here that the community is experiencing the current child welfare system the same as the “historical racism.” This comment also shows no regard for social change and instead hopes through “talking about the process” Inuit will acquiesce and agree to the mainstream colonial approach. By recognizing a need for community involvement but wishing the community would “understand” the southern system being imposed upon them, participants presented conflicting beliefs within their paradigm. One participant who indicated that a stronger community role was necessary, “The future has to be - the community take part for its own health.” Another participant indicated the consequence of continuing to have “outsiders” or Qallunaat social workers employ child welfare in the community was a negative approach for “as long as we have people from the outside, the community doesn't grab hold of it and say you know what, regardless of anything that was happening 20 years ago or 40 years ago or 100 years ago. This is what we want for our children.” Another participant commented, “I do think that overall that it is dysfunctional to continue to have people from the outside as the primary child welfare workers” indicating the recognition that Qallunaat should not be running an Inuit child welfare system. Participants, however, did not appear to connect this to the southern child welfare system currently operating in Nunavut or notice the conflict in discussing community control and having the community participate in the current model under which they hold no power.

Other policy and work related concerns by social workers included the “cut off” of children at 16 years old within the child welfare legislation, which can create challenges in accessing services for youth over this age. One participant remarked, “You got to be kidding me- a sixteen year old is an adult right!” Three Qallunaat participants spoke of their concerns relating to what is known as Aboriginal custom adoption or the placement of children by family within the community without any involvement by the

10 The Child and Family Service Act of Nunavut defines a child as anyone under the age of 16.
social worker\textsuperscript{11}. For these participants, not having any involvement in these placements of children through adoption made them uncomfortable. For example:

“I guess another thing that made me uncomfortable was, I mean it was- there was such a positive and heartwarming side to it and then a down side and that was, the custom adoption. That bothered me at times because there's a lack of involvement on our part…because some of the placements were wonderful and that was a good news story and it was excellent for everyone around, but some of the placements were made without taking due note that there were alcohol problems or drug problems or violence.”

Another participant reiterated this concern with:

“Something that we recognize as their life and it was very good in most places but I did over the last few years run across situations when babies were placed in homes where there was one or at least one abusive person and it may have been one of the parents or an adult child who was now an adult child, son or daughter, and that affects the whole environment for that child. There certainly were babies placed in homes where there was drugs and alcohol. Another one I remember is [certain sibling group] being separated and one placed not even with a relative but with another community person and one [that] really concerned me and I made note of it in a file and I was told that was all I was told I could do and that I was to stay out of it.”

These comments speak to the policy of non-involvement by social services with the community practice of aboriginal custom adoption, which created strong feelings on the part of these participants regarding what they believed were placements not in “the best interests” of children. Aboriginal custom adoption is the one area within the community where social workers hold no decision-making power and the desire for increased involvement and control here is visible. These comments, consistent with the social worker’s comment following Justice Sission’s decision in 1961 also indicate that social workers still believe they, from the dominant culture, hold better judgment as to children’s “best interests” than community members. This will be discussed further in the next chapter.

**Theme: Resource Based Concerns**

Another common concern social workers had regarding the territory’s child welfare system was “the placement of teens in southern group homes.” The use of southern resources, such as behavioral treatment facilities for youth was also linked by participants to “the lack of consistency between regions [and] between communities in terms of how child welfare is practiced.” “Certainly, you know, there have been attempts to standardize it but it's not there. You know we use southern placements a lot and that concerns me a ton. The lack of accountability that's been evident in our placements.” One participant referred to the use of southern placements for children in terms of professional liability and stated, “I think

\textsuperscript{11} Child welfare workers hold no authority over aboriginal custom adoption and are not permitted to become involved in this traditional practice in Nunavut.
that what we are doing...we are lucky that we do not have several lawsuits because we are doing child welfare over the phone and we are not able to follow up very closely with situations that need to be followed up on...Our caseloads are too high and there's not enough staff to do what we are doing.” Another worker made the connection between the use of out of territory placements for children and youth and reactive and temporary fixes within child welfare. This worker expressed concern for the long-term consequences of sending children and youth out of the territory:

“Child welfare for children, all the facilities should be in Nunavut, because it's scary enough when there's something wrong in the home...and we send them away to someplace bigger, that's not even helping, that's adding. We're adding more than helping, you know ten years from now, we are going to have a client, that doesn't help...It helps yes, but it will help today tomorrow and next week but it's not going to help that child two years from now and that's the problem, our, the way we look, we only look to make it better for the next little while.”

Clearly uncomfortable with the policy of providing out of territory residential placements, this participant believes facilities are needed in Nunavut for children and youth. When discussing the need for such resources within the territory, another participant stated, “If there are efficiencies in terms of providing services locally or closer to home or what have you or through the use of preventative services etc. Well, there's a real impetus then to want to do that, you’re going to realize some savings out of all that, which you can then reinvest. So probably that level of sophistication hasn't arrived there yet.” When further exploring the services accessed by Nunavut from southern Canada, it was clear that there was also concern that these services were not entirely appropriate. One participant described escorting a child out of the territory to a southern facility, “It was obvious when the person who picked me up at the airport. Very nice person, but when her focus was talking about ‘the Aboriginal’ and I said actually [this person] is Inuit. He’s an Inuit person. And it was really evident that [on] the whole there was no understanding of that whole cultural component at all.” One participant expressed frustration regarding the use of placements in southern Canada, “because there is no reason realistically, when you consider the number of kids throughout the whole territory that are outside, why these resources can't be developed.” Interestingly, the responses generated regarding the use of out of territory placements for children centered on the long term consequences of having children away from family and on the economics of creating resources in the north but were not connected to the historical use of residential schools and the cultural destruction through southern ideology that such placements involved. Sending children out of the territory does not appear to be something that the participants agreed with doing, but yet was done anyway due to the perceived lack of
alternatives. Needed resources for children and families generated strong emotional responses from participants as well, and this again appears to speak to how the resources available to social workers dictate their practice, creating frustration and possibly even affecting their view of their practice and abilities. Again, however, there was no discussion of an alternative perspective to the intrusive and colonial model of child welfare being practiced in the territory.

**Theme: Southern Ideology**

The negative impact of southern Canada’s Qallunaat culture on Nunavut and the Inuit is undeniable. Changes in communities as a result of imposed southern ideology were described negatively. As one participant clearly stated, “southern ideology on child welfare is a joke.” Other participants made similar comments as, “Southern quality standards are not adaptable to northern quality standards.” These standards were considered different because:

“Quality in the south is about paper work being done on time, it's about recording, and it's about all these systems that the south has. In the north, that's not as high a priority. Priority would be more- quality would be more engaged to stuff like for example, connecting with families, making sure that the workers, cause the workers are just as much traumatized as your clients half the time. So things are just different, it's not better, it's not worse. It's just different.”

Another participant referred to an increasing imposition of southern ideology on Inuit communities due to the increasing number of southerners in the territory. One social worker stated “All the new managers. All the new big people are southern people,” which consequently meant the approach to child welfare is “moving more towards the south than it is towards the north.” When discussing why southern ideology cannot be used in northern child welfare practice, another participant suggested that current southern perspectives ignore colonialism, the ripple effect colonialism has and continues to have on communities and that a southern world view ends up blaming the individual. For example:

“They blame, we blame, we blame as a people, as a society, we blame what we see as dysfunctional as problematic or as problem, but they fail to understand the historical or the systemic problems that were created by southern people to begin with. They fail to, you know, they come up and say you know the north is so much waste, the money, these people you know everybody's on welfare and I say you know who put them here? The federal government put them here and created this mess. They were fine before we got here. Don't you want to look at that? So you have to start from being real. They fail to really navigate that piece, which is no fault of their own, because they are coming in with their own paradigm, which is ok, it's not a bad thing, it's just not...it's easy to blame, it's harder to fix.”

Within this comment, it is possible to see how southern ideology is destructive to northern communities and due to southern paradigms, communities are seen as “dysfunctional” and “problematic,” consistent
with the notion of welfare colonialism previously discussed. The employment of social workers in Nunavut from southern Canada was also discussed, as one participant stated “some social workers who come to the north, have the time, think that they are going to bring their southern expertise to the north and they waste a lot of energy and a lot of my time and a lot of everybody’s time because we are not the south.” This was confirmed by another participant who commented, “you need to have a different view of common practice up here as you would in the south or it would result in a lot of unnecessary hardship on families. Although there are cut and dry situations, where you know obviously anywhere in the world where you are, whatever is going on is inappropriate right.” The need to practice in a different way than the Qallunaat social worker’s western-training and southern ideology would suggest was clear. One participant described how the use of child welfare intervention was a last resort in Nunavut’s communities, not a first response as in the south, because the community typically manages such issues on their own:

“The local people do child welfare practice; they just don't do it in such a formal way. Like they go to houses and take kids out and bring them back the next day, they intervene, they like do stuff like that and when they don't want to be perceived as being intrusive, then they call on us. And I know for sure that that's what they do, I've had a number of people come to me and say, I've done this a number of times, there's this going on, the family is not listening to me, they are not listening to the elders, you need to go in and do this and I'm like you've been doing such a good job, you really want me to come in and they are like, nobody wants to take it to this level, nobody wants to be that authoritative or be that intrusive to be that person that goes in to that extent and does that. They use us for that. And by all means, that's our job, that's why we're there.”

In addition to this social workers’ view of child welfare work normally being managed by community members, some participants recognized how their presence in the community was deeply connected to colonialism. When reflecting upon arriving in Nunavut, a Qallunaak social worker stated, “I think I was in la la land a bit because I didn't realize really how much my skin color freaked the crap out of everybody in the community, especially the elders.” Another participant also commented on being unprepared for the amount of power held by the role of social worker and the level of fear on the part of the community that was associated with it:

“In the beginning [I would] just go and sit in the waiting room at the health centre and just talk to people and let my presence be known and [be] very informal. Especially when they came in with babies, I'd often ask if I could hold the baby or whatever and I noticed very quickly that most people handed the baby over but in their eyes, they really didn't want to do that- but they did it anyway and I couldn't figure that out. I discovered in my time there, because of the history of sexual abuse of children you know by white teachers or religious folks or white social workers that they didn't trust me at all, but they were still working from this belief that because I was white and I asked to hold the baby, that they had no choice.”
This comment indicates how the power held by Qallunaat social workers impacts the relationship they are able to develop within the community. One participant stated, “There was a lot of learning involved in it. After the [amount of time], there were some people who could see me as an actual human being and someone who maybe who has something to offer and some people who were still of the opinion that this is simply people from outside who enforce their values on them.” Another participant stated, “The relationship building is important because it takes a long time for Inuit people to trust social workers anyway, and for them to trust white people, if there was an Inuit social worker it might be different. I’m not sure, because they still see social workers in a negative light. They hate all of them.” While there are other important pieces to take from this view of how participants believe they are seen in the community, social workers being seen as colonial agents is clear. The Inuit participant interviewed explained this further as “the traditional way of caring for our children and then being a social service worker, a child welfare worker, well I kind of see both sides.” This comment is most telling as it clearly indicates that there are “two sides,” clearly visible to Inuit, yet not so visible to Qallunaat. Interestingly, as Qallunaat social workers interpret the “fear” and “hate” they feel from Inuit communities towards them as a community not being educated to the child welfare legislation or due to their skin color or due to “historical racism,” Inuit see it quite differently. The “two sides” is suggestive of an Inuit perception of southern Qallunaat social workers as the same colonial agents that continue to enforce southern values, dominant culture and southern ideology on Inuit exactly as they have for the last 40 years. Inuit can see their perspective, world view, paradigm, values, beliefs, and child rearing as different from southerners. This appears to be the large difference between the “two sides” because Qallunaat do not appear to be able to see this alternative world view, which could mean they only see one side, their side, which they believe to be right.

Category: Safety, Stress and Discomfort

Participants spoke at great length regarding their feeling of safety, the stressors within their job and things that caused them discomfort within child welfare work in the territory. Although not unanimous, the majority of comments were associated with social workers feeling unsafe in Nunavut. Other stressors included elements of the child welfare work, such as the feeling of responsibility due to working alone and in isolation from peers, colleagues and senior staff. Despite concerns for safety and the stress within the work, every participant could list many things they enjoyed about their work.
Theme: Feeling Safe or Unsafe

One participant explained that in Nunavut there was a much larger sense of safety than in a southern location where the participant had lived previously:

“I had two small children when I lived there...they can play outside, you don't worry, there's no fences, no one is going to hurt anyone...My [x] year old cannot play on the street in [certain southern location] without me there. It ain't possible, it ain't going to happen. In Nunavut, my [x] year old can play outside with other [x] year olds and I don't have to watch them because the whole community watches them.”

This, however, was not the common sentiment, as all the other participants indicated feeling unsafe at different times, either physically or professionally relating to liability in their practice. One participant explained: “I felt a little uncomfortable, a little scared sometimes to be honest. And in terms of going out and where I was walking especially, you know in light of the RCMP officers that got shot. I meant there are a lot of weapons.” A similar feeling was described by another participant: “You know, so the fact is, that some of these people are so angry and you have to be aware of your personal safety at all times. You know I don't walk home in the dark anymore. I used to and it didn't bother me but now it's starting to.” Another participant stated: “There's no two ways about it. Your personal safety is an issue. And then you've got to walk down the street. You stay in that neighborhood. There's not, like I go in I do my stuff and I go home and I'm safe. Well not really. You've got to walk home that night past that same house.” This feeling of being unsafe, however, was viewed by some participants to be temporary and due to the nature of the work. As one participant stated, “The one thing that I will say is that most people, once the dust settles a little bit, realize nobody better do anything right now because I don't want to make it worse because, once the shock gets over, most really do want to keep contact with their children so you can work with it.” Another participant explained, “I've been threatened lots of times, but I take it with a grain of salt, they're not mad at me, they are mad at the system. So it's never really bothered me. Like, I know a lot of people that have been run out of town, because they took it personally, but you know I never take it personally, I've never been like that. Yah, you can't take it personally, it's not you, it's the system behind you.”

Another participant described feeling professionally unsafe due to being temporarily in a community and not having needed information:

“It would have been unsafe right because you can't make decisions. You can't make sound decisions when families have been involved with the system, you can't be making sound decisions without having at least a little bit of knowledge of what's gone on in the past. And the people don't have to be honest with you and they are going to have viewed their experience through their own
lens. But it does influence you—like if this family has been involved you know, if there have been 4 or 5 reports of them neglecting their children in a year, you, you need to know that. You know as a child protection worker I need to know that, I can't just go in. I'm all for going in for being helpful and the first experience with you and let's try and find a better, you know find a way to make things better. But it's also very different; you know when you're informed with that little bit of information. And I cannot find any of that information and it takes time to develop relationships.”

There appears to be a link here regarding a social worker’s length of time working in a community and their feelings of professional safety. This could also possibly be linked to the previous theme regarding the use of instinct within community social work practice. Yet another participant explained that regardless of a social worker’s length in a community, “the other thing that is major major major is that nobody as a social worker should have to work alone in a community. It's dangerous and it's unhealthy. RCMP wouldn’t work alone, after people were getting mortally wounded that they would make sure that everybody would have a partner and I would hope that they are not waiting for social workers to get maimed and killed.”

Another participant described a situation and stated, “A lot of bad things are happening, we just don't tell-they aren't public information because we need to protect the rights of the worker and a lot of nasty things are going on.” And again, a participant recommended:

“The government of Nunavut needs to take a very close look at the situation where they have social workers, which is a few people that are in situations that are very unsafe. And instead of having one person in a community on call all hours a day with very little protection and some people working in offices that are very, they are dangerous. They need to really take a look at what's going on because people are being seriously harmed. We had a situation where someone was very seriously harmed and other people are being threatened and there are a lot of negative things going on and this is why they have a very low retention rate and people not willing to come because they don't have a plan for retention and protection for social workers.”

Another link was made here concerning social workers perceived feelings of safety and the retention of Qallunaat social workers generally in Nunavut. In addition, these feelings of being unsafe were coupled with reported instances of someone “coming to your home at night and trying to break your door down;” and another situation where “a gentleman here in town was stalking…throwing rocks at the house.”

Overwhelmingly the participants expressed feeling unsafe living, working and being within Nunavut communities as within the role of the child welfare social worker. These comments were consistent with the research by Schmidt (2008) that some urban oriented social workers feel unsafe in northern communities.

Theme: Work Related Stressors
Creating additional stress for social workers are a number of work related aspects, such as being on-call to return to work or when a child in a community dies. One participant stated, “Working 24/7 is a definite strain… I hadn't really recognized how much…you are always aware of the job and that you could get called out and how you make your life around that because you could get called out at 2 o'clock in the morning so you are aware of stuff. You are aware of when you hear booze shipments come in and stuff like that.” Another worker described the stress associated with providing social work in child welfare matters over the telephone, “I can only make a judgment based on what I am being told. And I often hang up and think you know I wonder if there is something that I'm not aware of in this situation…especially if the decision is to leave the child at home with the parents, you know I wonder then if there is something else going on that I am not aware of you know, was it the right decision?” Decision making even in the community, however, is stressful as one participant describes, “You hope that you make the right decision and that they are going to wake up tomorrow.” This concern over making the “right” decision, particularly when working in isolation, was described by another participant who stated, “The fact that you are all by yourself and the decisions that you are making and you have nobody else to consult with and you are just on your own and that sometimes can be uncomfortable.” This is very similar to the comments discussed earlier by social workers that they feel responsible for the care of children in the community, as compared to recognizing the community’s strengths and responsibility for the care of children. Such comments suggest a vision social workers hold for themselves in terms of their power and ability and consequently the lack of power and ability accredited to the community. Qallunaat participants also provided specific examples of relationships, both professional and personal, and the blurring of professional roles with their private life that created additional stress as one participant explained, “Here- you’re away from family, away from extended family. You’re basically 24-7 your job, your job description is who you are…you don’t have any social life really apart from inside your house after you lock your door. And even then if you are on call.” In addition to this, participants struggled with the conflicting work inherent within generalist social work where they were required to provide child welfare services in addition to other social work roles within the community. As explained by one social worker:

“You wear so many hats that completely conflict…How do you have counseling with somebody and really and truly have them tell you things when you also have the ability to apprehend their children or the ability to you know revoke their probation and you wear so many hats that conflict
and not only is it difficult for the community to understand. It's completely, almost impossible to actually do your job and you're always struggling with I wish I didn't know this but I do.”

This highlights the decision-making power child welfare workers hold over community members, regardless of what “role” they are playing during their workday. Another participant similarly spoke of knowing “too much information,” due to the multiple roles held in one community leaving this social worker privy to information that could impact the child welfare decision-making. This was viewed positively by one participant who explained, “Sometimes it works in a positive way because you understand where the issues are coming from.” The stress in the role of social worker can take its toll on the overall mental health of workers, as one participant described having to leave employment in Nunavut:

“So I inherited this case…and I struggled with it, the family struggled with me and the whole thing was a struggle from beginning to end and for the longest time I was the only social worker…Not that I didn't want, well I didn't want the case anymore, but it was really irresponsible for me to have it. I had no impartiality, I had no sympathy for the family. I had lost every bit of social work skill that I had and it just needed to go to somebody else. It directly led to me being burnt out and having to leave the community afterwards. It was really hard.”

This comment appears to suggest that this social worker was expected to be “impartial” and to feel “sympathy” for a family and when this participant did not feel this way they viewed themselves as being “irresponsible.” This is interesting because it reflects the social work profession’s claim to neutrality, but also implies that this worker may have fighting her dominant culture world view, which led to becoming “burnt out.” The accumulation of difficult feelings, including this Qallunaq social worker’s view of social work skills, ultimately contributed to this participant leaving Nunavut’s child welfare practice. Another social worker described inner turmoil associated with attempting to adapt to a different culture:

“The fact that you are adhering to community standards that may not at all fit your personal value system. Sometimes when kids are in the home and you have a situation you think, anywhere else but here, those children would be removed. But here the community standards are different, the expectations of families are different based on culture and we're encouraged in our policies to take into account community standards so the bottom line is if the kids are safe and they are not being abused, then they stay home…that's uncomfortable sometimes in trying to fit your experience and your training and education and trying to fit all of that into a cultural sort of make up of these communities because we can't take this culture and squeeze it into our value system, we have to try to find a way to fit who we are into this cultural environment.”

This is an important comment because it reflects the challenges a Qallunaq social worker can face resulting from their southern paradigm when attempting to adapt to Inuit culture in Nunavut. These comments show the struggle some Qallunaat social workers can experience as they attempt to move beyond
their southern ideology. However, it also suggests that this may not be possible, and consequently leads to social worker “burn out.”

**Category: Worker Turnover and Employment**

Although not intended, during the interviews it became clear that participants were interested in discussing their thoughts on employment in Nunavut. Many had recommendations and additional thoughts and overall, comments by participants were associated with the retention and support for social workers in the territory.

**Theme: Worker Turnover**

When social workers hold different world views and incorporate different theory into their approaches, different social work practice occurs. Despite this, the interviews with predominantly Qallunaat social workers showed a perceived consensus regarding the needed traits and approaches to child welfare. For example, one participant commented on the need for “a caring social worker who’s got, who kinda knows what’s going on around social work values…obviously they are very inclusive, they’re very in tune to support communities, support family, and so they do very well.” Another participant described that the “excellent ones are usually ones that have worked in the north for a long time or they are really open to other people’s perspectives. They don’t fix people, they let people fix themselves, they just give the community tools. Those are the best ones.” Conversely, another participant stated that workers who have “a very hard time. They have a set, basically their ideology of what child welfare is or what social work is and they don’t adapt or they don’t transcend that to a new reality, because you don’t learn Nunavut social work in a text book. You don’t.” Interestingly, participants commented that without learning to adapt to Inuit culture, Qallunaat social workers were not likely to succeed, which would in turn increase the already large turnover of workers. This turnover of workers was discussed by almost every participant, and was generally viewed as a negative aspect of Nunavut child welfare work. It was agreed that the hiring of temporary short-term Qallunaat social workers could be hard on communities:

“because they are only there for a short time and you know as they go into even more contract workers, it's going to be more you go in and well. For instance I went in and did a duty travel assignment to [community z] while I was in [community x] and well I spent an hour and a half clearing out this case and realized I couldn't go forward to it. This is a place that didn't have a full time social worker for about a year before I got there and I was only going to be there for a couple days so. Basically you go in, you do the basic job and you wait for the plane out.”
This participant linked the trend towards increased use of temporary social workers with a lack of follow through that results naturally from short-term positions. The lack of follow through can be an issue when “you always have so people moving in and out so you don’t have a lot of consistency.” Another participant explained that “there are also workers within this system that go in and feel that people hate them and people don’t want to talk to them and I think it's probably 24/7 day in and day out.” This participant continued to say that social workers “get to the point of saying you know what maybe I'll just do my job here [because] communities have had so many people come in and try to do this type of community development work, they've already heard it, they are saying no, maybe just not even go there.” These comments suggest a direct connection between temporary Qallunaat social workers and a lack of investment by social workers in community work or community involvement. This is interesting because it also suggests that some of the work social workers are doing is community development, but with little regard for the colonialism inherent within child welfare. There was also a connection made between short term employment and a social worker’s overall health; expressed by one participant as: “I was only there for a short period of time, which on one hand, for me and my mental health you know, and going in and role modeling, and that sort of stuff. Going for the shorter term is wonderful.” Another participant confirmed the benefit of the short-term work as

“being [at work] until about 8 or 9 o'clock at night and then I would be on-call every night because there was no one else and I would be on-call every weekend so that's what I meant by 24-7 on duty. That was something that I never experienced in the south but it was time limited so you could manage, because you always thought, ok well there's three more weeks of this and then I'm out of here so I can do it, I can do it. But it was, I found that very demanding.”

It is clear from this participant’s comment that the child welfare work was so challenging that it would not have been manageable for this southern social worker on a permanent basis. Another participant commented on how the community sees southern social workers since, “they don't attach to you for the first two years. They don't. You may think they do, but they really don't. Like I lived in a town for [x] years and it was only after the [x] year that we started to really feel basically like the community owned or took ownership of us as part of that community.” The link between a community taking ownership of a social worker, which implies a relationship between the social worker and the community, due to the length of time in a community, holds large implications for the temporary use of social workers in Nunavut. In
addition to this, a Qallunaaq social worker described how living in Nunavut held a number of barriers to hiring other southern social workers:

“I mean it's not bad for somebody like myself you know, I mean I'm by myself right so and at this particular age I mean you know it's not like I do all that, I mean it's not like I'm having a great wild time anyway. It’s, I mean, I think it's fine but I think to keep people, so there's three, first of all, there's a person's concern about their personal safety, second I think is the fact of whole issue of lack of supports including residential. Which is just a significant issue and the third thing is in terms of your living, and so, you know there's not, there's certainly uh, not a huge amount to do. There's not a huge amount to do for people and so, you have to be content to you know, lead a pretty quiet life for the most part. The communities are such that, are small, so you're I'm mean you’re on display publicly. So those types of things are difficult for people. The latter I didn't find it personally hard, But, I am just thinking about the whole issue of recruitment and retention and I think that's an issue.”

All participants who had experiences involving working temporarily in Nunavut’s communities reflected on the difficulties associated with working only short term. One participant explained, “Just getting to know people and you know how things work and picking up on things, you know like the underground economy and what's happening here and how families are surviving. Like what's the norm? What's expected? And you know and what do they expect from the social worker?” Another worker commented on one particularly “difficult assignment” due to the “little support from the [other] staff. That one was probably the loneliest and most difficult assignments I’ve ever had.” These comments connect the difficulty of short-term work by Qallunaat in a community with the lack of relationships and the level of support available. In addition to increasing the southern ideology brought north by Qallunaat temporary social workers, the short-term social work in Nunavut by southerners does not appear to hold any benefits for the community and is simultaneously difficult for the social workers, which further suggests that temporary positions be examined.

Theme: Support and Acknowledgment

Finally, within almost every interview social workers brought up feeling unsupported. In itself, a lack of support accounted for the majority of comments regarding employment and turnover within child welfare in Nunavut. A lack of recognition for the work being done by social workers in Nunavut was described by one participant who stated, “I would like our status in the community to be recognized and get some kind of respect from our profile and our superiors and the community and we also need them to realize, the work that we are doing, that they are asking us is impossible and we are doing it anyway because social workers tend to take, we never say no.” The metaphor of a “totem pole” was also used a
number of times as participants described their “low rank” within the Government of Nunavut. One participant stated, “So I know we are not high on the totem pole, but I have never had a community yet that has said oh we don't need you here. Every community we go into, [a certain staff person] says I'm so glad you’re here and man can we ever use you. But we don't get acknowledged for the work we do and we do a very difficult job.” Another participant also described feeling:

“at the low end of the totem pole when it comes to consideration by the GN and by the health staff … I don't think we get nearly enough recognition. It's clearly one of the most difficult jobs that one could have in this territory and I don't think we get any recognition at all for that and I don't mean that in the sense of people telling us what a wonderful job we are doing. But I think people need to recognize not only the difficulty inherent in child welfare but also the difficulties in cross cultural practice and it is an incredibly busy environment.”

Closely connected to the issue of recognition for child welfare work was the discussion of frustration that stemmed from being viewed as less than their nurse colleagues. One participant described, “We are among the unsung in this territory, you know we have probably the least amount of recognition in the professional services and we're probably not considered at all - you know the nurses, because they scream the loudest they get the attention.” Another participant mentioned, “all over the place, but more so pronounced in Nunavut, that if you are not medical, your opinion is nothing; that we need to get the doctor to go over it or the nurses to go over it.” One participant described a situation with a client and the resulting feeling of frustration:

“I am embarrassed because she questions me, you just asked me all the stuff, can't you just tell them, and I'm like no I can't because I'm only the social worker you need to tell this stuff to the nurse because they have more control over money and things like that…Everyone has frustrations with the system you know, but… please, have a little bit of respect for my opinion. I go into work and lay it all out on the table and sometimes come home exhausted and you know, then you have to defer what the nurses say, because the nurses know more about social issues than you do? Like what is your degree for then?”

Regarding the lack of support and negative interactions within the organization, one participant summed up the issue of retention as: “I like my work but I don't need that kind of stuff. Like you know you don't need that kind of crap in your workday because it's stressful enough, there's enough pressure. And well, your supervisor, and supervisors need to be supportive. Supervisors need to be supporting. There should be, especially the direction coming from the top and that wasn't my experience at all.” Another participant recommended there be “plans for us for retention, plans for raising the profile of the worker in the community, put it up as a team, just like the RCMP, the nurses and the teachers so that we are, so in order to have a holistic services in a community, that these are the services that you need and you need to respect
them and take care of them.” These perceptions of status and the importance of a social worker’s status within the community were clearly important to the social workers interviewed. It is possible that these comments regarding the social workers’ frustrations just mentioned, suggest a desire for increased power and status to achieve services for their clients in an attempt to affect change. However, it is also highly consistent with a desire for more “control” and decision-making power due to the social workers’ view of their own “expertise” and knowledge. By desiring a higher place on the “totem pole” social workers highlight, not a desire for social change within communities through a more equitable dispersal of power, but instead a desire to maintain the status quo and if anything increase their power and position.
CHAPTER 7: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS

This research has looked at many elements of child welfare work in Nunavut. Issues explored have included the role of social workers, as well as the power inherent within the role and the employment of Qallunaat social workers within Inuit communities. The following discussion will look at the connections between the literature regarding child welfare in rural Aboriginal communities, social work theory, and the information that surfaced from interviews with Nunavut social workers. The themes that emerged from connecting these pieces, the overall conclusions drawn from this research, and the implications for child welfare and social work will then be discussed in greater depth.

INUIT CULTURE AND SOUTHERN IDEOLOGY

In this study it was essential to explore the cultural values, beliefs, and assumptions of mainstream child welfare work in Canada’s south, as it is these same values and beliefs that make up the foundation of child welfare in Nunavut as well, despite the conflict they generate with Inuit culture. Inuit values, such as the importance of sharing, being generous, “nurturance, non-aggression, autonomy, all of the values that are central to Inuit life” (Briggs, 1979, p. 397) have been misunderstood, overlooked and under acknowledged for the role they play within child rearing and, therefore, have not received recognition within the territory’s child welfare system (Kimelman, 1985). As well, the “best interests” of Inuit children have been used as a “rationalization of oppression by the dominant society” (Bellefeuille and Ricks, 2003, p.27). Yet it is this notion of “best interests” that, just as in southern Canada, remains the guiding principle in Nunavut’s child welfare system, despite “provid[ing] questionable justification for the removal of Aboriginal children on the grounds of ‘neglect’” and “without consideration of the structural disadvantage and poverty that many Aboriginal families experience” (Bellefeuille and Ricks, 2003, p. 26). As in the other provinces and territories in Canada, the “best interests” of children remains vague and undefined in legislation, leaving individual social workers and judges or other “experts” to decide through their own assessment of the situation. The underlying assumptions of southern Canada’s dominant culture have also fed the child welfare legislation in Canada regarding the “best interests” of children by promoting itself as “universal” (Kimelman, 1985). Unfortunately, no attempt has yet been made to identify what is in a child’s “best interests” based on their Inuit culture. Instead, Qallunaat social workers are left to determine the highly discretionary “best interests” of Inuit children through the application of their own dominant culture.
values, southern training and beliefs. Similarly connected to the “best interests” of children is poverty and its relation to child neglect, which has helped to create the paradox that while Inuit have been “expected to integrate with a modern industrial wage economy…while participating they were not to become dependent on the state when it failed to meet their basic needs” (Tester, 2006a, p. 239).

The continued imposition of the dominant culture’s values and beliefs regarding the “best interests” of children in Nunavut and the promotion of these values and beliefs as universal displays mainstream social work’s lack of recognition for the profession’s ethnocentric roots in dominant culture and a lack of recognition for Inuit world view. Today even southern Canada’s Aboriginal agencies are required to operate under the constraints of dominant culture values, which are embedded in child welfare legislation, for the concept of the “best interests” of children currently serves as “the main guiding principle found in every Canadian statute governing child welfare services of the day” despite its incongruence with Aboriginal culture and beliefs (Bellefeuille and Ricks, 2003, p. 25). Nunavut’s child welfare legislation requires social workers to take the “child’s physical, mental and emotional level of development and needs,” the “cultural, linguistic and spiritual or religious upbringing and ties,” “relationship[s] by blood or adoption” and the “effects on the child of a delay of in making a decision” among other things into consideration when determining what is in a child’s best interests (Bellefeuille and Ricks, 2003, p. 25). In practice, this can often result in children being apprehended from impoverished homes that may not provide enough food for the child or meet the child’s physical needs consistent with mainstream standards. For example, a home that does not have indoor plumbing could be understood by a social worker as not meeting a child’s physical needs and to remain living there could, therefore, be viewed as not in a child’s best interests. Also absent within these considerations is any discussion regarding the community or suggestions for how social workers should understand these considerations and when one consideration such as “relationships” should “trump” another, such as “physical” needs.

Social workers in Nunavut routinely face scenarios such as the example of no indoor plumbing, that could be classified as “neglect” due to a lack of food, housing and other factors and these situations can lead to children being apprehended from their caregivers. It is likely that this may be related to the difficult decisions social workers are faced with when encountering poverty and linked to the participants indication of a need to not follow the “rules.” The comments by participants regarding not following the “rules” also
suggests the social workers interviewed recognized the potential for making decisions supported by the legislation to apprehend a child, but that may not be in what they perceive to be in the child’s “best interests.” As previously mentioned and depicted within the literature review and the interviews with social workers, is the vast differences in values and world view that, therefore, leads to child welfare decision making. These situations in particular, however, greatly suggest the importance of addressing the realities that give rise to child neglect in the first place, such as the lack of basic needs in communities including adequate food and housing.

Some of the most striking differences between the southern Canada’s dominant culture and the Inuit world view may be regarding the notions of individual wellness and perception of oneself in the world. For example, an Inuit paradigm may view health and wellness from a holistic lens and place importance on balance as compared to the southern Qallunaat perspective that may focus on an individual’s mind and body health as separate entities. Yet within this research participants commented on the lack of focus on family support and wellness in Nunavut’s child welfare model. Also, as an Inuit paradigm may place a high value on the non-interference into the behaviors and activities of another person, this can be seen to contrast with the colonialist southern paradigm, which supports intrusion into others’ lives (McMullen and Rohrback, 2003). This intrusion is evident within the child welfare system, which typically includes investigations into families to determine whether there has been child abuse or neglect. Also different is the Inuit value of community where “harmony [is] fostered through cooperation and the priority of communal aspirations versus individualistic success” as valued in southern dominant culture (Harris, 2006, p. 122). The Inuit collectivist orientation is accordingly displayed through placing “thoughts of themselves as a group ahead of thoughts of themselves as individuals” (Kulchyski and Tester, 2007, p. 225). Finally, the Inuit paradigm may also involve a “strong sense of community and shared responsibility” and a “connectedness to land and family, resulting in a view of the individual in context” (Liberman, 2004, p. 26). Highly similar to an Aboriginal paradigm, this contrasts with the focus of mainstream child welfare that typically centers on child safety exclusive of the child’s community.

In addition to these differences in world views, Qallunaat and Inuit notions of spirituality may also conflict as “perspectives on spirituality evident in the mainstream social work literature differ from the perspectives commonly found in the rural and Aboriginal social work material” (Zapf, 2005b, p. 1). This is
especially relevant to a discussion of social work theory because as Qallunaat social workers attempt to understand the connection between Inuit and their unique environment “it remains unlikely that [the] mainstream social work profession (or the dominant society) will easily shift paradigms and come to understand the person and the environment as expressions of the same creation” (Zapf, 2005a, p.639). This is because the dominant culture has “attempted to include traditional or Aboriginal theory as part of the knowledge base for mainstream social work practice, but any assumption of traditional knowledge as just another theory base disguises a fundamental difference in world view” (Zapf, 2005b, p. 3). Therefore, Inuit world view, including spirituality and a connection to the land, is essential to culturally relevant child welfare work in Nunavut, yet this is beyond the knowledge base gained through mainstream social work theory.

Despite the now understood harm that dominant culture values and world view has had on kinship ties within Aboriginal families in history, the interviews with Qallunaat social workers, particularly regarding aboriginal custom adoption, displayed a lack of recognition for the imposition of southern Qallunaat values in child welfare (Sinclair, 2004; Alia, 2007). It also clearly displayed an attitude of continued problematization of Inuit communities. For example Qallunaat social workers displayed their dominant culture paradigm when discussing children’s “best interests” regarding placement within Nunavut’s communities. Their frustrations with the traditional practice of custom adoption signaled a desire to maintain power within the community, while simultaneously denying Inuit knowledge and the community’s ability to ensure the safety of children. Both historically and today, decision-making power in Nunavut’s child welfare system is held by Qallunaat and it is directly linked to ethnocentric and racist views of Inuit culture as inferior to the Qallunaat paradigm, culture, beliefs and values (Morrissette, McKenzie and Morriseotte, 1993; Kalyanpur, 1998). Qallunaat social workers that commented on their desire to intervene within aboriginal custom adoption pointed to the separation of siblings and the placement of children in particular homes within a community as poor decisions by the parents. This view held by Qallunaat social workers depicts southern ideology, southern social work theory (particularly attachment theory) and a lack of understanding of Inuit culture, which places responsibility on the extended family and community members to provide safety and ensure the care of children (Mooradian, Cross and Stutzky, 2006). The paternalistic views of the community and the discomfort social workers had with their
lack of power in this domain can be understood as the Qallunaat social workers’ belief that he or she has the “better judgment” due to their “expert” status. The discomfort with custom adoption described by Qallunaat social workers is also likely tied to their “internalized dominance” or the belief in their views and practices as superior to Inuit (Hardiman and Jackson, 1997), their perceived status and importance, and the lack of autonomy they attribute to Inuit communities (Grey, Coates and Hetherington, 2007). Interestingly, it appears that these Qallunaat social workers have forgotten that it was the adoption of Aboriginal children into “appropriate” homes selected by social workers throughout Canadian history, which has had devastating effects children, families and communities. This is particularly alarming as even the dominant culture has come to recognize the cultural destruction that such “well intended” placements have caused (Sinclair, 2004; RCAP, 1996; Kimelman, 1985).

Another reason it is important we examine the desire of Qallunaat social workers to have increased power and status in Nunavut is because such desire runs counter to a community development or community work related practice, which commonly involves a “mission of striving for a society in which power and resources are distributed in a more equal fashion than it obtains at the present time” (Wharf, 1990, p. 177). Despite Qallunaat social workers’ recognition of community development as part of their role in Nunavut communities, their interest for increased decision-making power does little to “engage Aboriginal people in a process of empowerment” and instead more likely contributes to the disempowerment of Inuit (Litwin, 1997, p. 328-329). Participants in this study did not appear to see the conflict of promoting community development, increased community control and Inuit involvement in child welfare, with the social workers’ own desire for increased power, status and a higher place on the “totem pole.” As well, the interviews within this study have shown that Qallunaat social workers relied heavily on their instinct and creative problem solving abilities to address the “emergency based social work” they viewed as their day to day work. But this use of creativity and problem solving is less likely, however, to “defend the clients’ rights when they are blatantly violated” when it could pose “a risk to [the social worker’s] own position” (Carniol, 1992, p. 7). Instead many Qallunaat social workers, as depicted within the concept of “problem solving” follow “a medical model in which the social worker-as-expert diagnoses the problem and prescribes solutions which clients are expected to follow” (Carniol, 1992, p. 8). Therefore, the contradictions and mixed messages being promoted through Qallunaat social workers in
Nunavut leave us to question the benefit to hiring Qallunaat social workers, even if only to provide solely community development programming, as it appears to present the potential to further disempower Inuit.

In addition, it became evident that despite the Qallunaat social workers’ education at southern universities regarding oppression and social change, within the interviews there appeared to be a greater attempt to “keep the ship afloat” and protect the status quo, than push for social and structural change. This may partly be because although structural social work theory requires social workers to acknowledge “structures of oppression in order to eliminate them” it neglects to provide direction as to how social workers from the dominant culture are to put this into practice (Carniol, 1992). In fact, the current social work theories used in Nunavut, including structural social work theory, appear to do little to curb the practice of a social worker’s reliance on instinct to provide creative problem solving, which will naturally be based on their southern dominant culture ideology and world view. This is not to suggest that social work theory is not useful to northern social work, for particularly as colonialism has been so entrenched within Inuit communities, certain theories such as structural social work may be needed as it can “explicitly expose the structures of oppression” (Carniol, 1992, p.10). Although exposing oppression is a necessary step towards Inuit self-government and Inuit gaining control over decision-making in their communities, structural social work theory unfortunately, may do little more that encourage Qallunaat social workers to “demystify professional techniques and processes and invite clients’ feedback” or “avoid professional jargon and political rhetoric” (Carniol, 1992, p. 10). For even the recognition of oppression still does not change the current decision-making power held by Qallunaat over Inuit. Similarly, as Qallunaat social workers described a desire to “talk about the process just frankly” and “demystify the process” of child welfare within communities, this also suggests a position that is more in line with the “rationalization of oppression,” which “takes as fact the dominant group’s perception of reality, thus placing the dominant group in the position of authoritative knower” (Bellefeuille and Ricks, 2003, p. 27). Therefore, discussing the oppressive structure of child welfare in Nunavut does little to actually combat the status quo, particularly when it is coupled with paternalistic notions of Inuit communities as evident in the interviews. Nonetheless, as structural social work theory holds two goals, one being “to alleviate the negative effects on people of an exploitative and alienating social order” and the second being “to transform the conditions and social structures that cause these negative effects” (Mullaly, 1997, p. 133), it may perhaps be a
beginning place for “attending to the roots and personal problems, not merely to their symptoms” (Carniol, 1992, p. 17).

Additionally, the use of a strengths based approach, or “a way of thinking about and working with human beings across the lifespan that focuses on assets instead of deficits and on working in partnership ‘with’ instead of doing ‘to,’” appears to be a fitting approach for social work in Nunavut (Bernard, 2006, p. 197). This approach, however, is entirely dependent on the social worker’s ability to determine and understand strengths outside of his or her paradigm. As Kalyanpur’s (1998) research determined, what social workers from the dominant culture assume to be “strengths” and “deficits” are not shared across cultures. This was confirmed by some Qallunaat social workers in this study who were unable to see the strengths of Inuit communities regarding custom adoption or determine abilities or resources within communities to meet families’ needs. Interestingly, Qallunaat social workers in this research responded in a manner consistent with the research of Walmsley (2004), who found that non-Aboriginal social workers viewed communities in terms of a “relationship of powerless dependency to the state” (p. 66). Qallunaat social workers displayed this through their comments of resources in communities being what “individual social workers do with the family” and not on the people, skills, and abilities Inuit communities have to offer to child welfare. Therefore, this study has determined that despite social workers’ desire to practice from a strengths based approach, if they cannot see the strengths in the communities, due to their dominant culture paradigm, then it is unlikely that these strengths will be incorporated into their child welfare work.

CULTURAL COMPETENCE

Just as cultural sensitivity has recently been recognized for its inadequacy for cross cultural social work practice, so too is cultural competence not adequate for Qallunaat to practice child welfare in Nunavut’s Inuit communities (Grey, Coates and Hetherington, 2007; Weaver, 1999). Cultural competence, however, is not only inadequate for child welfare work in Nunavut; it is also inconsistent with the direction of Inuit self-government, self-determination and autonomy over decision making for Inuit children and families. Rather than the employment of culturally competent Qallunaat social workers from the south, large-scale structural change is required in Nunavut as “a critical pre-condition to any reform of the child welfare system” because “the paradigm of welfare colonialism does not acknowledge the continuity of these oppressive structures” (Litwin, 1997, p. 328). Although this need for structural change is due to the
uneven balance of power, it is also due to the southern workers’ inability to move beyond their southern ideology and Euro-Canadian paradigm, as was evident within the interviews with Qallunaat, because “outsiders do not have the needed cultural reference” (Harris, 2006, p. 124). This research has also shown that the internalized dominance of Qallunaat from the dominant culture has consequently led to “internalized oppression” as Inuit began to perceive their values and beliefs as less (Hardiman and Jackson, 1997). Internalized dominance was described within the interviews by one participant who discussed a situation where a mother allowed the social worker to hold her child because the social worker was Qallunaaq and from the dominant culture. This example clearly indicates the power Qallunaat social workers hold and that internalized oppression that continues to exist. Despite Canadian university-level education of social work students on internalized dominance and oppression and the “relationship between an agent group and a target group that keeps the system of domination in place,” the recognition of this dominance was only touched on by a couple of participants (Hardiman and Jackson, 1997, p. 17). This is likely due to the assumption of the dominant culture that by seeking understanding other cultures, being self-reflective of personal biases and integrating this understanding and reflection into practice, social workers can become “culturally competent” to practice in cross cultural settings, thereby undoing or minimizing their internalized dominance. This perception, however, entirely neglects to recognize that “once systems of oppression are in place, they are self-perpetuating” (Hardiman and Jackson, 1997, p. 17) nor does it examine that despite a Qallunaat social workers’ cultural understanding “western trained social workers…might not be able to meet the needs of the Aboriginal population” (Sinclair, 2004, p. 51).

“Cultural competence,” nonetheless has remained the standard for dominant culture social workers in cross-cultural settings (Weaver, 1999).

As many Qallunaat social workers in Nunavut believe they are working from a place of “cultural competence,” the reliance on their perceived “expertise” as indicated by participants in this study have suggested the need for a critical look at the role for Qallunaat social workers in Nunavut. An assessment of the roles Qallunaat hold and an examination of power within Nunavut’s communities is also an essential part of moving towards Inuit self-government and self-determination; however, it is also likely to produce great resistance by Qallunaat (Weaver, 1999).
It is likely that this position will be met by resistance by both Qallunaat social workers practicing within Nunavut’s child welfare system, but also by western-trained social workers who are dedicated to learning about Aboriginal cultures, applying theories they believe fit with Aboriginal paradigms, and practicing in a respectful and mindful manner. However, within this research participants repeatedly displayed their difficulty in “grasping and understanding another world view” due to their own world view being consistent with the dominant paradigm (Morrissette, McKenzie and Morrissette, 1993, p. 92). For example, many Qallunaat social workers commented on their belief in the community as unable or unwilling to address its own issues, leaving social workers to “do it all.” Unfortunately, the reality of a community’s ability and interest in meeting its needs may need to be examined further through additional research as it remains possible that even the concept of “community” in Nunavut may be of issue for Nunavummiut, due to their historical camp-based life organized around extended families. Despite how Nunavut’s communities currently function, however, it is important to this research that we critically examine the lack of a strengths based perspective provided by Qallunaat social workers, and instead the portrayal of communities through descriptions that appear steeped in ethnocentrism and paternalism.

Similarly, Qallunaat social workers displayed no recognition of an alternative to the “recruitment and retention” of other southern Qallunaat social workers who were “educated” to work in Nunavut. This paradigm takes the mainstream colonial child welfare system, including a role for Qallunaat workers, as a given, and as the best and only system possible. Interestingly, southern educated culturally competent Qallunaat social workers are seen as a solution to the lack of social workers in the territory, despite all of the Qallunaat participants’ recognition that they arrived in Nunavut without an understanding of Inuit culture, that they were unable to practice as they had in the south, and that “you don’t learn Nunavut social work in a text book.”

Although unlikely that even the dedication to cultural competence is “good enough” for cross-cultural practice in southern Canada where Aboriginal people have experienced forced assimilation for over 150 years, it is definitely not enough for Qallunaat to practice child welfare in Nunavut. The inadequacy of cultural competence in Nunavut, however, is in part due to the territory’s unique situation in Canada, as

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12 Determining whether cultural competence truly is “good enough” is beyond the scope of this study. There is, however, a need for an actively anti-racist position to be taken within all social work due to deeply embedded racism persistent within the dominant culture in Canada.
child welfare workers continue to hold even increased power in the north, as compared to southern locations (Graham, Brownlee, Shier and Doucette, 2008). But the inadequacy of cultural competence is also partly due to Nunavummiut being predominantly Inuit, the distinctness of Inuit culture, and because Inuit have experienced colonialism for a lesser amount of time than Aboriginal people in southern Canada. Although the history of the relationship Inuit hold with the dominant culture of southern Canada is in no way intended to minimize the impact of colonialism in the north or magnify the impact of western culture on southern Aboriginal communities, it is necessary to recognize that much of Nunavut’s culture remains intact as it was prior to southern colonialism. Since the majority of colonialism and assimilation of Inuit occurred after World War II, many Inuit today can describe growing up on the land and having gone “from the iglu to microwaves in less than 40 years” (Irniq, 2008, p.1). This short time frame means many Inuit not only “draw on knowledge for strength and inspiration in [their] personal, family and community life” through cultural practices and traditions passed through generations of elders’ oral accounts, they also grew up and experienced the change as their “Inuitness is becoming more Europeanized or ‘southernized’” (Irniq, 2008, p.1). Many Inuit today retain a solid footing in pre-colonialist culture and have witnessed firsthand the imposition of “the west’s view of itself as the centre of legitimate knowledge” (Grey, Coates and Hetherington, 2007, pg. 58). Although “reviving ancient knowledge from the ashes of colonialism is critical to Aboriginal social work education and the healing agenda,” Inuit traditional knowledge is not ancient, nor is it in the form of ashes, as it is still very alive within Nunavut communities today (Sinclair, 2004, p. 53). One example of this is the strength of the Inuktitut language within the territory (G.N., n.d.a; Statistics Canada, 2006d). This is important because the retention of Inuit culture and language can be understood as presenting an opportunity to develop a new approach to child welfare from a truly Inuit paradigm, one that is not born out of southern ideology and training. Inuit traditional knowledge reminds us that “there is more than one way to do things, and [by] making room for other ways of knowing, being, or doing, we have the opportunity to engage in a reciprocal process of learning and teaching” (Harris, 2006, p. 128). It is through a recognition of Inuit traditional knowledge and Inuit world view, and by addressing the power held by Qallunaat over Inuit within child welfare that a uniquely Inuit child welfare system could be created to be consistent with the move towards a true Inuit self-government and a future of self-determination. Therefore, until the existing structure of child welfare in Nunavut, including roles for
Qallunaat social workers, has been overhauled entirely and a new or different approach is developed out of Inuit values and beliefs, “cultural competence” remains only a piecemeal attempt to fix an unsuitable system and Qallunaat social workers will remain a continuing form of colonial power within the territory.

**EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT**

Many Qallunaat and Inuit alike have accepted that solutions to some of Nunavut’s social issues should include incorporating Inuit culture into government programming and focusing on training and employing Inuit to “take over” the role of social worker from Qallunaat workers (Timpson, 2006). This solution, however, is rooted in beliefs that “the recruitment process of government staff has been plagued by a shortage of qualified Inuit professionals” and “the problem is more than half of the government positions require college or university training” (Legare, 2008, p.357). Despite the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement (NLCA), which “included measures to remove artificially inflated education or experience requirements not based on essential consideration of proficiency and skill” (Timpson, 2006, p. 520), Inuit still hold only half of the territory’s government jobs, very few of which are in management (Legare, 2008; Tester, 2006b). The solution of training Inuit to fill social work positions is indicative of the dominant culture’s lack of an alternative world view, including the view and reliance on southern training or education as necessary and the only acceptable solution. This view is further based on “meritocratic ideals presented as ‘consensual’ values that were central to a fair and just society that treats everyone equally” (Augoustinos, Tuffin and Every, 2005, p.319). In this same line of thought, many Qallunaat social workers justify their work in Nunavut as necessary until “trained” Inuit are available to take over the social work position within the communities. The perception that Inuit require college or university level social work training to do child welfare work within their own culture, communities and with their own people is an example of “indigenization as a bureaucratic reform measure aimed at integrating Indigenous minorities into the imposed system of social control by co-opting Indigenous people to enforce laws of the state” (Litwin, 1997, p. 334). This replacement of Qallunaat social workers with Inuit workers, is similar to many Aboriginal child welfare agencies in southern Canada, which has served to “compound the oppression of Indigenous people within an operational context which paradoxically, by appropriating Indigenous personnel, manages to enhance the legitimacy of state intervention” and seeks to turn Inuit into the “family

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13 Nunavut Land Claims Agreement, Article 23
police” of their own communities (Litwin, 1997, p. 335). Instead, a recognition of Inuit traditional knowledge as more specific to Nunavut social work than southern education and training is necessary, so that an entirely new or different approach that is not rooted in colonialism can be developed without the constraints of southern thought. Although education was not the focus of this study, it is important that we touch on it as it:

“has been used as a pretext for removing Aboriginal children from their communities and indoctrinating them in western/European knowledge systems. Even though residential schools no longer exist, [the current] educational systems remain steeped in Eurocentric knowledge. This bias in education is often invisible to those from the dominant western culture because society is so steeped in this culture that western ways can appear to be the ‘normal’” (Green and Dumbrill, 2005, p. 171).

This research study determined that Qallunaat social workers view themselves as “educators” and “teachers” despite holding no prior knowledge of Nunavut or Inuit culture upon arriving in the territory for work. In fact, the Qallunaat participants described a feeling of disorientation upon arrival in Nunavut and recognized that they were unable to practice social work as they did in southern Canada. These social workers, therefore, found themselves being trained and educated by the community and other Inuit staff, which led to the unintended consequence of Qallunaat social workers becoming “students” and Inuit colleagues becoming the “experts.” Interestingly, despite these learning experiences, Qallunaat social workers then reverted to the position of “educator” and “teacher” during the course of their employment. This could be understood as “the worker enter[ing] into the system of local meanings and priorities,” which although initially involved frustration and disorientation, “give[s] way eventually to regained confidence and a sense of well-being as the worker learns to operate with the new system of meanings” (Zapf, 1993, p. 702). However, the return to the role of “expert” by Qallunaat is more likely suggestive of internalized dominance and an “absence of feeling that one has to prove oneself, or that one’s status, talent, and qualifications would be questioned in any situation on the basis of social identity” (Hardiman and Jackson, 1997, p.21). As well, when social workers presented themselves as “experts,” there did not appear to be any response or system for combating the assumed positioning by the Government of Nunavut. In addition, the Qallunaat social workers’ desire to “teach” Inuit also does not appear to be addressed by the government for being harmful. This is particularly important as history has shown such teaching to be highly destructive, which further displays that “social workers are hardly neutral” (Yan, 2008). Instead Qallunaat social workers appear to perceive themselves and their world view, including their western form of
education and training as superior to Inuit world view, traditional knowledge and community based training or experience (Kalyanpur, 1998). This again points to the inability of Qallunaat social workers from the dominant culture to see another world view or perspective and leads to the implication that southern social workers may be unable to participate in the creation of a new approach to child welfare due to their world view and education of what is “normal.”

Although Nunavut’s Arctic College graduates Inuit social workers each year and holds cultural components within its programming, it is unlikely that it is focused on “the decolonization of Aboriginal people, which is enacted through methodology that contextualizes colonization, and integrates healing methods based on Aboriginal epistemology” (Sinclair, 2004, p. 55). This is because the college’s current human service or social work program is “considered bi-cultural in the sense that it attempts to incorporate the orientations and values of traditional First Nations culture with the dominant values of Euro-Canadian society” (Durst, 2006, p. 10). Interestingly, this choice of First Nations culture rather than Inuit culture highlights the use of southern mainstream cross-cultural education. Although this could be understood as a positive sign of “Indigenous themes entering mainstream social work discourse” (Grey, Coates and Hetherington, 2007, p. 60), social work education in Nunavut remains “mainstream” as it comprises dominant culture educators, dominant culture course work and materials, dominant culture theories, approaches, interventions, expectations, and values and beliefs (Nunavut Arctic College, 2008b). This can be seen within it’s programming, which includes “post-modern counseling and capacity building techniques” and provides Qallunaat instructors to teach the programs (Nunavut Arctic College, 2008a). The curriculum also includes standard mainstream courses commonly taught at southern Canadian Universities including “Social Work Methods,” “Interpersonal Communication Skills,” “Human Development,” “Applied Counseling Skills,” “Theories of Counseling,” and “Sociology: Family Dynamics” to name a few (Nunavut Arctic College, 2008b). In addition to this, the Nunavut Arctic College also requires the majority of students to have “completed grade 12” and “submit a letter” in application, possibly submit to “a security clearance” and be “required to write” a proficiency exam to enter the social work program (Nunavut Arctic College, 2008b). These entrance requirements indicate that the school’s social work program is more congruent with Qallunaat educational institutions than the “principles and values of IQ”

14 Emphasis added
and the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement regarding a reduction of barriers to Inuit. This has in part led to the criticism that “Nunavut schools are essentially foreign institutions delivering a foreign curriculum in a foreign language” (Legare, 2008, p. 365). As well, the use of southern education in Nunavut remains challenging for Inuit as “following natural rhythms make the artificial schedule of the Qallunaat school especially difficult for some Inuit” particularly when there is daylight or darkness for 24 hours a day (Berger, Epp and Moller, 2006, p. 188). Similarly, even the “structure of curriculum in Qallunaat schools [is] hierarchical and therefore problematic” (Berger, Epp and Moller, 2006, p. 188) and the majority of Inuit have to leave their home communities to access “training” by Qallunaat in the larger communities (Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, 2005). As well, the training of Inuit to “take over” the role of social workers in Nunavut does little to benefit Inuit as it “perpetuates marginalization and constructions of difference, and fosters the internalizing of racism” (Sinclair, 2004, p. 52). This is not to say that all social work education is negative, that there is nothing to be learned from the south or southern education methods, or that the employment of Inuit social workers is not constructive to Inuit self-government. Instead, it is to suggest that the role of social work education in Nunavut could be culturally relevant if educators “conceptualize education as a dialogue between the educator and students –a process in which both learn and are changed” (Green and Dumbrill, 2005, p. 173). This exchange and process of learning could be transcended to child welfare practice as the Inuit social worker interviewed in this study indicated, “parents themselves are not being heard.” However, as long as Qallunaat continue to overlook and not acknowledge the world view of Inuit or the other “side,” both social work and social work education will only continue to act as “instruments of assimilation to western culture” (Berger, Epp and Moller, 2006, p. 196).

The shift to Inuit possession of decision-making power and control over the care of children, in line with Inuit world view and traditional knowledge, as previously discussed, will be challenging, as commonly “the more widespread, the more unsettling, the more radical the change, the more intensely it will be resisted” by the status quo, particularly when change “call[s] for organizations to dissolve or to reconstitute in some basic way” (Wharf, 1979, p. 18-20). Resistance to the creation of a different approach to child welfare can also be expected, as it will require a departure from the notion of social worker as “expert” and relinquishing the power and authority Qallunaat hold within their roles as child welfare workers. A new approach to child welfare will also require:
“forfeiting status, comfort, and certainty as one who has access to the ‘true’ reality and the authority to dispense that truth...It means a shift in thinking away from the comfortable idea that there are ‘right’ methods of practice, towards the idea that methods and practices can be improvised to fit each community’s unique, dynamically-changing contextual demands” (Sellick and Delaney, 1996, p. 42).

Giving up power is not something likely to be comfortable for those who have embedded beliefs of their personal status due to their education and years of experience within the working environment. But it is this very notion of a social worker’s education and experience or “merit,” which is the foundation of the subtle “new racism” that meritocratic logic holds and ultimately prevents social change (Augoustinos, Tuffin and Every, 2005). Moving away from a western view of merit is a necessary step towards Inuit self-government and reversing the current flow of power in Nunavut communities. Elders, healers and guides in the territory are unlikely to hold degrees or certificates in healing, counseling or social work, and young community members that may have the necessary education may not be recognized in such respected roles due to their young age and lack of experience (Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, 2005). In order to view Inuit elders, healers and guides as qualified and able to teach, heal and support, will require abandoning the southern meritocratic paradigm currently being upheld in Nunavut by the dominant culture. This was evident within the interviews with Qallunaat social workers and their views of themselves as “experts” of social issues. Moving beyond the view of credentials, resumes and formal “experience” will be necessary to the development of a new child welfare approach within the territory. This move will naturally be difficult for those who “still cling to a value system that cherishes rugged individualism and extols the myth that Canada is an open society in which anyone can succeed with the requisite amount of hard work and determination” (Wharf, 1990, p. 174). However, until a move away from meritocratic thinking to the “very opposite of the hubris which so often accompanies academic training and expert status” possessed by Qallunaat social workers, the status quo and power in Nunavut will be unable to change hands (Sellick and Delaney, 1996, p. 42).

SELF GOVERNMENT AND SELF DETERMINATION

The achievement of Nunavut’s government has been substantial and has been called “a public service grounded in Indigenous perspectives and experience” (Timpson, 2006, p.517). However, it has also created an arena for Qallunaat to dominate under the guise of Inuit control. For as the government was set up to “ensure Indigenous representation numerically and in linguistic and cultural terms” while stretching
“the concept of representative bureaucracy to facilitate the cultural, linguistic and numerical representation of Indigenous citizens” (Timpson, 2006, p. 518), half of all government employees are Qallunaat and the majority of management positions are held by Qallunaat despite southerners making up only 15% of the territory’s population (Legare, 2008; Tester, 2006b). Even though the territory’s government “is a public non-ethnic political jurisdiction” and has been “portrayed as a de facto Inuit self-government” in southern Canada, the lack of power held by Inuit displays the distance Nunavut still has to go to achieve Inuit self-government (Legare, 2008, p. 347). In particular, self government would include “decision-making directly affecting a people spanning political, cultural, economic and social affairs,” as this is necessary for the “survival of their language and culture [and] dependent upon the maintenance and continued development of their ‘distinct societies’” (Durst, 1995, p. 8). Unfortunately, the power imbalance between the Qallunaat social workers as colonial agents and Inuit communities that exist today, do so despite Inuit “reassertion of their collective identify” in the government of Nunavut for the past 10 years (Legare, 2008, p. 367). This is likely due to the dominant culture within the government, which maintains the status quo, retains the decision-making power and continues to be held by southern Qallunaat workers.

However, true self-government still only provides a degree of decision-making power as compared to achieving Inuit self-determination, which could provide for complete autonomous control. Self-determination, or the “legal, political, or structural framework to be sovereign and operate as a supreme authority within a defined geographic area,” while holding the “sufficient financial resources” and possessing the “adequate social infrastructure, [or] the knowledge, skills, and values (competencies) required to make self-determination happen” remains the ultimate goal (Durst, 1996, p. 105). Although the financial resources, infrastructure and even the legal autonomy have yet to be obtained by Inuit, and even though “no government, Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal, can act in total isolation from the larger society” self-determination provides the direction for Indigenous groups in Canada (Durst, 1995, p. 8). Inuit self-government in Nunavut will, therefore, be a crucial step towards self-determination, and it is required to both “break the yoke of colonialism” and to “seek control over the development and delivery of services provided for families and children” (Durst, 1995, p. 7). It is through self-government and moving towards self-determination that Inuit will be able to dismantle the oppressive Qallunaat child welfare system of the south currently operating within their territory.
Complicating the task of self-government is Nunavut’s heavy reliance on Qallunaat workers throughout all levels of government, as well as the “reliance upon experts and ‘scientific’ approaches to determine community needs,” which “ultimately places control in the hands of the very people [who] caused the problem in the first place” (Tester, 1993, p. 120). The current child welfare system in Nunavut does not mesh with Inuit values and beliefs, as it has been fashioned after southern Canada’s child welfare system and nor does it work, due to the current social and environmental conditions in the territory. This was made clear by participants in their descriptions of Nunavut’s child welfare system and it was repeatedly described as not meeting community and family needs, particularly regarding the practice of sending children outside of the territory, a practice strikingly similar to the historic use of residential schools. All of the participants in this study provided concerns regarding child welfare in the territory, including the “investigative approach” being employed, the lack of focus on family support and the lack of resources for children and families, which again indicates that the current colonial model of child welfare is not working. Instead, Nunavut’s child welfare system is currently only meeting the needs of the dominant culture in southern Canada as the federal government, southern universities and southern ideology have not had to bend to Inuit culture or even recognize Inuit world view regarding child welfare, and instead have required Inuit to adjust to their system and way of doing things.

As Inuit self-government is an inherent right and southern Canada’s mainstream child welfare approaches have been determined to be inconsistent with and harmful to Aboriginal cultures and communities, many First Nations and Aboriginal communities have been moving away from Euro-Canadian ideology imposed on their families through mainstream child welfare (McKenzie, Seidl and Bone, 1995). Since “community control involves transferring authority for child welfare to community systems [and] First Nations people have pioneered this approach to child welfare, in spite of difficulties in mounting effective responses in communities devastated by poverty and cultural annihilation,” Nunavut could follow this lead by developing its “community capacity” (Swift and Callahan, 2006, p. 136). Nunavut, in fact, could learn from the struggles and successes of First Nations and the 110 Aboriginal child welfare service agencies established across Canada (Gough, Blackstock and Bala, 2005, p. 4). As well, as Inuit gain control over their own child welfare programs, and move towards self-government this will in turn have the additional benefit of facilitating local empowerment in the communities (Durst, 1995).
Through the process of community dialogue regarding community needs, Inuit cultural approaches and what Inuit communities would like to see for themselves, communities would be required to recognize their own strengths, unique attributes and internal resources. This exercise may also have a positive impact on the families and family politics that interconnect within the communities, as family relations in Nunavut’s communities can pose challenges for employment among other things. Closely connected to empowerment is the process of community healing as well. For many Inuit that have experienced the trauma of residential schools, government relocations and have faced colonialism for decades, the need to reclaim one’s personal strength will also be necessary. This may particularly be the case for some elders, who on one hand may be able to provide support and knowledge to younger generations, however, this may first require they heal from their own past. As well, for many Inuit, living in a community is itself foreign and it has required incredible adjustment for families as historically Inuit were forced into community and settlement life; a significant change from living and traveling in large extended family groups. Part of this community based approach, therefore, will require the use of empowerment theory, as the imposition of southern Qallunaat culture and southern child welfare “have sabotaged Aboriginal families and communities [including] the building of positive self-identities and self-direction” (Harper, 2003, p. 105). Through empowerment theory, “the clients themselves are the people who work to change the society around them” (Harper, 2003, p. 106). Unfortunately, however, it “does not deal with the true internalization of oppression that lies beneath the skin of those who have endured racism and discrimination throughout the majority of their lives” (Harper, 2003, p. 106). Therefore, although the use of empowerment theory is a necessary part, it remains only that, a part of the whole process of decolonization. Fortunately, community development approaches go hand-in-hand with empowerment because they “act as a healing tool to speak to internalized oppression” (Harper, 2003, p. 109). However, “in order to have community development occur as a process within a community…the people within the community have to tackle their own internalized oppression” (Harper, 2003, p. 109). Interestingly, although social workers in Nunavut recognized the potential “for community development work,” it was viewed as secondary to the child welfare requirements of the job and not viewed as part of empowering the community to “get involved” in child welfare.
NEW APPROACH TO CHILD WELFARE

As the current child welfare system has been built upon the power of Qallunaat over Inuit, the need for an entirely new approach to child welfare for the territory and a reversal of power from Qallunaat to Inuit is clear. As previously described, the power imbalance between Qallunaat and Inuit, the Qallunaat social workers’ inability to act in a position that is not “expert,” and the likelihood of a southerner to inadvertently fall back onto southern processes, procedures and policies make Qallunaat unsuitable for participating within the process of moving towards Inuit control of child welfare. Southerners’ western knowledge of child welfare is also not useful to the process of getting to the essence of Inuit values and beliefs regarding child welfare. Instead a new approach to child welfare may seek to use support and knowledge available from elders, healers and guides,\(^\text{15}\) due to the wisdom and knowledge such community members could provide and their potential to increase community involvement, and ensure greater healing and support among community members during this process. The importance of Inuit holding the decision-making power and determining what child welfare should be for their children is essential. In order for Inuit to do this with the support of Qallunaat across Canada requires, however, that southerners accept that “our dominant western world view prevents us from seeing that we are pushing Inuit out of a relatively embedded culture into the disembedded culture that is our own” (Irniq, Rowley and Tester, 2006, p. 5). As it was shown in this study, Qallunaat social workers lack the recognition of another way of doing things and are unable to recognize systems in place in communities when they are not formalized the same as in southern Canada. As well, participants displayed how they clung to the position of “expert” despite the recognition that communities needed to “take control” and “get more involved” in social issues. This suggests that it is the Qallunaat world view and ethnocentrism that is standing in the way of collaboration and support for Inuit holding power for child welfare in the territory. Once Qallunaat are able to understand that there is an alternative paradigm to the dominant culture’s perspective of child welfare, that an alternative child welfare approach was in place prior to contact by Europeans, and that this child welfare approach continues to function informally within communities today, it is possible that Qallunaat will recognize their lack of expertise.

\(^{15}\) Title given to respected and trusted community members (Unger, Manuel, Mealey, Thomas, & Campbell, 2004).
Although it is clear that a new approach to child welfare in Nunavut is required, in order to begin transforming the current child welfare system, Qallunaat social workers, administrators and policy makers will have to also “come to realize that much of past and present social work practice with Native [sic] families is bad practice, with the best of intent it has destroyed families” (Howse and Stalwick, 1990, p. 102). A new approach to child welfare needs to be developed out of Inuit values and beliefs, consistent with the Inuit culture, Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ), the resources available in communities and the territory, while taking into account the territory’s history of colonialism and developed in a direction of equity and collaboration, rather than just maintaining the status quo. When Qallunaat social workers accept their current role as part of the continuing colonialism in the territory and begin to envision how they can “get in there and help to realize and learn participatory alignment” only then can they be a part of structural change, for remaining in their current roles does nothing to counter the power imbalance in Nunavut (Howse and Stalwick, 1990, p. 106). The social work profession’s lack of addressing its ethnocentric value base other than requiring social workers gain greater cultural competence, means social workers have been cushioned by a professional climate that, although “sensitiz[ing] social workers to cultural differences, [is] unlikely to result in culturally appropriate services that must emerge from and be consistent with the traditional culture of the minority group” (Morrissette, McKenzie and Morrissette, 1993, p. 92). Current theories underpinning social work and applied regularly within child welfare in Nunavut, such as attachment theory, crisis intervention theories, anti-discrimination theories, social construction theories and even critical theories “emphasize rationalism and individualistic approaches [which] are inappropriate in the context of non-western cultures” (Coates, Grey and Hetherington, 2006, p. 382). Even structural social work theory and a strengths-based approach, although potentially useful, are inadequate when applied by Qallunaat social workers within child welfare in the territory. In fact, regardless of the theories selected by Qallunaat social workers and how they are applied to child welfare practice, the result will likely be consistent with the dominant culture and the historical application of child welfare in Canada. A new approach not only has to ensure this does not occur; it has to provide a structure so that it cannot occur. Moving away from the dominant mainstream approach of child welfare requires “a significant shift in consciousness” and may even be challenging for those Inuit social workers who are indoctrinated into the southern systems and methods. But this shift is essential as a “communal perspective sees individuality in
the context of the whole, and can serve as motivation to bring about a shift in personal lifestyles and social organization that is both sustainable and socially just” (Coates, Grey and Hetherington, 2006, p. 392).

Finally, a new approach to child welfare in Nunavut will also need to recognize that:

“Moving from extreme to more subtle forms of benevolent colonialism in social programs, one could include the presentation of cultural awareness workshops for non-Aboriginal social workers or the establishment of child care receiving homes in northern Aboriginal communities for children deemed to be in need of protection. Although alternatives such as these are an improvement over a complete absence of cross-cultural training for social workers or the placing of children in institutions in larger southern centres, they can represent subtle, and in certain contexts, insidious forms of colonialism. The fact they might have been well-meaning makes them no less oppressive” (Durst, 1996, p. 111).

Therefore, the decision to create a truly culturally specific child welfare model for Nunavut requires an entire overhaul of the current colonial system, not just from a Qallunaat perspective of what is culturally adequate, but from Inuit perspective of what Inuit families and Nunavut’s communities would like to see for their children.

**TOWARDS CULTURALLY SPECIFIC CHILD WELFARE**

A culturally specific model for child welfare developed from the ground up needs to come from Inuit social workers, Inuit community members and Inuit families throughout Nunavut. As I am Qallunaat from southern Canada and in possession of a southern world view, it is not for me to assume and outline what an Inuit approach to child welfare should or would entail. It is, however, possible to discuss some of the elements that may be included within a new approach. It is also possible to suggest that an Inuit approach to Nunavut’s child welfare must begin with Inuit world view and traditional knowledge receiving preference over southern ideology and knowledge. The initial steps will also require Nunavummiut to collectively address internalized oppression and subordination or any accepted “definition of themselves that is hurtful and limiting” (Hardiman and Jackson, 1997, p. 21). The same internalized oppression that may lead some Inuit to “question the credentials or abilities of members of their own social groups without cause, yet unquestioningly accept that members of the [dominant] group are qualified, talented, and deserving of their credentials,” needs to be openly discussed within each community (Hardiman and Jackson, 1997, p. 21). Once the internalized oppression of Inuit has been openly examined by Inuit communities it will be necessary to begin addressing the oppressive structures in place, such as the current child welfare system.

Although community development approaches have the potential to “celebrate and leverage the
resiliency founded in cultural ways of knowing and being that [have] sustained generations of Aboriginal children throughout the millennia” (Blackstock and Trocmé, 2005, p.30) they can as also act as “lip-service” to the support communities need to make decisions for themselves (Campbell, Wunungmurra, and Nyomba, 2007). Community development initiatives can also involve risks to Inuit communities as “the result of structural decisions made by those outside of their communities,” which, therefore, suggests “culturally based family interventions must be coupled with culturally based community development approaches to redress structural challenges” (Blackstock and Trocmé, 2005, p.13). It is also important to recognize that while “participation can be manipulated by professionals and others, it can also be democratic, authentic, and inspiring” and can lead to “a vision of a transformed world based on humane social values” (Carniol, 1992, p.14). Such participation, however, relies on true collaboration, which can only occur when everyone holds equal status, power and responsibility. As “Inuit need to draw on [their] strengths from the past and find a way to integrate them into life today” (Irniq, 2008) this likely means, “the interdependence between children, their families and communities and the socio-economic context cannot be ignored” (September, 2006, p. 69). A truly collaborative community development approach based on the interdependence in northern communities may be possible when it involves Inuit leadership. Should Inuit communities determine a role for Qallunaat, this would likely require constraints on the power allotted to the role so as to ensure employment “drift” does not occur and Qallunaat increasingly assume power and responsibility over aspects of the work. As well, “community development techniques must be defined and formulated on the basis of their applicability to practice in individual northern communities, and not generalized across all communities either between north and south or within the north” (Graham, Brownlee, Shier and Doucette, 2008, p. 404). As well, “community workshops [may] need to be designed and implemented to prepare local leadership for increased control” with the support of Qallunaat and the dominant culture (Durst, 1996, p. 106).

Perhaps the most useful element of any community development work, however, is the creation of dialogue among community members, as it is through this dialogue that community members can describe their needs and formulate their own solutions. The process of creating community dialogue, if organized and developed by Inuit, will also serve to shift the decision-making power away from Qallunaat social workers. This process, however, will require collaboration, which in turn requires “the willingness to
conduct business differently” (Barter, 1996, p. 72). Collaboration, however, cannot be in the form of “lip service” to projects developing from within, as was shown by the study of Campbell, Wunungmurra and Nyomba (2007) that displayed reluctance of non-Aboriginals to relinquish control due to the “deeply embedded power inequalities” as this leads to initiatives being undermined (p. 151). As this study raised questions about the ability for governments to engage in community development given the unequal power relations and their reluctance to share power, it should be viewed as a warning to initiatives involving well-intentioned Qallunaat workers (Campbell, Wunungmurra and Nyomba, 2007, p. 151). Community development measures involving Qallunaat social workers, therefore, require assessment for such risk and should be approached cautiously, if at all. Qallunaat social workers in this study indicated they believed the largest issue in child welfare practice was the lack of resources. This, however, requires further exploration through community dialogue in order to determine if this is also what Inuit see as the largest issue regarding child welfare. This is particularly important as the current lack of resources appears to have led to less children brought into government care and because “limited resources [can] have a positive impact” on the work with children and families, it is likely that communities and social workers may view the community needs differently (Oliphant, Templeman and Branov, 2007, p.142). This potential for different perceptions as to community needs suggests that a Euro-western child welfare model of social work does not fit with developing nations, as well that community development initiatives can be very different depending on the perspectives of those involved (Oliphant, Templeman and Branov, 2007). Accessing a community’s internal human resources and the increased involvement by community healers and elders are essential to moving away from the southern colonial models because “their leadership is non-hierarchical and more catalytic than directive” (Unger, Manuel, Mealey, Thomas, and Campbell, 2004, p. 7). As “rural family and child needs are too often met with urban solutions that either miss the point or assume resources exist where they do not,” the need to develop a ground-level approach to the territory’s child welfare system that begins with Inuit perspectives of communities’ needs is evident (Oliphant, Templeman and Branov, 2007, p.130). Also very necessary for this approach to be holistic in nature and based on and consistent with the principles outlined in the Bathurst Mandate and Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ) (G.N., 1999). From this it should be expected that “when communities take charge, the people take care of each
other from within” and an approach that is more centred on family support and less on “investigative” child welfare will likely evolve (Kral, 2003, p. 38).

**IMPLICATIONS**

Although there are many implications that stem from this research regarding child welfare in Nunavut, possibly the most obvious implication concerns the employment of Qallunaat social workers in Nunavut’s Inuit communities. The research has determined that Qallunaat social workers’ world views and ideology are the greatest challenge to providing culturally specific child welfare services. Although the culturally competent social worker may be an adequate fit for cross-cultural settings in the south, this is not the case in Nunavut. If there is a role for Qallunaat social workers with child welfare in Nunavut, this needs to be decided by Inuit communities and not by the dominant culture of Qallunaat in Nunavut’s government. As well, if such a role were to be created for Qallunaat social workers, it would likely require clear constraints on power, as southerners already assume increased power over Inuit due to their internalized dominance and their membership in the dominant culture.

As well, Qallunaat social workers have yet to begin to see themselves for what they represent to those who do not belong to the dominant culture. The use of reflection by social workers on their biases and dominant culture beliefs is not enough, as social workers need to look deeper at how their daily work is embedded in colonialism and how it is not just “historical racism.” A key part of this is to examine the social work position as “expert” and the Qallunaat desire to “teach” Inuit. Social workers from the dominant culture need to ask themselves what they know and what gives them the authority to “teach” particularly when their “lived realities” are so different. It is likely that in Nunavut, just as in southern Canada, the “concepts of professionalism and competence are seen as elitist and insensitive to Aboriginal cultural values, life experience, and reality-based knowledge” (Christensen, 1994, p. 29). This should lead Qallunaat social workers to look critically at their own desires for status, power and authority within the community, but also within their profession. Social workers can begin by recognizing that the “eradication or chipping away of a group’s identity is not always a visible or conscious process. Rather it happens gradually, and in many respects, unconsciously. Over an extended period of time, a system of domination becomes institutionalized so that conscious intent is no longer necessary to keep power and privilege in the hands of the [dominant] group” (Hardiman and Jackson, 1997, p. 18). Perhaps most importantly, an
implication of this research includes the reminder “not to accept uncritically the idea that western social
work has universally relevant methodologies, that universal standards are desirable, and that an
international professional identity for social work will necessarily be valued in non-western countries and
contexts” (Grey, Coates and Hetherington, 2007, p. 64). Nunavut, although neighbors to Canada’s south, is
home to people who hold a very different paradigm than that of Canada’s dominant culture. Qallunaat
social workers’ recognition of alternative paradigms and their own role as colonial agents appear to be the
first step towards playing any role in social change.

Implications for Nunavut’s government run along similar lines as those for social workers in the
sense that those from the dominant culture and “non-Aboriginal governments, cannot now plead the
passage of time and the institutional weaknesses of present-day Aboriginal nations as an excuse for
inaction” (RCAP, 1996). In particular, the employment of Qallunaat social workers within the child welfare
system needs to be viewed for its imposition of southern values and the risk it poses to Inuit culture. It is no
longer acceptable “to argue that existing service models are ‘culturally appropriate’ given that it is still the
case that Indigenous children are over represented in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems” and the
need for change is obvious (Litwin, 1997, p. 337). Most central to this recognition is the detection of power
Qallunaat hold on all levels of government over Inuit communities under the guise of a “de facto Inuit self-
government.” As it stands, Qallunaat in Nunavut’s government have yet to relinquish power and provide
Inuit with the support necessary to take control and provide direction for their own child welfare, as Inuit
“are required to pursue their goals of autonomy and empowerment in conformity with bureaucratic
expectations” (Litwin, 1997, p.330). The government retains the underlying biases and perceptions that
place southern knowledge, procedures, standards and ideology above Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ), which
is clear in its continued employment of Qallunaat in management. As well:

“the state has allotted insufficient resources to this assignment and social work has been content to
respond to child abuse in a manner that does not challenge the conventional view. But an
empowering approach to practice provided through agencies controlled by communities or
constituencies might well enable the profession to transform child welfare” (Wharf, 1990, p. 175).

In order to move closer to Inuit self-government and future self-determination, the Government of Nunavut
needs to look critically at the current child welfare system within the territory, the legislation, the “best
interests” that the territory’s child welfare work is based on, the southern values inherent within the overall
system, and the current funding scheme that provides for much of Nunavut’s money to leave the territory through the temporary employment of southern workers.

The creation of a new or different approach to child welfare that does more than simply follow the direction of southern Aboriginal agencies will require all Qallunaat workers to relinquish power, address underlying biases or perceptions of southern social work as superior to Inuit traditional knowledge, and then support Inuit communities in their ability to create and manage an entirely new child welfare system built on Inuit cultural values and beliefs. In discussing changes to the existing power structures, this research has been intentionally vague when discussing how to develop an Inuit approach to child welfare in the territory other than providing possible insight and suggestions, so as to not assume that a southerner, such as myself, could possess the knowledge or means for addressing the oppression of Inuit by Qallunaat. Nonetheless, education and employment go hand in hand when discussing collaborative action and the process of empowerment in communities as “empowerment can be realized through facilitation of a process in which students have the opportunity to learn or articulate the community’s own concepts of health and healing and understanding of the helping role” (Harris, 2006, p. 123). By assuming that Inuit have the ability, willingness and resources to address community issues within the territory and by moving away from the meritocratic requirements for “experts,” Inuit can be placed in the position of determining their own needs and what solutions will best meet these needs in a holistic and culturally relevant way.

Finally, Inuit communities in Nunavut have been long aware that the colonialist approach to child welfare has not met the needs of their children and families. A new approach to child welfare will require Inuit input throughout the territory and a dedication by communities towards a truly unique system for protecting their children, which will include obtaining funding to finance the creation and provision of such services. Addressing internalized oppression may require some Inuit to remember they “have demonstrated resiliency for thousands of years prior to the arrival of colonial powers, and certainly by surviving through the myriad of traumas brought on by colonization” (Blackstock and Trocmé, 2005, p. 13). Recognition that a culturally unique system can be created and that this could be key for the continuance of the culture and language is needed. As well, a collective recognition of Qallunaat social workers in positions as experts and generally of the current child welfare system as doing little to empower communities is also required. Community members will have to face their own colonial and postcolonial beliefs and look to the strengths
of those within their communities and their territory as “experts.” For some Inuit this will require “remembering [and] recovering historical and collective memories of culture and spirituality, as well as positive memories of resilience, resistance, and tradition that affirm a positive sense of identity” (Nadeau and Young, 2006, p. 94). For others, there may be a need for patience as other community members seek to restore balance within themselves, their families and their relationships with the land. “Everyday acts of resistance” continue to be necessary and “slowly a new collective understanding of the freedom to be who one is will emerge” (Nadeau and Young, 2006, p. 99). Inuit communities will need to voice their own perceptions, uncover their own biases and focus on their needs within their distinct culture and through traditional knowledge. Taking control of child welfare may not initially be comfortable for some communities, particularly when family relationships could complicate the work, but it is a necessary element in the move towards self-government and cultural autonomy for Inuit in the territory. As well, because “leader burn-out is another factor that impedes the process to realizing self-government” communities need “dedicated individuals who are committed to completing the arduous process of gaining greater control of social services” (Durst, 1996, p. 119). This in combination with the community “achiev[ing] a level of empowerment and gender equity that is recognized, acknowledged, and assumed both within the community and by both the federal and [territorial] players” as well as the importance of “the community assum[ing] control first, and that control has to be accepted by all of the respective players” will also be key to a new child welfare approach (Durst, 1996, p. 119).

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The largest and most obvious limitations of this study were the lack of Inuit social workers interviewed and the focus on Qallunaat social workers from the dominant culture. Future studies that include interviews with Inuit social workers and Inuit community members regarding child welfare are necessary to ensure a more comprehensive understanding of the territory’s current colonial system and a clearer vision of what a new child welfare approach could include. Specific research into community needs and the process of developing an Inuit approach to child welfare is also needed. This should be done through input from communities and families, research into traditional child welfare practices, and learning about the methods for addressing child abuse prior to colonialist interventions because “Aboriginal children were perfectly well loved and cared for before the British invaded” (Green and Baldry, 2008, p. 397). My
position as a Qallunaaq social worker from the dominant culture and the overall design of the study were
possibly the greatest contributions to the lack of Inuit social workers for this study. Further examination
into child welfare in the territory could be conducted through participatory action research and should be
organized in collaboration with Inuit communities with Inuit researchers. Future research should also be
conducted in Inuktitut in order to gain a complete and accurate understanding of Inuit communities and
Inuit perspectives of child welfare. Despite my best intentions, my role as colonial agent has likely added to
the oppression and disempowerment of Inuit in Nunavut. Just as other Qallunaat social workers, although:

“the intentions, dedication and commitment of many [social work] professionals is notable, it is
impossible to fully understand and work with the lived reality of Inuit communities without prior
knowledge of the colonial and developmental history that has played such an important role in
shaping Inuit lives” (Tester and McNicoll, 2004, p. 2634)

Ultimately, Nunavut’s historical, social and cultural environment requires an innovative response
that is different from the mainstream southern child welfare practice of the dominant culture, but a new
approach may only be determined by those who lack the constraints of a southern world view.
CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION

Although there are many overlapping implications that stem from this research on child welfare in Nunavut, most importantly perhaps is the imminent need to address the imbalance of power held by Qallunaat child welfare social workers within the territory. In addition, the imposition of southern ideology, colonialism, and the southern values and beliefs built into Nunavut’s current child welfare system raise “considerable concern that the child welfare experience may inadvertently parallel the colonial experience of residential schools, and may have similar long-term negative ramifications for Aboriginal communities” despite the “good intentions” of Qallunaat social workers (Lafrance, Bastien, Bodor and Ayala, 2006). This research showed that despite the experience of working in Nunavut, Qallunaat social workers were unable to shed their southern perspectives, values and beliefs in order to practice in a culturally specific way. Instead of recognizing Inuit world view, a different way or doing things, and working to address oppression, it was evident that some of the Qallunaat social workers interviewed retained their ethnocentrism and through paternalistic approaches often attempted to take responsibility for communities, consistent with a view of communities as unable and unwilling to address their own needs. This study also found that despite arriving in Nunavut with no knowledge of Inuit culture, Qallunaat social workers retained a vision of themselves as “expert.” These among other elements led to the conclusion that possessing cultural competence in social work is inadequate for Qallunaat social workers to practice child welfare in Nunavut.

This study has further shown that the current child welfare system in Nunavut is similarly not a culturally relevant means for meeting the needs of children and families and that the path Nunavut is taking is similar to Aboriginal child welfare agencies in southern Canada. Despite the large gains Aboriginal agencies have made in their attempt to replace non-Aboriginal workers with Aboriginal workers, these southern child welfare systems can remain based on colonial beliefs, work from provincial legislation and, therefore, remain guided by the dominant cultures’ values and beliefs. This direction is the long route for Nunavummiut to take towards truly being in control of the services provided to their people. A more fitting path would be one where the system is recreated from the inside out or from the bottom up, so that all aspects are unique to the territory and its people and all aspects are in keeping with Inuit culture and world view.
Similar to many developing nations where there is a lack of infrastructure and often tremendous poverty, the Euro-western model of child welfare has been determined unsuitable for Nunavut and instead community development approaches offer more relevance. Through Inuit-led community development initiatives, a new approach to child welfare may be created provided it is born from Inuit traditional knowledge, Inuit perspective, and based on community needs and not mainstream southern child welfare requirements. This will lead to community empowerment and ensure a more culturally relevant child welfare system. This new approach will also require a move away from a meritocratic view of knowledge so that “Indigenous people are established as the experts who can speak for themselves” (Augoustinos, Tuffin and Every, 2005, p. 329). Further research with Inuit communities and families that seeks to understand Inuit values and beliefs associated with child welfare will be beneficial towards developing a holistic and culturally relevant child welfare approach. In keeping with the direction of Inuit self-government and cultural autonomy, Inuit communities are in a position and faced with the opportunity to create a child welfare system unlike anything in Canada; one that is truly unique and tailored to the current social, environmental and cultural needs of Nunavut’s communities.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


APPENDIX A: MAP OF NUNAVUT

[Map of Nunavut showing various locations and landmarks]

Scale

Kilometres

Nitikmet
Qikiqtaaluk (Baffin)
Kivalliq (Keewatin)

APPENDIX B: THEMES AND SUB-THEMES AND DESCRIPTIONS OF CODES

1. CFSA Legislation (10)
   • Views of the Act: All comments associated with the CFSA and how participants view the act, including positive and or negative aspects of it
   • Other:

2. Comparison North to South (21)
   • Life: Description of how the participant’s life, such as emotional and personal way of being or relationships differs
   • Work: Description of how CW practice differs, including specific pieces of the work, interacting with people at work, relationships with colleagues and clients
   • Resources: The difference in resources between the north and the south (how this is managed and how it affects practice/policy is looked a separate category within “Resources and Funding”)

3. Inter-related Issues (14)
   • Self Governance & Communities in Transition: Comments and description of transitional challenges, reference or comparison to other communities in transition, connection to CW issues
   • Southern workers & CW: The challenges of CW work and the connection to the view of and relationship with southern social workers in Nunavut, the impact and effects of this issue
   • Other:

4. Description of Role Work (94)
   • Role Specific: Description of the role of CSSW/CW worker, their job and how they understood it, additional roles the social worker plays
   • Daily Tasks and Duties: What the social worker actually does, including traveling, and responding to the community, clients and other professionals
   • Challenges: Aspects of the role and or the work that workers find challenging, including descriptions and examples
   • Instinct Dictates Practice: Description of how, when and why instinct plays a role in CW practice
   • Creative Problem Solving: Examples, descriptions of using creativity within CW work, how and why creativity is a necessary tool in CW, working with/around CW Policies, thoughts on whether creativity is valued within the work
   • Other:

5. CW Theory (15)
   • Colonialism & Post Colonialism: Comments that could be discussed in the context of post colonialism
   • Attachment Theory: Comments that could be looked at in terms of attachment theory
   • Ecological or Family Systems Theory
   • Role of Social Worker in Aboriginal Communities/Community Development
   • Structural systems theory, crisis (intervention) theory, other related CW theories

6. CW Policy (25)
   • Policy Adherence, (Bending or Ignoring Policy): Problem solving, How and why policies are bent, when bending occurs, feelings associated with this, when policies can’t be followed, examples
   • Policy in the Community: Comments referring to how the community views, feels and or understands policy

7. Education Training (33)
   • Preparation and Orientation: How workers were prepared, educated, trained for northern social work practice
   • Learning in the North: All comments referring to the learning, education, training, or prior experience in CW in the north
   • Learning in the South: All comments referring to the learning, education, training or prior experience prior to working CW in Nunavut
8. Expectations and First Impressions (44)
   • Community Related: All comments referring to the expectations or first impressions of the community, of Nunavut
   • Work Related Expectations and First Impressions: All comments referring to the expectations or first impressions of the work, of Nunavut CW
9. Differences Between Communities (9)
   • Actual Community Differences: Physical, social and other differences of communities in Nunavut, comments referring to the differences
   • Social Services and Resource Differences: Differences associated with how the social workers work, how workers experienced the community, the resources available and how these differences impact social work practice
10. Funding and Resources (35)
    • Lack of Resources Within the Community: Comments associated with a lack of needed resources within each community, what these are, why they are needed
    • Client Needs and Clinical Practice: use of funding, how resources and funding affect CW practice, how the management of funding and resources affects service provision, how the lack of resources and funding create additional challenges within CW, how the lack of resources impacts social work practice
    • Out of Territory Placements for Children: Comments related to the lack of resources within the territory and the placement of children in southern Canada
11. Concerns with CW in Nunavut (48)
    • CW Policies/ Work: Concerns related to specific or general policies, practice or other aspects of CW work in Nunavut, including concerns stemming from southern education, different culture and or value systems
    • Resource Based Concerns: Comments regarding the use and management of resources
    • Lack of knowledge in the South of Inuit culture: Comments associated with the general low level of knowledge or understanding of the north by those who live south
    • Social Workers: Reference to concerns with social workers both regarding particular people and general experiences, concerns of workers from southern Canada working in Nunavut
    • Southern Ideology: All comments suggesting, indicating or describing the application or impact of southern based systems and or dominant culture thinking on CW practice in Nunavut
12. Positive Elements of the Work (29)
    • Opportunity: Reference to the opportunity of working, traveling, experiencing Nunavut and its people
    • Role and or Work Aspects: Reference to the scope of the work, the duties, tasks and learning, generally positive aspects of the CW role or work
    • Other: Including things they felt were positive effects of their work, feelings and positive elements that did not fall into the other two subcategories
13. Realities of Northern Life (12)
    • Physical Realities: Such as environmental aspects including temperature, cost of living, traveling,
    • Public Persona: Comments referring to the personal and professional role as one and the same, descriptions of how a participant feels, is viewed or believes they are viewed in Nunavut, reference to a line or barrier to cross in order to be seen as more than one’s role or job
    • Other: Aspects of life in a small community, including how this affects CW work
14. Relationships (9)
    • Within the Community: Creating relationships within the community, with clients, need to overcome preconceptions etc.
    • With other Professionals: Including comments regarding certain people, challenges and benefits to working relationships
15. Safety, Stress and Discomfort (40)
    • Feeling Safe: Comments associated with feeling ‘safe’ in Nunavut, comfortable and or not at risk
• Feeling Unsafe: Comments associated with feeling “unsafe” generally, including specific examples, instances, aspects of work associated with feeling unsafe, personal (in the community) and professional (at work) safety, feeling at risk or generally uncomfortable
• Work Related Stressors: All comments relating to levels or feelings of stress from the CW role
• Community Standards: Thoughts, feelings or views of community standards and working according to community standards
• Community Deaths: The toll of deaths on a community, on the workers, feelings associated with this
• Working independently and in Isolation: Description of how the working environment and issues of isolation affect practice and how workers generally feel about this.
• Other

16. Worker Turnover Employment (40)
• Different Workers- Different Approaches: Comments regarding workers’ feelings, thoughts and views regarding the different approaches, practices of different workers
• Financial Aspects: Issues related to money and employment in Nunavut
• Concerns: Comments related to employment in Nunavut
• Turnover of Workers, Issues, Challenges: All related comments and views of turnover
• Length of Time Working in Nunavut in CW: Long term, Temporary employment
• Future Plans: Thoughts or plans to return to CW work in Nunavut
• Other:

17. Support and Acknowledgment (21)
• Negative Experiences: Feelings, experiences associated with a lack of support or acknowledgment
• Positive Experiences: Feelings, experiences associated with receiving support or acknowledgment
• Comparison to Other Professions: Participants relating their experiences to those from other professions (such as nurses, police etc)

18. Recommendations (26)
• Requested to Include in Research: Comments, thoughts and recommendations that were requested by participants to be included
• New Future Workers: Knowledge expectation, learning and skills, what every new worker should be taught, provided with etc., certain skills they should possess and the personal traits workers should possess to work in the north, including personality types, attitudes
• Role and Use of Resources: Need for change in service provision, how and why certain aspects of CW service provision should be changed to better meet client needs etc., comments related to the management of services, need for increased services/ certain services
• Clearer Roles and System Organization: Comments referring to the need for clearer roles and increased organization within the CW system in Nunavut
• Community Action and Involvement: Comments that suggest the need for increased community action, community involvement in decision-making, planning, daily CW work, policy development etc.
• Infrastructure Needed: Physical needs of communities, for Nunavut in general to increase overall well being
• Other: Suggestions provided by participants that would need to be given further thought prior to including

19. Personal Thoughts / Other (6)
• No, New Information: Personal thoughts of participants that was already collected within other categories.
• Yes, New Information presented: Referring to the personal thoughts of participants that was not gathered by any other category.
APPENDIX C: CONSENT FORM

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Consent Form

Nunavut Child Welfare Policy:
Exploring Social Workers’ Experience

Principal Investigator: Dr. Edward Kruk, School of Social Work, 604-822-2383
Co-Investigator: Patricia Johnston, MSW Student, School of Social Work, University of British Columbia, T: 604.728.5725, F: 604.986.7636, patricia_johnston@telus.net

This research is being conducted as a requirement for a master’s thesis, a semi-public document. You will be informed regarding the use of and access to the information provided. All identifying information will be removed from information collected during interviews.

Purpose
The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of social workers working within the constraints of Nunavut’s child welfare policies.

Study Procedures
You will be asked to participate in one interview that may take up to two hours and possibly a follow up interview to clarify or expand on information. In the interviews you will be asked several questions pertaining to your experience of social work in Nunavut. The interviews will be conducted by Patricia Johnston, co-investigator. Maximum total time commitment is four hours.

Confidentiality
Your identity will be kept confidential. Any identifying information will be removed from interview transcripts. Audiotapes and written transcripts of the interviews will be kept in a locked filing cabinet. Any study documents stored on the computer will be file-protected. Participants will not be identified by name in any reports of the completed study.

Risks
The research study deals with a sensitive topic. While no risks are anticipated, I, Patricia Johnston, will attempt to alleviate any potential risks to you by ensuring that you are aware of your right to stop the interview at any point if you become distressed or are unable to continue.

Remuneration/Compensation
No remuneration or compensation is offered for participation in this study.

Contact for information about the study
For further information regarding this study, you may contact the investigators named above.
Contact for concerns about the rights of research participants
Any concerns about your rights or treatment as a participant may be directed to the Research Subject Information Line in the UBC Office of Research Services at the University of British Columbia at 604-822-8598.

Consent
Your participation in the study is entirely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without consequence.

Your signature below indicates that you have received a copy of this consent form for your own records.

Your signature indicates that you consent to participate in this study.

Signature: ____________________________________________
Printed Name: _________________________________________
Date: _________________________________________________
APPENDIX D: QUESTIONNAIRE

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

School of Social Work and Family Studies
2080 West Mall
Vancouver, B.C. Canada V6T 1Z2
Tel: (604) 822-2255    Fax: (604) 822-8656
www.swfs.ubc.ca

Questionnaire


Principal Investigator: Dr. Edward Kruk, School of Social Work, 604-822-2383
Co-Investigator: Patricia Johnston, MSW Student, School of Social Work, University of British Columbia,
T: 604.728.5725, F: 604.986.7636, patricia.johnston@telus.net

1. Please begin by telling me about your work in Nunavut including where in the Territory you have
   worked? For how long? What your main social work duties were?

2. As a social worker in Nunavut how do you view or how have you viewed your role(s) within child
   welfare?

3. If you have worked within child welfare in another area of Canada outside of Nunavut, have you
   noticed a difference in your social work practice between the two locations? If so, please describe
   them?

4. Is there a significant aspect of your work in Nunavut that you particularly enjoy or have enjoyed?
   Why or why not?

5. Were there moments within your work as a child welfare social worker in Nunavut when you
   recall feeling uncomfortable? Can you please describe an experience you have had that made you
   feel this way?

6. As a social worker have you ever had any concerns to do with child welfare practice in Nunavut?
   If so, can you describe these concerns?

7. How familiar with child welfare policy in Nunavut would you describe yourself? How have you
   obtained this level of familiarity?

8. Have there been ways in which a community’s geographic location, community size or particular
   community characteristic has played a part in your child welfare practice? If so, please describe
   how?

9. Have there ever been occasions within child welfare work where you have had to use creativity
   and or instinct? If so, can you please describe these occasions?

10. Are there any other elements within your social work practice in Nunavut that you would like to
    share? Any other aspects of your experience that you believe could be important to this research?
APPENDIX E: RECRUITMENT POSTER

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

School of Social Work and Family Studies
2080 West Mall
Vancouver, B.C. Canada V6T 1Z2
Tel: (604) 822-2255 Fax: (604) 822-8656
www.swfs.ubc.ca

Are you a Social Worker in Nunavut?
Or have you worked as a Social Worker in Nunavut?

I am a Master of Social Work student at the University of British Columbia. My research study for my thesis Nunavut Child Welfare Policy: Exploring Social Workers’ Experience is on social workers’ experiences of working within Nunavut’s child welfare policies.

You are eligible to participate in the study if:
• You are a social worker;
• You have experience working in Nunavut (currently or in the past) as a social worker;
• You are willing to participate in one or two interviews (maximum total time commitment could be up to four hours).

Your identity will be kept confidential. Any identifying information will be removed from interview transcripts. Participants will not be identified by name in any reports of the completed study, nor will any potentially identifying information, such as location specific features, events or incidents be included.

This study is being supervised by Dr. Edward Kruk, Assistant Professor in UBC’s School of Social Work (phone: 604-822-2383).

Interested? Please contact:
Patricia (Patti) Johnston
Phone: 604-728-5725
Email: patricia_johnston@telus.net
Non-Technical Description of the Research Project

Nunavut Child Welfare Policy: Exploring Social Workers' Experiences

This research aims to explore social workers' experiences working with Nunavut's child welfare policies.

The research questions will be tailored to ensure the research participants provide a general description of what types of situations they have experienced that fall beyond the typical application of child welfare policy, but this does not require community-specific details.

There will be a thorough editing out of information that describes unique events or incidents, particular references to locations or location-specific aspects of the participant’s work and experiences. This thorough editing will not compromise the quality of the data as the goal of the research is to gain a general understanding of social worker’s experiences and how the participants work and practice in Nunavut, and not necessarily what specifically they have done, with whom, or in which community.

Interviews will be held via telephone in English. Provisions will not be made for social workers to participate in languages other than English; however, the consent form can be provided in Inuktitut.

I, Patricia Johnston, will be conducting the study. I am a Graduate student with the University of British Columbia's School of Social Work and Family Studies. I have professional experiences as a social worker and I hold a Bachelor of Social Work degree. I also have professional interview experience and research training. All of my research will be supervised by Professor Dr. Edward Kruk.

The research findings will be used as a basis for my (Patricia Johnston's) Master's thesis. This use of the findings will be explained in the consent form. The intent of this research is also to benefit Nunavut in the future development of child welfare policy.
APPENDIX G: NON-TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION (INUKTUT)
CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL - MINIMAL RISK AMENDMENT

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Edward A. Knik
DEPARTMENT: UBC/Arts/Social Work & Family Studies
UBC BREB NUMBER: I06-03589

INSTITUTION(S) WHERE RESEARCH WILL BE CARRIED OUT:

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Other locations where the research will be conducted: Interviews will not be conducted in public places. All interviews will be held by telephone.

CO-INVESTIGATOR(S): Patricia Johnston

SPONSORING AGENCIES: N/A


Expiry Date - Approval of an amendment does not change the expiry date on the current UBC BREB approval of this study. An application for renewal is required on or before: January 11, 2008

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The amendment(s) and the document(s) listed above have been reviewed and the procedures were found to be acceptable on ethical grounds for research involving human subjects.

Approval is issued on behalf of the Behavioural Research Ethics Board and signed electronically by one of the following:

Dr. Peter Suedfeld, Chair
Dr. Jim Rupert, Associate Chair
Dr. Arminee Kazanjian, Associate Chair
Dr. M. Judith Lynam, Associate Chair
Dr. Laurence Ford, Associate Chair
The University of British Columbia  
Office of Research Services  
Behavioural Research Ethics Board  
Suite 102, 6190 Agronomy Road, Vancouver, B.C. V6T 1Z3

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL - MINIMAL RISK AMENDMENT

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Expiry Date - Approval of an amendment does not change the expiry date on the current UBC BREB approval of this study. An application for renewal is required on or before: January 7, 2009

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The amendment(s) and the document(s) listed above have been reviewed and the procedures were found to be acceptable on ethical grounds for research involving human subjects.

Approval is issued on behalf of the Behavioural Research Ethics Board and signed electronically by one of the following:

Page 1 of 2
ISSUED TO: Patricia Johnston
2-2-1740 Esquimalt Avenue
West Vancouver, BC
V7V 1R8 CA
604 922-4974


OBJECTIVES OF RESEARCH:
This research aims to explore social workers' experiences working with Nunavut's child welfare policies. The research questions will be tailored to ensure the research participants provide a general description of what types of situations they have experienced that fall beyond the typical application of child welfare policy, but this does not require community-specific details. There will be a thorough editing out of information that describes unique events or incidents, particular references to locations or location-specific aspects of the participant's work and experiences. This thorough editing will not compromise the quality of the data as the goal of the research is to gain a general understanding of social worker's experiences of how the participants work and practice in Nunavut, and not necessarily what specifically they have done, with whom, or in which community. Interviews will be held via telephone in English. Provisions will not be made for social workers to participate in languages other than English; however, the consent form can be provided in Inuktitut.

DATA COLLECTION IN NU:
DATES: March 01, 2007-December 01, 2007
LOCATION: Nunavut Wide

Registered for notification purposes only.
Issued at Iqaluit, NU on February 26, 2007.
RESEARCH REGISTRY

Registry#  0500408-Registration Renewal

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OBJECTIVES OF RESEARCH:
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DATA COLLECTION IN NU:
DATES: January 2008-December 2008
LOCATION: Nunavut Wide

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