PROMISES OF PROSPERITY: MINING-INVOLVED INUIT MOTHERS AND CULTURALLY RELEVANT CHILD WELFARE

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Abstract

Research indicates extractive resource development, such as mining, can have negative impacts on women. This includes increased domestic violence and substance abuse among other things. Social and personal problems generated by the separation of families through fly-in, fly-out (FIFO) employment, as well as increased incomes, and other changes can occur. These problems can often bring families to the attention of child welfare (state intervention for the protection of children), yet no studies have been undertaken that connect matters of child welfare to the employment of women and other family members in the mining industry. Through interviews with mothers directly affected by either/both involvement with child welfare and/or mining employment, this study documents and alters an understanding of these experiences. Where mining provides employment to an increasing number of Inuit in Nunavut, understanding how mothers perceive social workers and believe social workers to have responded to these problems is important. This is because there is a growing awareness within the social work profession of the importance of providing culturally relevant child welfare services and supports. In Nunavut, this would involve services and supports that are created from within Inuit culture and Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ) or traditional knowledge. While respecting and incorporating Inuit cultural considerations, this study examines how mining can impact mothers’ responsibilities in relation to the care and protection of their children. It also examines what support services and programs need to be developed; and where changes to existing infrastructure are required that are informed by IQ. Without this information, decision makers in Nunavut are insufficiently tasked to develop solutions and inform standards, legislation, policies and programs to protect children in
ways that respect and incorporate Inuit cultural considerations. This was a community-based participatory study; mothers were directly involved in the data collection and analysis. The study found mothers encountered a range of problems associated with mining employment among other things. There are a range of policy implications that stem from these findings, most importantly regarding the design of child welfare within the territory. The mothers have offered suggestions for what would help them to protect and care for their children.
Lay Summary

Mining has been connected to a range of social problems, such as domestic violence, which can bring families to the attention of child welfare (the state intervention for the protection of children). Interviews were held with Inuit mothers of Arviat, Nunavut, to discuss their experiences with mining. They were also asked to describe their experiences of the child welfare system. They described these experiences in light of the range of changes they were experiencing in relation to mining. How the child welfare system takes Inuit culture and Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ) or traditional knowledge into consideration was also examined. The study found mothers encountered a range of problems associated with mining employment, such as not being able to afford enough food, needing childcare, and developing difficult relationship within their families among other things. The study also found mothers worked to protect their children from social workers. This information is important to making policy changes that can better support Inuit mothers.
Preface

This thesis is an original piece of work. The research was conceived and designed in collaboration with Inuit mothers in the community of Arviat, Nunavut. I carried out the research with guidance from my supervisory committee and direct consultation with Dr. Frank Tester. Data was collected with the help of two mothers, Roseanna and Nadine Alareak of Arviat. Nine of the twenty-six mothers involved in this study participated in the analysis. I was responsible for the final analysis and writing of this thesis. No part of this work has appeared in publication.

I received approval from the UBC Behavioural Research Ethics Board (BREB) (H13-00083). I also obtained a research license from the Nunavut Research Institute to conduct this study (#03 002 17R-M).
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List of Abbreviations

- GN: Government of Nunavut
- ITK: Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami
- IQ: Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit
- NU: Nunavut
- NWT: Northwest Territories
Glossary

Several terms used throughout this document may require explanation for some readers.

These terms include:

- **Arviarmiut**: Inuktitut for ‘people of Arviat.’ This term would typically refer to those who are Inuit and from Arviat. However, it may be used to include Qallunaat who have made Arviat their permanent home.

- **Child Welfare**: Refers to the state’s involvement in the protection of children from abuse and neglect. In Nunavut, the state refers to the territorial government. Child welfare is also known as child protection or social services. In Nunavut, child welfare falls under the jurisdiction of the Government of Nunavut’s Department of Family Services.

- **Income Assistance**: Often referred to as ‘welfare,’ this is financial support provided by the provincial and territorial governments in Canada to those who are without adequate income. Also commonly referred to as ‘income support.’

- **Indigenous/Aboriginal**: Debate has occurred concerning the terms Aboriginal, Indigenous and First Nations. Inuit prefer to be recognized as such. Although Aboriginal and Indigenous are both colonial constructions (Monture-Angus, 1995), there is an increasing dislike among many Indigenous peoples for the term Aboriginal (Joseph, 2016). Indigenous has been selected for use in this paper and a greater discussion concerning this decision has been included in Chapter 1.

- **Inuk/Inuit**: Inuit refers to someone who is Inuit in Canada. Singular is Inuk, plural is Inuit. Inuit can be translated as ‘the people’ (Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, 2017).
Inuit is used to refer to some of the Indigenous peoples of the Arctic and subarctic, regardless of where they might live.

- **Inuktitut**: The language often spoken by Inuit in Nunavut.

- **Northerner**: Commonly refers to someone who lives north of the 60th parallel in the Northwest Territories, Yukon, Nunavut or Labrador, Canada.

- **Nunavummiut**: Inuktitut term for the ‘people of Nunavut.’ Although typically used in reference to Inuit, as Inuit make up 85% of residents in Nunavut, this term can include Qallunaat who have made Nunavut their permanent home.

- **Qallunaat**: Refers to those who are non-Inuit. Most commonly this term is used to refer to those who are Caucasian or of European decent. Qallunaat are also referred to as Kabloona, Kabloonak etc.

- **Social Services**: Refers to the state’s provision of social supports and services generally. In Nunavut, social services have historically included a range of program areas including guardianship, family services, corrections, and adoptions among others. Today in Arviat, this term is often used to describe income assistance or ‘welfare’ services. To differentiate, social services at the health centre in many communities commonly means child welfare, and social services or ‘welfare’ refers to income assistance. Attention was paid to ensuring a clarity of these terms from the outset of this study.

- **Southerner**: Commonly refers to someone who lives south of the 60th parallel in any of the Canadian provinces.
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1. Introduction

1.1 Relationships

Upon arriving in the Arctic, I had no real understanding of the colonial history between Inuit and Qallunaat (non-Inuit), nor of the range of different policies over time that have been put in place to encourage Inuit to assimilate into the dominant Canadian society (Anderson & Bonesteel, 2008; Keeling & Boulter, 2015; Tester & Kulchyski, 1994). I did not understand how or where industrial employment and child welfare fit into these historical (and as I argue within this text, current) political goals and I had no understanding of Inuit culture. Much of this was because my education to that point had centered upon the experiences of, and work with, Indigenous peoples in southern Canada. The lack of knowledge and understanding I possessed, I later learned, is a common experience among Qallunaat (non-Inuit) social workers from southern Canada who arrive in Nunavut to work as Community Social Service Workers (CSSW) (Johnston, 2009; McKenzie, 2016).

I hold a range of memories from my first few years in the Arctic that were critical to shaping my understanding of the relations between Qallunaat and Inuit. As a Qallunaat, some of these memories are due to being privy to conversations among other Qallunaat. Others, are related to situations I had not previously encountered; where I struggled to make sense of what I was both witnessing and often, participating within. One such memory concerns a staff meeting. I had arrived in an Arctic community only days before and I was seated at a table in the kitchen of the Health Centre, where social services in this community was located. Around me at the table were nurses, health care workers, and office staff, including a translator and janitor; everyone who worked in the
building. I was the social worker. In this community, similar to the rest of Nunavut, Inuit held all the supportive, and much lower-paid positions (Government of Nunavut, 2015, 2017c; Office of the Auditor General [OAG], 2010). This included positions such as administrative staff and cleaning or translation support workers. The Qallunaat at this table held the professional and well-paid positions. This hierarchical positioning of Qallunaat included me. I had gone North for the employment, akin to colonists around the world as described by Memmi (1965). He described a colony as:

A place where one earns more and spends less. You go to a colony because jobs are guaranteed, wages high, careers more rapid and businesses more profitable. The young graduate is offered a position, the public servant a higher rank, the businessman substantially lower taxes, the industrialist raw materials and labour at attractive prices. (Memmi, 1965, p. 4).

Hicks (2004) has also referred to Nunavut as a colony of Canada. The benefits Qallunaat receive in relationship to their social positioning in the territory, as Memmi’s (1965) quote here describes, are discussed in more depth in the next chapter.

During this meeting the phone rang. An Inuk staff member answered the call and carried on a quick and excited conversation in Inuktitut—the language spoken by many Inuit community residents. Upon hanging up, Inuit in the room exchanged a few words among themselves. Someone hastily explained to the Nurse-in-Charge what had transpired, and politely but hurriedly, all Inuit staff left the room. The Nurse-In-Charge then explained to the room of remaining Qallunaat that a beluga had been caught, and the entire community was down at the ocean’s shore to share in this event. Rather than express an interest in participating in the event or encouraging the room of Qallunaat to
go down to the beach, this individual initiated a disparaging conversation about what she perceived to be a lack of commitment by Inuit to their employment. The room of Qallunaat appeared to agree and began to discuss how they believed Inuit did not want to work and could not expect better jobs or more money—or a better life—if they were not willing to give up certain things (i.e. their cultural activities or possibly, their culture altogether).

I have heard these sentiments many times during my work in Canada’s Arctic. Inuit need to modernize—or adjust to the exigencies of capitalism. Inuit need to go to school, get jobs, and live differently. In essence, Inuit need to become Qallunaat or perhaps, to Qallunaat-ize. The perspective appears to be based on an assumption that if Inuit transform themselves and their culture in this way, they may be able to access what Qallunaat typically access in the North: namely, money, and the material possessions and decision-making power that often comes with it. Importantly, Inuit who became employed in Nunavut’s first mine in the 1950s were understood by Qallunaat in much the same light as they were within this morning meeting. Inuit were thought to demonstrate “undisciplined behavior,” when “employees withdrew after three or four days [of work], or dropped their pickaxes, picked up their rifles, and headed off to sear or to the floe edge when a whale or group of seals was sighted” (Loo, 2017, p. 234). Among other things, such sentiments tend to highlight a divide that can exist between Qallunaat and Inuit. This divide appears to be based in different cultural logics, values and beliefs that have been constructed, or reconstructed, by some Qallunaat through both explicit and more covert racist perspectives. I have conducted research and written about this previously (Johnston, 2009; Johnston & Tester, 2014). In my experience, these perspectives may be
held consciously or unconsciously towards Inuit, but often qualified or communicated within language or sentiments associated with, or as intended to ‘help’ (Johnston & Tester, 2014). I look at this divide in Chapter 3 as it permeates child welfare and the larger political agenda concerning Nunavut. These sentiments also highlight how the colonial agenda—one based on goals of assimilating Inuit into the dominant Western society through a range of strategies and policies has come up against strong Inuit resistance (Bonesteel, 2006; Kulchyski & Tester, 2007). Serving as an example of this is the Inuit land claims initiated in the 1970s and the establishment of a national political organization (then called the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada, now called the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami [ITK]).

As the morning meeting appeared to demonstrate, Inuit resistance to an all-encompassing modernization agenda continues. Many Inuit continue to live their lives on their terms. Others, however, are described to now ‘live like Qallunaat’ (Mancini Billson & Mancini, 2007). Indeed, increasingly Inuit have adjusted to the political economy of capitalism, and subsequently some have found increased material wealth, including within the mining industry (Knosch, Bradshaw, Okalik, & Peterson, 2011). This has contributed to the emergence of a class structure not historically found within Inuit culture (Czyzewski & Tester, 2014). The tensions that can result from the range of encouragements to assimilate within the dominant Canadian culture that are offered by Qallunaat (and Qallunaat culture), such as the Nurse in the morning meeting, against Inuit resistance, can be felt in many communities throughout the Arctic. The large number of Inuit throughout the territory who become almost nocturnal (often known as “backwards”) during winter or summer months underscores this point (Stern, 2003, p.
Yet the history that has led to this tension is rather recent. Inuit largely lived according to seasonal migration and the availability of resources (for hunting, trapping, fishing etc.) until the 1950’s, only then beginning to remain permanently in what are today Nunavut’s communities (Anderson & Bonesteel, 2008). Although at different times the state attempted to encourage Inuit to ‘stay on the land’ (or remain subsistence hunters etc.), at other times, assimilation of Inuit has been a clear objective (“Advisory Committee,” n.d.; Keeling & Boulter, 2015; Memorandum re Eskimos, n.d.). The tensions associated with these policies and the political shifts that underlined them are discussed in the following chapter.

The morning meeting, however, also demonstrated something more. It demonstrated a significant lack of understanding by Qallunaat for the centrality of relationships within Inuit culture. This includes relationships between individuals, within and among families, and throughout the community. It also includes the relationships Inuit hold to the land. Ozkan and Schott (2013) have echoed this in their description of the North where “every economic, cultural, and political activity and decision is somehow connected to the Arctic environment” (p. 1275). Such relationships are the foundation of Inuit society (Karetak, Tester, & Tagalik, 2017; Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, 2006). As I explain in subsequent chapters, the ‘making of a child’ (as opposed to the Western notion of childrearing) is integral to this, as it contributes to the foundation of Inuit families (Karetak, Tester, & Tagalik, 2017). This is because:

Inuit know that the foundations for a good life are established in early childhood, Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (traditional knowledge) places a strong emphasis on inunnguiniq, the process of making a human being, which begins at birth and
extends through to adulthood...Central values taught to all Inuit children ensure respect towards Elders, the land, sea and sky, and all living things; and harmony and balance in relationships between people and the living environment.

(Greenwood, 2017, p. 221–222)

The activities required by Inuit to live well, in harmony and balance, necessarily requires these relationships (Karetak, Tester, & Tagalik, 2017; Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, 2006). Today, Inuit drive trucks, work for wages, eat pizza, download music, and shop online. Although to some, this may represent a ‘dying’ Inuit culture as described in Mancini-Billson & Mancini (2007), many Inuit simultaneously retain a strong connection to their cultural traditions and knowledge (Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, 2006). Indeed, many remain steadfast in their desire to retain their cultural traditions and practices, their beliefs, and to be able to live in such a way that these are respected. The desire to protect the use of Inuktitut in the territory is indicative of this point (Dorais, 1995; Madwar, 2016)

Coming together with family and as a community to participate in cultural events and share food is an important part of Inuit relationships as well (Henderson, 2007; Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, 2006). It is also a key part of living within Inuit communities in a way that supports peaceful co-existence through difficulty and over time. For example, historically if someone broke certain camp rules, food might not be shared with them to the same extent, and this served as a useful form of social control (Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, 2006). Henderson (2007) describes food sharing as “an obligation to the social group [based in] reciprocity [as] a collective ideal rather than a contract among individuals” (p. 44). Community events, such as catching a beluga,
signify important opportunities for this sharing of resources. Yet the constraints of capitalism can create obstacles for Inuit to participate in these same cultural events or activities (e.g. work schedules). Such constraints can, therefore, serve to disrupt relationships. This is explored in more depth in the subsequent chapters.

Importantly, the relationship Inuit hold to the land is also one that can tie them to each other. Historically, the labour involved in subsistence hunting for example, required “a complementary blend” of roles for women and men (Quintal-Marineau, 2017, p. 336). For many Inuit families, the interdependence of these relationships was critical to a hunter’s survival but also the maintenance of families, as women often cared for the children and managed the camp (Quintal-Marineau, 2017). Land is, therefore, woven into many of the relationships within Inuit society (Cameron, 2016). In fact, a certain spirituality and ‘groundedness’ is often described by Inuit in their relationship to the land (Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, 2006; Pufall et al., 2011).

A relationship to the land throughout the North has also existed for Qallunaat—just often, this has been in different ways. For example, the first whalers and fur traders in the territory have been described as focused on accessing all the land could provide in terms of profit (McElroy, 2008). As an example, the Hudson’s Bay Company, which opened its first post in the Keewatin region of Nunavut in 1911 (northwest of the Hudson’s Bay), and later in Arviat (previously known as Eskimo Point) in 1921, did so in part due to increasing competition within what was at that time, a highly profitable fur trade (Usher, 1971). Although many Qallunaat remained focused on profit, many employed by the state also became concerned with Canadian sovereignty. To maintain occupation of Arctic lands, the state set about relocating Inuit to the high Arctic to act as
human placeholders or “flagpoles” (Tester & Kulchyski, 1994, p. 114). These decisions were understood as not only important for Canada, but also for the oil and gas industry (Kanik, 1963). Here the overlap of objectives that exists among profit-based corporations and the state becomes visible. Detailed later in this chapter and subsequent chapters, this relationship O’Connor (1970) explains, is necessary to ensure state accumulation. Similar ‘placeholder’ perspectives appear to have been carried forward to today as Stephen Harper, previous Prime Minister of Canada, described the occupation of the Arctic by Inuit as advantageous to Canada’s continued sovereignty through comments such as “use it or lose it” (Lackenbauer, 2013, para 2). In this way, land represented for some Qallunaat, as it often still does, a form or combination of ownership, control, and profit. The use of land in this way can be connected to values associated with individualism and capitalism. Namely, motives and beliefs that include “a view of the self as independent rather than interdependent, [with an] emphasis on self-reliance, the primacy of self-interest, and the regulation of behavior by personal attitudes rather than social norms” (Bazzi, Fiszbein, & Gebresilasse, 2017, p. 5). This can be read as consistent with descriptions of mining as “moral progress [where it] brings ‘value’ to the land and allow[s] people to ‘maintain a standard of living’ through industrial opportunities” (Levitan & Cameron, 2015, p. 322). When Inuit historically offered resistance to such motives and beliefs, and as they became increasingly engaged politically in Canada, they often became understood as potential barriers to development (Bernauer, 2012; Bonesteel, 2006; Levitan & Cameron, 2015). This is in keeping with Jacob’s (2009) work that demonstrates how historically Indigenous occupation and possession of land often was viewed as an impediment to development. Importantly, Inuit have also been framed
as burdens on the public system (Laugrand, Oosten, & Serkoak, 2006). One example of this has been in reference to transfer payments from the federal government as required by the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement (‘Nunavut fears,’ 2010; Nunatsiaq News, 1999).

Framing Inuit in these different ways may have supported access to mineral resources. Coulthard (2014) and Wolfe (2001) have described such situations as forms of settler–politics, which they believe currently are, and always have been, about land.

Within this context, rarely are the vast benefits Qallunaat reap from mining Nunavut, in relation to the much lesser benefits that flow to Inuit, discussed. This may be because many now recognize the mining industry as one that produces disproportionately greater benefits for transnational corporations than Indigenous peoples, particularly in northern communities (Keeling & Sandlos, 2015; Kolodner, 1994; Rodon & Levesque, 2015; Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples [RCAP], 1996b; Warikandwa, Nhachena, & Mtapuri, 2017). Partially owing to this, Impact Benefit Agreements (IBAs) between mining companies and regional Inuit Associations have become commonplace in Nunavut (Levitan & Cameron, 2015). These agreements can include purposes such as to “contribute to the well-being of Inuit” and to “address, as far as reasonably possible, any detrimental impacts on Inuit and provide benefits for Inuit” (Meadowbank Mine, 2011, p. 7). They can also, however, “prohibit critique of the company and any form of protest against the mine on the part of Indigenous community members, as well as other measures to secure ongoing consent” (Levitan & Cameron, 2015, p. 260). Importantly, the IBA associated with Meadowbank Mine, where many Arviummiut (people of Arviat) are currently employed, does not include any reference to social support programs (Meadowbank Mine, 2011; Czyzewski & Tester, 2014). Nor
does it mention women specifically (Meadowbank Mine, 2011). Czyzewski and Tester (2014) have pointed out that many impacts on women, such as increased family violence, which may hold “implication[s] for absenteeism and labour turnover” (p. 31), are not necessarily addressed in IBAs as these agreements are “construed narrowly [so as to only include] health, safety and hygiene ‘on the job’ or in the workplace” (Czyzewski & Tester, 2014, p. 31). Research on the additional impacts women can experience in relation to mining are discussed in the subsequent chapter.

Importantly, not all Inuit oppose mining in the territory and some Inuit do derive benefits from it. Consequently, an increasingly number of Inuit have sought employment within this sector (Bernauer, 2011; Nunavut Economic Forum, 2013). Mining employment has given some Inuit the ability to purchase a range of material goods, such as vehicles and televisions. It has meant more money flowing into Inuit communities by way of wages (Czyzewski & Tester, 2014; Knotsch, Bradshaw, Okalik, & Peterson, 2011). The Mining Industry Human Resources Council (2014) has, therefore, projected hiring more Inuit into the industry over the next ten years. Political leaders, such as Stephen Harper, have stated “the North’s rapidly growing extractive industry is driving prosperity and creating demand for local skilled workers,” (Chase, 2013, para 4). While mining has been described as a positive opportunity for Inuit and the territory as a whole, some have also questioned as to whether mining is instead a matter of Inuit exploitation (“The North’s resource boom,” 2014). Some Inuit have also indicated they are opposed to mining for a range of reasons. Their objections have been related to the social, cultural, and environmental impacts mining has been shown to have on Inuit communities and surrounding areas (Carter, 2015; Czyzewski & Tester, 2014; Knotsch, Bradshaw, Okalik,
& Peterson, 2011). As discussed further in the following chapter, this suggests a tension can and often does exist within communities. This is because Inuit have at different times both resisted and simultaneously adapted to the social, cultural and economic changes mining has brought to their lives over the past 60 years (Abele, 2009; Bernauer, 2010; Keeling & Boulter 2015). The employment of Inuit within mining and the changes it has brought with it to Inuit in Nunavut is examined in the next chapter.

1.2 Linking Mining and Child Welfare

The distance between Inuit and Qallunaat cultures, given their differing values and beliefs, is arguably exemplified by the mining industry. Where Inuit possess a collective cultural identity; one that focuses on family and the sharing of resources, mining can be associated with individual gain, achievement, and capital acquisition (Dorais, 1995; Hipwell, Mamen, Weitzner, & Whiteman, 2002; Legare, 2007). The cultural differences between Qallunaat and Inuit are described in more detail in Chapter 3. Social services can also be placed in juxtaposition to mining. Where social services are typically associated with the provision of support to families and communities through the redistribution of tax dollars, mining is driven by production and profits. Both, however, work to meet the needs of the state. O’Connor (1970) explains that social services play a role in the legitimization function of the state (to “maintain social harmony”), but as such, is also reliant on the state’s other main goal, capital accumulation (O’Connor, 1970, p. 7). He explains:

The growth of the monopoly sector [e.g. mining] is irrational in the sense that it is accompanied by unemployment, poverty, economic stagnation, and so on. To insure mass loyalty and maintain its legitimacy, the state must meet various
demands of those who suffer the ‘costs’ of [this] economic growth. (O’Connor, 1970, p. 7)

The argument for mining often ignores this point, and instead typically focuses on the economic opportunity through the employment it can bring (Bolaria, 1995; Hick, 2014; van Dam, 2008). This paradox, as well as the employment of Inuit and the benefits associated with it, is examined in the subsequent chapters. This includes consideration for the many other things mining brings with it, including additional contradictions. For example, due to strict mining schedules and fly-in-fly-out (FIFO) requirements, mining can pull families away from land-based cultural activities, but simultaneously provide families the financial ability to engage in these same activities (Czyzewski & Tester, 2014; Gibson & Klinck, 2005).

Mining and the social, cultural, and economic impacts it can have on families is particularly relevant in Nunavut given it is largely perceived as the economic future of the territory. Mining has been described as “Nunavut’s greatest hope for capital investment, job creation, and business opportunities” (Nunavut Economic Forum, 2013, p. 17). Importantly, many of the social problems associated with mining in the North, such as family violence, point to the relevance of child welfare (Czyzewski & Tester, 2014; Gibson & Klinck, 2005). This is because these problems can often bring families to the attention of social workers. In fact, in 2008 domestic violence accounted for the most common risk factor (46%) of substantiated child welfare investigations in Canada (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2010). Importantly, the rapid social, cultural, and economic changes within Inuit communities, largely driven by mining, have been associated with these and other negative impacts to Inuit well-being (Hicks, Bjerregaard, & Berman,
2013; Kral, Idlout, Minore, Dyck, & Kirmayer, 2011; Southcott, 2015). The national Inuit women’s Pauktuutit Inuit Women’s Association (2006) has stated, “At times, the rapidity of these changes have threatened to overwhelm us. However, Inuit are known for our tenacity and ability to adapt” (p. ii). Importantly, a historical link between mining and child welfare in other contexts has been made. Jacobs (2009) for example, explains how child removal also has been directly linked to the objective of gaining control over land occupied and possessed by Indigenous peoples. She explained that children who have been disconnected from their lands are not always able to make claims to their own traditional territories (Jacobs, 2009). In some locations, such disconnection historically served as both a punishment and warning for those that protested the appropriation of their lands (Jacobs, 2009). Further, literature suggests the existing child welfare system in the territory is unable to support families within the current context and may even be contributing to problems associated with cultural continuity (Johnston, 2011; Phaneuf, Dudding, & Arreak, 2011). What these changes mean for children and families, but particularly mothers who must contend with them in real-time as they parent, remains unknown within the existing literature. What they also mean for child welfare in terms of changes that may need to be made to help Inuit families care and protect their children have also not yet been explored. Where Inuit mothers may need additional support or help, and whether this is being provided by the state remains unknown.

1.3 Purpose, Aims, and Relevance of This Study

It is evident that for many Inuit families, mining has not brought the prosperity they were promised (Chase, 2013). The perpetuation of poverty and unemployment within the territory are evidence of this—something I discuss further in the following
chapters. Instead, many communities have seen a rise in social problems alongside the changing or changed social, cultural and economic conditions (Czyzewski & Tester, 2014; Gibson & Klinck, 2005). Some of these changes, as discussed in the next chapter, signal a loosening of the family and cultural connections that are understood as critical for individual, family, and community wellbeing (Kral, 2003). This loosening may have a negative impact on children (Phaneuf, Dudding, & Arreak, 2011). Yet the development of an effective and culturally respectful response to these issues is hampered by a lack of research in relation to the care and protection of children in the territory. The changing (or rather, changed) status of women and their roles and responsibilities in relation to child protection and care, due to changing livelihoods and rapid socio-cultural change associated with mining, also has not been examined. This is problematic because without a gender-based and contextualized understanding of mining and resource development in relation to the protection and care of children, territorial decision makers are insufficiently prepared to develop the necessary legislation, policies and programs. This is particularly pertinent because mining, as the only industrial activity in Nunavut (other than a commercial fishery in Pangnirtung on Baffin Island), is largely understood by the Government of Nunavut as the “foundation for the future” and greatest source of employment for Inuit outside of the government and service sector (Government of Nunavut, 2007, p. 1). Thus, the purpose of this study is to contribute to understandings that may help mitigate negative impacts associated with resource development on Inuit families, while informing the development of supports and services within the child welfare system. Thus, the questions that drove this research include:
• What are the current realities (problems, experiences, issues, needs etc.) facing Inuit mothers involved in mining? And;

• How, if at all, is the child welfare system supporting them?

These questions point to questions concerning the role and involvement of social services in the territory. They challenge assumptions of benefit associated with employment in mining and the support provided to Inuit families through the child welfare system. They simultaneously suggest a need for the examination of responsibility concerning support for families in the territory.

An emphasis on mothers— as opposed to families, including fathers—was important to this study given the focus on child welfare. This is because mothers are typically the primary caregivers of children (Raley, Bianchi, & Wang, 2012). Further, the input and experiences of mothers are essential to the topic of child welfare as they also disproportionally face social and economic challenges that can impede the ability to care for children (Health Canada, 2003; Healy & Meadows, 2008; Lessa, 2013). These issues have been noted to impact the experiences of many Inuit mothers as they work to meet their family’s needs (Impact Economics, 2012; Tester, 2006). Mothers are also those most likely to be involved with child welfare—often due to these same reasons (Jones, 2010; Kline, 1993; Swift, 1998). In my experience of working with four different provincial and territorial child welfare offices, child welfare investigative files were associated with children’s mothers’ names when possible. This may mean that mothers are the first point of contact by child welfare social workers. This is consistent with the historical context of child welfare regarding Indigenous children in Canada as documented by Kline (1992). It may also mean that mothers are the ones with the most to
gain through positive interactions or involvements with social services, but also the most to lose through negative ones. Consequently, mothers who have been previously involved with child welfare in Nunavut are arguably the best positioned to discuss the child welfare system in the territory. Additionally, to focus on families, including fathers, would be to side-step the care-based labour women disproportionately provide for children. This is important because research by Hughes, Chau, and Vokrri (2016) has shown that women involved with the child welfare system believe their experiences as women are not taken into consideration—and yet this is what often has contributed to their children being understood as ‘at risk.’ Often this occurs in situations when women experience violence at the hands of their partner or spouse but opt to remain in these relationships, so they can provide housing or stability or meet other needs of their children. For many, this can involve great efforts to keep their children safe, and the placement of their children’s’ needs ahead of their own (Hughes, Chau, & Vokrri, 2016).

By employing a gender-based analysis, the role of women within the community, and society more generally, could be examined for its relationship to both child welfare and mining. For these reasons, working with mothers was essential.

Although this research occurred within the community of Arviat, Nunavut, it may offer insights relevant to other communities in the territory. It may also provide information relevant to other areas in Canada as well—particularly Indigenous communities considering the development of resource extractive opportunities. I believe it offers important understandings concerning the child welfare system in the territory, and may have implications for child welfare in other rural and remote locations.
1.4 This Study Asks

This research is the result of a partnership between myself and Inuit mothers in Arviat, Nunavut. Among other things, the mothers helped develop the questions that guided this work. Namely, how is the state responding to family needs given the shifting social, cultural, and economic impacts that have occurred in relation to mining? In effect, *how are families being supported?* As existing IBAs do not address the impacts to families and their relationships—when mothers experience stressors and pressures associated with the changes mining is known to bring, where do they turn? (Czyzewski & Tester, 2014). And how do relationships factor into this? Although there are many statistics available concerning the social and economic problems in the territory, the lived experiences and day-to-day realities of life for Inuit mothers in Nunavut have yet to be explored. How they meet their needs within a context of poverty, food insecurity, and household overcrowding among many other issues, is largely unknown (Battle & Torjman, 2013; Tester, 2009). The experiences of families, including the range of issues that bring families into contact with child welfare, and to what extent and in what ways the child welfare system responds to and addresses these problems is important. This can offer information relevant to determining how child welfare work can be adapted to better support families’ needs.

1.5 Cultural Conflict

Through my work in Nunavut I have developed an intimate understanding of the socio-economic challenges many Inuit families face; specifically, challenges that can lead families to seek employment outside of their communities within the mining industry. I have also gained an understanding of the range of problems families can encounter in
relation to the territorial child welfare system. It was by working closely with Inuit families that I was drawn to this research. Working with mothers in particular, however, has highlighted for me the complications and challenges they face in caring for and protecting their children. Within this work, however, something that has always stood out is the centrality of familial relationships to Inuit. This has been described by Kral (2003), Kral et al. (2014) Briggs (1971), Condon (1987) and by the Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada (2006). Unfortunately, these relationships have not always meshed with the work (e.g. decisions, policy, and approach etc.) of the territorial child welfare system. As an example, I remember being required to place two children in foster care in one of the first communities in the Arctic in which I was fortunate to work. As part of the foster-care placement policy at the time, I had to review a checklist to determine if a certain family was acceptable to foster these children. The checklist, in effect, was to assess the family home (much less, the family) for suitability. If the foster home did not comply with the listed requirements, a different home was supposed to be sought. The list required each child be provided with their own bedroom that had a window (no closets or utility rooms to be used as bedrooms), and their own bed. There had to be food in the fridge and cupboards. All exits were to be free of any furniture or debris for safety in case of fires, and foster parents were not to possess a criminal record among other things.

These requirements stand out in my memory because although they may sound benign, the criteria did not coincide or fit with the Inuit family that was so obviously suited to care for the children in question. In fact, the potential foster family was distantly related to the children, knew and loved the two children, and the parents were considered strong and healthy community members and role models. The potential foster parents
actively participated in community events and provided support to others in times of need. In this family’s two-bedroom home, however, one bedroom housed a range of skidoo parts that were being worked on by the older son. The other bedroom was filled with sewing material and a sewing machine, a deep freezer, and caribou meat on cardboard on the ground. Although the cupboards and fridge were largely bare, ‘country’ food (or traditional food such as char, caribou etc.) filled the freezer. Boxes were piled against the back door as there was no storage space within the home, and there was not a standard bed with box spring in the house. Instead, two mattresses, that when placed together in the living room at night, made a comfortable space for the family to sleep together. There were not enough bedrooms for their three children to each have their own room, but nor would this necessarily have been needed. Also, both parents had criminal records from many years ago related to public intoxication. The couple no longer drank alcohol and had not done so in years. Given all these things, it was apparent how disconnected the checklist of requirements was with the social, cultural, and economic realities of life for many Inuit families.

In my experience, the homes that may have most likely met these requirements within the community could be those of Qallunaat workers. This is because Qalluanat workers typically arrive to Nunavut’s communities as single, or as couples without children, but are often provided housing with multiple bedrooms. Their furnished units typically come with standard furniture (e.g. beds, kitchen tables etc.), and given the high salaries Qallunaat earn and their largely Western diets, their cupboards and fridges are likely to be filled. Qallunaat, typically employed as teachers, social workers, and nurses in Nunavut, are commonly required to possess clear criminal records before being hired.
in the North. Qallunaat may, therefore, have been more likely to meet the requirements to become foster parents. The checklist offers an example of what Lauster and Tester (2010) have described as policies that can extend the dominant group’s power to define what is culturally appropriate. They describe how such policies rely on “the application of comparative measurements of material inequality, [and this] may push policy towards the disciplining of minority communities, extending the power of the dominant culture to define appropriate relationships to the material world” (Lauster & Tester, 2010, p. 523). Thus, such foster home requirements may have been created by Qallunaat for Qallunaat, or the standards for care of Inuit children were possibly designed with Qallunaat foster parents in mind, or to encourage Inuit to meet these material requirements. This may have played a role in why so many Inuit children live in Qallunaat foster homes (Gregoire, 2016; Turner, 2016). It further suggests a preference for material things (e.g. beds, certain size of home etc.), over that of relationships or deep connection to a community. This makes sense when social work has been largely developed and conducted by those from within the dominant culture. I provide evidence for this and examine the positioning of Qallunaat within this work/role in the following chapter. This disconnection between Qallunaat culture and the lived realities of Inuit in Nunavut, however, is nothing new. In fact, a newspaper article in 1938 titled “English Culture of no use to Nanooks of the North” reflects this same point (Winnipeg Tribune, 1938). Further, the checklist I was to

1 “Of the 600 Inuit foster children in Canada, 43% were living with at least one Inuit foster parent, 6% lived with at least one foster parent of another Aboriginal identity, and 51% were living with non-Aboriginal foster parents” (Turner, 2016).
work with also appears consistent with a Guide for Foster Parents created by the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND) in 1966 (translated from Inuuktitut). This guide states “If the social worker likes your house then you would be able to foster a child. If the social worker likes the living conditions and if he/she thinks that the child will be happy, then you can take in a child” (DIAND, 1966, p. 2). This points to what has been described as the “considerable latitude” afforded to social workers in the North (Morse, 1980, p. 202). Decision-making power and authority is another way to express it. Historically, this latitude attributed to social workers was a contributing factor in the large number of Indigenous children placed in foster-care during the ‘Sixties scoop’ (Johnston, 1983). Consistent with that of residential school, such placements have been associated with intergenerational trauma, and negative effects on identity and cultural understandings (Johnston, 1983; Menzies, 2007; RCAP, 1996; Truth and Reconciliation Commission [TRC], 2015a).

Policies, such as this historical one concerning foster care, help to make up the territory’s child welfare system; a system introduced to Inuit in Nunavut through An Ordinance to Provide for the Welfare of Children (N. W. T.) in 1953. This was the first legislation that provided legal authority for the state to intervene in the protection of children who were abused or neglected in the territories. Reflecting the time and context within which it was written, this legislation was not only concerned with the protection of children from abuse and neglect, but also the protection of children born out of wedlock (Child Welfare Ordinance, 1953). Under this legislation, some children were placed in foster care with other Inuit families in the North (Rudnicki, 1956). This was encouraged by some Qallunaat, such as the first social worker in the Northwest Territories, Walter
However, many children were also sent to southern placements where they were boarded or housed with Qallunaat (Rucknicki, 1956, 1958). Others were sent to residential schools (TRC, 2015a). Residential schools continued to be used despite some opposition towards their use existing within the government itself. For example, one northern agent described residential schools as “harmful” and called for policy decisions that recognized the importance of intergenerational transmission of cultural skills and knowledge (Turner, 1934). Unfortunately, such warnings were not heeded. Residential schools consequently disrupted the relationships and lives of many Inuit throughout the territory (TRC, 2015a, 2015c). This history is explored in more depth in the following chapter.

More recent changes to child welfare legislation in the territory, such as requiring social workers recognize ‘community standards,’ has helped to address some of the problems in child welfare generally (Consolidation of the Child and Family Service Act, 1997, s. 59). I discuss these changes in more detail in Chapter 5. Unfortunately, these changes have not addressed the most basic problem with the child welfare system: the disconnection between Inuit culture, values and beliefs, as well as the socio-economic realities of life in Inuit communities, with that of middle-class Western Qallunaat values, culture and logic on which the legislation is based. As Morse (1980) explained, this “means that [the] legislation [that] is applied to [Inuit] that is not tailored to meet their particular needs and values but rather is enacted to cover the entire population” (p. 201). One consequence of this is a pressure placed on Inuit to assimilate and acquiesce to the dominant culture’s demands, as opposed to receiving the support needed for healing and strengthening families. This is explored in more depth in Chapters 5 and 6.
Consequently, this research aims to dive into and advance understanding of this disconnect, particularly as it relates to child welfare, and what Inuit mothers believe would better support them as they raise and care for their children. The intention here is to gain insights that can benefit Inuit families, but also social work within the territory. To do this, I begin with those most disproportionately involved with child welfare: mothers. I explore mothers’ needs, the challenges they face, and their vision for how and what support might be useful to them as they care for their children. Further, this study focuses on child welfare because it constitutes the majority of tasks and activities social workers are required to do within the territory (Johnston, 2009; Government of Nunavut, 2010–2011). As discussed in the findings of this study, social workers can hold the legislative ability, or individual capacity, to engage in different supports and services. However, they often lack the time, personnel, or supervision for this work. I explain this challenge facing social workers in more detail in Chapter 5.

1.6 Changes in the North—and in Academia

As many northern researchers may come to know, the traditional silos that make up academic disciplines can often become blurred in the Arctic. I have learned over my time in Nunavut that one can rarely discuss research in any field (i.e. fish populations or ice density), without understanding how such topics or issues relate to Inuit culture and/or impact communities (i.e. the ability of Inuit to hunt and provide for their children, and to maintain one’s culture). Consequently, biological and natural scientists may (or may not) develop an understanding and appreciation for the social sciences and vice versa. Increasingly, northern researchers are gaining an understanding of the interrelatedness of different fields of study and the importance of bringing them together within their work.
This is evidenced in an agreement signed between the International Arctic Science Committee (IASC) and the International Arctic Social Sciences Association (IASSA), which declared the intent of each of these organization’s activities to be interdisciplinary work (‘Letter of Agreement,’ 2013). Discussing mining employment in terms of its impact on Inuit mothers makes sense in this context. In my opinion, it also makes sense because almost everything in Nunavut can be understood in terms of relationships and every policy decision or political change that occurs in the territory can have direct impact on the people living there. Many of these policies can and often have an impact on Inuit culture. The intergenerational trauma associated with residential school offers perhaps the greatest example of this point (TRC, 2015a).

Colonial policies, such as the use of residential schools, have had a disruptive effect on the sharing of Inuit culture between generations (TRC, 2015a). Rhoda Akpaliapik Karetak of Arviat explained how colonization, and the movement into settlements changed everything—including relationships:

When outsiders came to our lands to lay down their unknown laws, our Inuit ways were forever disrupted. The laws made by these people were extremely confusing to the Inuit...Even Inuit kinship terms are not being practised anymore. I can give you an example of our loss of kinship here, where small children address me by my name when they greet me anywhere in Arviat shouting: “Hi Rhoda!” In my day it would have been considered rude to call older people by their names. We were never allowed to address anyone older than us by their name. The only way it seems to work today is to address everyone by their names in order for people to understand who you are talking about, as there are now many people in one
community. In my day, I was raised by my parents according to the laws of my grandfather, and he was the most important leader of our camp. What he said was practised without second-guessing him at all. Our systems of leadership have also been replaced, so it is no wonder that we seem to have lost direction. (Karetak, Tester, & Tagalik, 2017, p. 191)

This sentiment demonstrates some of the many disruptive shifts within relationships that have occurred as Inuit established new lives and ways of living within communities. Although something such as how Inuit address each other, may be considered a ‘small’ change within relationships to those Qallunaat who witness such interactions, there can be deeper impacts to the individuals involved, their relationships, and the culture.

Adapting Nixon’s (2011) concept here, it can signal a ‘slow violence’ or one that: Occurs gradually and out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space, an attritional violence that is typically not viewed as violence at all...incremental and accretive, it’s calamitous repercussions playing out across a range of temporal scales. (p. 2)

The result appears to be increasingly changed relationships and a propagation of colonial and assimilative forces.

In the research sphere, however, there are increasing attempts to move away from the perpetuation of colonial relationships and the policies that stem from them, and instead towards decolonization and decolonized relationships. Decolonization, as a process to reversing and addressing colonization in all its forms, has also been described as:
Acknowledging and harnessing the strengths of Indigenous communities rather than engaging in blaming games that compounding deleterious effects of several hundred years of colonization. Indigenous Peoples have exhibited remarkable resilience in resisting colonial incursions and attempts to eliminate them completely have failed. Indigenous people have and will continue to survive and resist further incursions into their territories, natural resources, sacred sites, languages, beliefs, values, networks and systems of governance, intellectual property rights and sovereignty. (Grey, Coates, Yellow Bird, & Hetherington, 2013, p. 7)

Gray and Allegritti (2002) have explained that decolonization can be translated into “a form of resistance and a medium of transformation from externally imposed to locally developed models of practice and solutions ... [that] include local cultures” (p. 325). However, as many researchers, such as myself, aim to decolonize their thinking and the work they engage in, they can encounter challenges. Struggles over language and naming are indicative of this, as are other attempts by non-Indigenous peoples to ‘get it right.’

Mentioned in the Glossary prior to this chapter, considerable debate has occurred concerning the terms ‘Aboriginal,’ ‘Indigenous’ and ‘First Nations.’ Monture-Angus (1995) argues these terms are all colonial constructions. Although the term Aboriginal has been commonly used for some time, more and more Indigenous peoples in Canada have voiced objections to it (Joseph, 2016). This has led many to adopt the term Indigenous. This term also signals acknowledgement of legal rights of First Peoples through the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous peoples (Indigenous Foundations, n.d.; Joseph, 2016). In some situations, such as within the Truth and
Reconciliation Commission, both Aboriginal and Indigenous have been used (TRC, 2015a). Indigenous, however, is the term selected by Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK), a national Inuit organization (ITK, 2018). Taking these considerations into account, I have opted to employ the term Indigenous throughout this work when referring to Indigenous peoples generally. Inuit are recognized as such. My decision here is also in keeping with suggestions for language use by Vowel (2016), and decisions made by the Government of Canada (Department of Justice, 2015), the Canadian Press (Watson, 2017), and the University of British Columbia (UBC) (UBC, 2016). I have also opted to capitalize the term ‘Indigenous’ and ‘Elder’ as a demonstration of my respect for Indigenous peoples (Joseph, 2016).

This debate over language, however, represents something more. For example, within a recent newspaper article regarding the Edmonton Eskimos football team, some Inuit indicated they held little concern for the term ‘Eskimo’ being used in the team’s name (Barton, 2017). This is after the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami requested the name be changed (“Stop, Eskimos, stop,” 2015). As one Inuk interviewed explained—Inuit have more pressing concerns. This response is important. It suggests there may be an irrelevance for the concern over language, or a reluctance to focus on it over what are considered much more pressing struggles or issues many Inuit face. The article highlights the disconnect between what is happening on the ground or on a structural level for some Indigenous peoples within their communities, and what can occur at an academic or intellectual, or organizational level. Debates such as these represent the distance between

2 In dominant Western society, capitalization is often provided to those deserving of respect (e.g. the Queen, the President).
modernist concerns (e.g. issues such as housing or food), and postmodernist issues (e.g. identity politics). The tension between modernism and postmodernism in light of this study is explored in more depth in Chapter 3.

The dialogue concerning both identity and respect, however, begs the question: Who am I to engage in research with Inuit women in Nunavut? Answering this as a white middle-class woman requires ongoing and serious contemplation. This is because there remain many examples of exploitation, misrepresentation, and harm that have come to Indigenous people and communities via non-Indigenous researchers (Cochran et al., 2008). From what are now understood to have been unethical studies concerning nutrition on Indigenous children at residential schools (Mosby, 2013), to a range of experiments conducted on Inuit (Gilmet, 1975; Greenwald, 2009), Canadian researchers are implicated in what has been described as a negative and harmful history (Cochran et al., 2008; Kulchyski, 1993). For many Indigenous peoples, the result of this includes the development of deep-rooted distrust for researchers and research generally (Ermine, Sinclair & Jeffery, 2004; Orb, Eisenhaur, & Wynaden, 2001; Smith, 1999). As Smith (1999) has explained, many Indigenous peoples have come to perceive the word research as a ‘dirty’ word. This relationship between Indigenous peoples and research is explored further in Chapter 4 as it contributes to the rationale for the methodology selected for this study.

Child welfare social work has what could be considered an equally dark past. Guided by what have been described as ‘colonial goals of assimilation,’ and paternalistic desires to ‘help,’ child welfare policies and practices have been criticized for the negative impact they have had on Indigenous children and families (Blackstock, Brown, &
Bennett, 2007; de Leeuw, 2009; de Leeuw, 2014; Johnston, 1983; Kline, 1993). The ‘Sixties scoop’ of Indigenous children, as previously mentioned, is an example of such policies (Johnston, 1983). In Nunavut, the assimilation of Inuit children was to “take place through every contact with the white man” (p.1) so as to “enable them to take their place as citizens of Canada” (Jackson, 1949, p. 4). Today, such explicit assimilative policies, and the practices associated with them, are commonly understood as racist, paternalistic, and built upon the uncritical application of supposedly benevolent values and beliefs (Blackstock & Trocme, 2005; de Leeuw, 2009; de Leeuw, 2014; RCAP, 1996; TRC, 2015a). Subsequently, literature regarding Indigenous child welfare points to how policies and practices, alongside attempts to ‘save’ Indigenous children from their families, their culture, and poverty, and or some combination of these things, has left deep scars on many Indigenous families, on Canada’s history, and on the social work profession (Irniq, n.d.; TRC, 2012, 2015a). In the North, this historically included children who were thought to be “incorrigible, perverted, or subnormal, [and therefore] requiring institutional care” (Gibson, 1947). A loss of culture, language, intimate familial and community relationships, coping and life skills and emotional security, were just a part of the high price Indigenous children paid (and continue to pay) for becoming involved with the child welfare system (Johnston, 1983; Irniq, n.d.).

1.7 Locating the Study and Locating Myself

As residential school perhaps best exemplifies, helping and holding “good intentions” has been long problematic within the field of social work (RCAP, 1996, p. 109). Consequently, Marker (2003) has stated that good intentions should be considered a “suspiciously ethnocentric and patronizing goal” (p. 370). Research, however, often
possesses underlying, obscured, or even prominent and blatant goals of ‘helping’ Indigenous communities. As Marker (2003) claims, “for too many researchers, it is a more fun and rewarding— not to mention safer— to imagine themselves ‘adopted’ by a tribe or nation and ‘collaborating’ to help solve some problem that the tribe or nation then has” (p. 370). In an attempt to address this, social work researchers must examine themselves and their work as part of what maintains colonial structures, as well as their social locations, all as integral to reinforcing colonial relationships. My work begins here.

What I have noticed through my own experiences in Nunavut is consistent with this, and with the perspective of Razack (2009). She comments on how the pseudo-ally positioning can enable non-Indigenous social workers and researchers to view their work and involvement, as not just important, but positive and useful (Razack, 2009). As such, it rarely includes an analysis of how one may be simultaneously contributing to the oppression of the same people they are wishing to help.

There are, however, many non-Indigenous researchers who have worked and continue to work to create much different research relationships. Indeed, increasingly researchers appear to be working towards and developing research relationships based on collaboration, trust, respect, and mutual benefit with Indigenous communities (see Ball & Janyst, 2008; Chambers & Balanoff, 2009; Evans, Hole, Berg, Hutchinson & Sookraj, 2009; Greenhill & Dix, 2008; Hart, Straka, Rowe, 2017; Moore, Castleden, Tirone, & Martin, 2017). Many academics are also attempting to work in a way that is consistent with Chapter 9 of the Tri-Council Policy Statement on Research Involving the First Nations, Inuit and Metis Peoples of Canada. The preamble for this Chapter indicates it was designed:
To serve as a framework for the ethical conduct of research involving Aboriginal peoples. It is offered in a spirit of respect. It is not intended to override or replace ethical guidance offered by Aboriginal peoples themselves. Its purpose is to ensure, to the extent possible, that research involving Aboriginal peoples is premised on respectful relationships. It also encourages collaboration and engagement between researchers and participants. (Canadian Institutes of Health Research et al., 2014, para 5)

Many researchers now also attempt to work in a manner consistent with the following statement from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) (2015b):

Canadians must do more than just talk about reconciliation; we must learn how to practice reconciliation in our everyday lives—within ourselves and our families, and in our communities, governments, places of worship, schools, and workplaces. To do so constructively, Canadians must remain committed to the ongoing work of establishing and maintaining respectful relationships. (p. 21)

As more researchers take earnestly their relationships with Indigenous peoples and strive to do research ‘in a good way,’ the field of settler and colonial studies has expanded (Ball & Janyst, 2008). Despite this, however, the existing flow of power (e.g. financial, authoritative etc.) between Indigenous peoples and researchers does not appear to have been addressed or reversed (de Leeuw, Greenwood & Lindsey, 2013; Snelgrove, Dhamoon & Corntassel, 2014). Power remains with researchers, who continue to be largely Caucasian males. As an example, at the University of British Columbia, males comprise 60% of all professors, and only 32% of all professors are visible minorities (UBC Equity and Inclusion Office, 2013). This is echoed by statistics at the University of
Toronto, where only 36% of tenured professors are women and less than 1% are Indigenous (Brown, 2016). Despite equity-based policies in place for preferential hiring of women and Indigenous peoples, this suggests that representation—and the associated power that can accompany it—continues to be an issue. Such statistics also appear to demonstrate how good intentions alone have not addressed these issues. They further suggest that structural injustice is pervasive within society and reflected in academic institutions. Thus, it should not be surprising that the field of social work was addressed specifically by the TRC (2015g): “Reconciliation requires constructive action [to] address the ongoing legacies of colonialism that have had destructive impacts on Aboriginal peoples”, and that this includes in the field of “child welfare” (p. 16). To move in the direction of ‘constructive action,’ however, implies the need for looking deeply at ourselves as social workers, at our profession, and at the research we do. This means exposing, but also dismantling colonial structures, systems, and relations. This study is an attempt to do just that.

To do this requires I locate myself within the colonial structures and systems that I have previously, and currently benefit from and operate within, namely, the child welfare system, the academic system, and the state. Examining my social location is important as it relates to the “production of knowledge [and] social organization of scientific work” because “it facilitates the creation of social kinds of knowledge and creates obstacles to others” (Sprague, 2016, p. 82). The process one must go through to understand their location has also been described as critical to becoming an ally (Daynes, 2007), and important to understanding the power and privilege that underlies research relationships (Muhammed, 2015). This process involves ‘turning back’ upon myself and
engaging in serious reflection (Madison, 2004). I understand that I am accountable and responsible for the way in which Inuit mothers are represented in this thesis, the way in which the information they shared with me is interpreted, and how the accounts of their experiences are depicted within this text (Madison, 2004). This is also important to the discovery of other thoughts, constructions and biases I bring to the research as these “are powerfully woven into and inseparable from the process” (Madison, 2004, p. 8). Through constant monitoring of my thoughts, values, beliefs, and actions as they impact the research, I have obtained some considerable insights (Hardcastle, Usher & Holmes, 2006; Harrowing et al., 2010). As part of this I have developed a consciousness for how my race, class, and gender intersect. I have also spent considerable time examining how this impacted my previous work in the field of child welfare; and hence, the experiences that then drove my education. As well, I have scrutinized my current involvement with academia, and how this has helped me form both my understandings and my analyses of my work. These intersections are important to the context of this research and analysis, including the ways in which I work, understand, and interpret information (Bowleg, 2008).

Although I have always been sensitive to the multiple and intersecting oppressions facing women specifically, I did not understand the complexity of this until I became a mother. This appears to be consistent with the experiences of many women and literature regarding the transformations women often experience through the process of motherhood (Abram, 2008; Anderson, 2000; Kruger, 2003; Phillips & Cree, 2014). My reality as a mother, although different from the experiences of mothering for Inuit women in Nunavut, provides me an intimate place from which to begin to understand mothering
in general. It also offers me insights associated with the labour of mothering, as well as the challenges and the relationships that can be linked to it. It does not, however, undo the limits to my understanding of what mothering means for Inuit women in Nunavut. My understanding of mothering for Inuit women is, and always will be, only partial. Critical examination of literature concerning the work of white and non-Indigenous feminists who attempt to understand and detail the experiences of Indigenous women are relevant here (Anderson, 2009; Arvin, Tuck & Morrill, 2013; Grey, 2004; Hilden & Lee, 2010).

While there are limitations to the knowledge and insights I bring to this research, I also have the advantage of having been an insider, as a former employee of the child welfare system operating in Nunavut. The critical perspective I have developed through my education affords me insight into how Qallunaat (non-Inuit) employees understand child welfare practices in Nunavut. Both my gender and race have afforded me access to conversations that provide me insight into Qallunaat perspectives relating to both child welfare and mothering in the territory. Therefore, this knowledge of how the child welfare system works, by way of function and administration, as well as philosophically and ideologically, provides me understandings important to this research. By drawing on values and principles and philosophies of participatory action research (PAR) and critical ethnography (CE), this study relied on and prioritized the mothers’ beliefs and perspectives on caring for and protecting their children. Methods used include semi-structured interviews, group discussions and analyses, and the incorporation of archival information, and other text and web-based material. The methodology is described in greater detail in Chapter 4.
1.8 Understanding Mothering

Although my presence as a Qallunaat middle-class social worker in Nunavut required I spend considerable time reflecting upon my race, class and gender, I now understand how being childless during my employment in the territory likely caused a great deal of fear and distrust within communities as well. I represented, by virtue of my skin colour, my class, and my Western perspectives and thinking, a threat—to not just the safety of Inuit children, but to Inuit culture and society. I now appreciate how being childless likely added to the concern families may have had when they encountered me, and just how incomplete my grasp of mothering had been. As an example, I understood it could be hard for mothers to attend meetings with social workers, but I possessed no idea what that meant. I had no knowledge of how such a visit had to be organized around naps, feedings, struggles with jackets and boots, and likely involved fatigue from being awake much of the night, or hunger due to offering the last of the food to one’s children. I had little awareness of how these struggles can often occur amidst arguments with spouses, and family members that can deplete a mother’s energy even further. I lacked an understanding of the exhaustion, self-doubt, and just how overwhelmed mothers can feel in light of the task of raising children. The appreciation I possessed for the challenges mothers encountered lacked a depth of appreciation for the resentment mothers can also hold for fathers, or for those who are childless, and for the larger society, due to its structure and design. This example represents only a small portion of the considerations necessary to comprehend mothering on the most basic level, let alone mothering while experiencing issues such as poverty, domestic violence, or mental health challenges among other things (Abrams & Curran, 2011; Awram, Hancock, & Honey, 2017; Elliott,
Powell, & Brenton, 2015; Lapierre, 2010). I explore mothering in more depth in the following chapter.

My understandings of mothering intersect with my race and class in many ways as such understandings are rooted in my Qallunaat middle-class experience, but they were also largely informed by Western societal notions of what is often understood as ‘good mothering’ (Elliott, Powell, & Brenton, 2015; Hays, 1996; Swift, 1995). Mothering as a social construct based on a range of values, ideas and beliefs, within a Western context, has become largely understood as a practice and role undertaken by women in relation to their children. By challenging motherhood as a “natural condition,” some feminists have pointed out how mothering is instead “an institution that presents itself as a natural outcome of biologically given gender differences, a natural consequence of (hetero)sexual activity, and as a natural manifestation of an innate female characteristic, namely the maternal instinct” (Smart, 2013, p. 37). Others point to mothering as a significant form of unpaid labour provided by women (Luxton, 1980; Millar, 1996; Swift, 1995). The role mothers play can be differentiated in Western society from caregiving provided by grandparents and extended family members. In contrast, mothering for many Indigenous peoples:

Is not limited to relationships between a female parent and her biological offspring. Mothering, as a relationship and practice, is a social and cultural act that occurs between multiple configurations of people of many generations—individually and communally is something Indigenous peoples have always known, celebrating extended families and lauding the wisdom of matriarchs as it applied and was transmitted to all the younger generations of a community.
Mothering, understood in this way as a complex web of relational practices, was and is fundamental to life (NCCAH, 2012, p. 3).

The distance between these ideas in relation to social and cultural understandings of mothering are discussed in the following chapter.

Child welfare is largely concerned with mothers: the work of mothering, how mothering looks in practice (what mothers do or do not do) and their labour (how, where and when they enact mothering) (Davies, Krane, Collings, & Wexler, 2007; Strega et al., 2008; Swift, 1995). However, this is typically:

Couched in such phrases as ‘the well-being of children’, ‘support for families’, and ‘least intrusive measures’, the capacity of women as mothers drives child protection practice while remaining largely implicit and invisible. [Which] is understandable given that child welfare practitioners often construct their interventions as helping and protecting children, if not rescuing them from horrendous, dangerous, or appalling situations. This conception of their mandate as saving children—in which the child is the client as opposed to the mother or family—makes it almost impossible for child protection workers to imagine how they might listen to and embrace the voices and concerns of women as mothers. (Davies, Krane, Collings, & Wexler, 2007, p. 24)

Despite these understandings, a gap appears to exist between those mothers who are ‘experts’ on their own lives and experiences, and those that engage with them in this field as child welfare workers (Cowie, 2010; Hughes, Chau, & Vokrri, 2015; Koncikowski & Chambers, 2015). As a Qallunaat childless, middle-class social worker when I arrived in Nunavut, my experience illustrates this gap. In other words, those who are most impacted
by the child welfare system, and those who may possess alternative understandings and perspectives for caring for children, are not necessarily afforded any real say as to how it operates (Johnston, 2011; Sinha & Kozlowski, 2013). Nor are they necessarily involved in the evaluation of such systems. The findings of this study suggest this is the case in Nunavut. Inuit mothers and families have been asked for their input regarding child welfare on only a couple of occasions (Phaneuf, Dudding, & Arreak, 2011; Representative for Children and Youth, n.d.). Instead, they are faced with a child welfare system that has been modeled after systems in southern Canada. It is a system created from within a western way of thinking and intended to support a western way of raising children. I have written about this on previous occasions and I offer more detail to describe the child welfare system in Nunavut in Chapters 2 and 5 (Johnston, 2011; Johnston & Tester, 2014; Johnston, 2014).

Although my understanding of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ) (traditional knowledge) represents a simplification of highly complex concepts, I have attempted to examine child welfare with this in mind. However, as Karetak and Tester (2017) have explained:

The problem with the word “traditional” is that it implies something from the past, of limited value to living in a modern world. Nothing could be further from the truth. IQ is about a set of values and practices, the relevance and importance of these, and ways of being and looking at things that are timeless. Aboriginal worldviews are of increasing relevance and importance to a rapidly changing world. (p. 1)
Given this, I have focused on incorporating principles of IQ within this study. Specifically, *piliriqatigiingniq*, or the concept of collaborative relationships and working together for a common purpose, as well as the principle of *ajiiqatigiingniq*, the concept of consensus decision-making (Arnakak, 2002; Tagalik, 2009). Research that is consistent with these ideas demands ongoing communication with those most impacted by the research. This reinforces the suitability of the methodology chosen for this work as explained in Chapter 4. It also requires the development of trusting and respectful relationships to be built with Elders and key informants who possess a depth of understanding of IQ. As in all work with Indigenous peoples, and all social work generally—relationships here are key. This has included relationships with the mothers involved in this research, Elders and key informants, but also organizations such as the Nunavut Arctic College and the Arviat Wellness Centre, both of which play supportive roles to those involved in the child welfare system and or employed through mining.

### 1.9 Additional Considerations

In order to weave together the different aspects of this research (child welfare and mining), while linking both to the historical context, I have incorporated history and historiography throughout this study. I have also applied a critical lens to this text. This is in keeping with the work of Lavallée (2009) and Smith (1999) regarding the rewriting and ‘rerighting’ of the Indigenous position in relation to historical accounts. Rather than offer a stand-alone section concerning relevant historical events, I have attempted to weave history into the text so as to demonstrate how germane it is to today. This is largely because the history of Nunavut’s communities, as well as the organization and development of the territory, is so recent. The history I am referring to here begins in the
1950s, and despite there being over 60 years of changes within the territory, many things remain much the same. Much of what was set in place at that time continues to be visible or exists largely unchanged today. I believe I made this point regarding foster care requirements previously. Other examples include the many roles in the community, such as RCMP officers, Northern Store Managers, and state agents (e.g. social workers), that continue to be positions largely filled by Qallunaat as they were when they were first established (GN, 2004; Legare 2008; McKenzie, 2016; Rogers, 2012). As another example specific to Arviat, the community was in part created through the bringing together of what have been described as two different groups of Inuit in the 1950s (Tester & Kulchyski, 1994). Elders, however, have named seven groups that have come to reside in the community— the Ahiarmiut (or Ihalmiut) from Ennadai Lake, the Paalirmiut, the Tahiuharmiut (a subgroup of Paallirmiut or Paatlirmiut), Nuvurugmiut, Kivihiktormiut, Qainirmiut, Hauniqtuurmiut, and Harvaqtuurmiut (Arviat Archeology and Oral History Project, 2012; Laugrand, Oosten, & Serkoak, 2006; Van Den Scott, 2014). Interviews within this study indicate there may continue to be a degree of social tension between these groups within the community, which serves to highlight just how ‘fresh’ this history continues to be.

Unfortunately, the history of child welfare in the territory has yet to be truly explored. In fact, much less research has occurred in Nunavut on the topic of child welfare than in southern Canada. This may be related to the challenges associated with accessing the territory (e.g. distance, cost etc.). To my knowledge, academic research in this field has only ever been conducted by myself, and more recently regarding the experiences of social workers by McKenzie (2016). Given the lack of specific academic
research on this topic, a greater reliance on grey literature, including policy reports, web-based material, and newspaper articles has been required. Where relevant, literature concerning child welfare within First Nations communities has been drawn upon.

Arviat is a particularly important community in Nunavut and one selected purposefully for this study as explained below. Located on the western shore of the Hudson Bay, the community is described in more detail later in this, and subsequent, chapters (see Figure 1 and Figure 2).

Figure 1. Map of Canada indicating location of Arviat, Nunavut

![Map of Canada indicating location of Arviat, Nunavut](http://ca.epodunk.com/profiles/nunavut/arviat/2000096.html)

Figure 2. Aerial view of Arviat, Nunavut

![Aerial view of Arviat, Nunavut](http://ca.epodunk.com/profiles/nunavut/arviat/2000096.html)
Arviat is understood to be the second largest community in Nunavut after Iqaluit, the capital (George, 2000; ‘Government of Nunavut n.d.d; Worden, 2015). Researchers have long favored working in Arviat because of its proximity to southern Canada and importantly, they have helped to create some favorable attitudes within the community towards research projects. For research regarding children and mothers specifically, Arviat is a particularly pertinent community due the large number of births in the community each year. This hamlet has been described as having the highest birth rate of any community in Canada (George, 2000; Nursing in Nunavut, 2009). One newspaper has reported 35 births per 1,000 people, compared to 10.3 per 1,000 people throughout the rest of Canada (White, 2016). The mothers in this study indicated there are nearly 100 babies born to their community each year. This vast expansion of the community suggests a few things in relation to this study. Namely, that it is a particularly relevant place to discuss mothering and the needs of mothers, the caring and protection of
children, and mothers’ concerns and perspectives. Additionally, given the huge number of children, Arviat is a particularly suitable place to discuss the resources necessary to do this work. Possessing a large Inuit population, Statistics Canada (2016a, 2016b) indicates 2,525 of 2,650 people living in Arviat in 2016 were Inuit (or 95% of the community). This suggests Arviat is rather representative of the territory (where 30,135 of 35,580 were Inuit, or 85% of the territory was Inuit in 2016) (Statistics Canada, 2016a; Statistics Canada, 2016b). Thus, the experiences of Arviarmiut mothers may offer some insights that could be important to other Inuit communities within the territory.

Finally, although I describe my relationship with the mothers of Arviat in more detail in Chapter 4, I would like to emphasize from the outset that this research could not have occurred without them. My commitment to them and their needs has led to an agreement that I will also draft a report based on this study’s findings to be presented to the Government of Nunavut’s Department of Family Services. We also discussed the creation of a book in the future. If this can occur, it would be developed with Elders and local organizations to provide information for young Inuit mothers who desire greater understanding of traditional Inuit knowledge in relation to childrearing but lack the direct relationships and associations by which they would have historically gained such information. The goal would be to have this book distributed to young mothers via community health care centres in Nunavut.

2. Child welfare, Mining and Mothering in Nunavut

2.1 Introduction

The first night I spent in Nunavut was with the family of a 15-year-old girl who had just completed suicide by hanging herself in her bedroom. As the social worker in
town I was expected to ‘do something’ so the local RCMP escorted me to the family’s home. Despite having spent almost two years in a high Arctic community in the Northwest Territories (Uluhaktok), I immediately understood how little I knew about Inuit culture within the community of Gjoa Haven, Nunavut, where I then found myself. I recognized immediately how different Inuit communities can be, even when rather ‘near’ to each other in proximity. I had, however, been close to many families that had experienced suicide, as has most everyone in the North given its prevalence. In fact, suicide is so common in Canada’s North that from 1999 to 2014, the suicide rate was almost 10 times higher in Nunavut than in southern Canada (11.4 deaths by suicide per 100,000 in 2009), and for young males, almost 40 times higher (Hicks, 2009, 2015; Harding, 2007). Here, the home in which I found myself was filled with family and children. The RCMP officers, nurse, and coroner checked for life amid aunties, uncles, cousins, grief-stricken parents and siblings who cried over the young girl’s body. Dozens of small children milled about in doorways, many to be drawn lovingly onto the laps of adult family members. The sound of sadness in the home was deafening. That night, unfortunately, was just one of many times I sat with families after they lost someone they loved to suicide. In Nunavut’s 25 communities, made up of 30,000 people, and spread out over 356,000 square kilometers (136,000 square miles), suicide remains the most common cause of death in the territory (Eggertson, 2015; “Nunavut leading,” 2017; Nunavut Tunngavik Inc., 2004). Unfortunately, this child’s suicide was not a unique situation. Inuit experience the highest suicide rates in the world—often making headlines when children as young as 11 and 12 years-old kill themselves (Eggertson, 2015; Kral, 2016).
“I’m lifeless” Bernadette Uttak of Naujaat, Nunavut, stated following the suicide of her 11-year-old son Rex in 2015 (Skura, 2015). As an example of the context within which suicides happen, Rex had been one of 24 people living in his family’s four-bedroom home (Skura, 2015). Household overcrowding, as another issue, is also nothing new in the territory. It — like suicide — appears to be getting worse. In 2010, 49% of homes were overcrowded (“GN Long Term,” 2013). This was up from 38% in 2004 (Nunavut Housing Corporation and Nunavut Tunngavik Inc., 2004). Living conditions in the territory have been described as “rivaling many so-called ‘third world’ countries” (Tester, 2006, p. 10). As Tester (2006), Hicks (2009), and the national Inuit organization, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami in their National Inuit Suicide Prevention Strategy (NISPS) (2016) indicate, overcrowding contributes to social issues such as suicide. Suicide has also been connected to family violence and drug abuse (Hicks, 2009; Tester, 2006; National Inuit Suicide Prevention Strategy [NISPS], 2016). Current living conditions, rapid social change, and a cultural disconnection between generations are understood to play an important role in suicide as well (Hicks, 2009; NISPS, 2016). By and large, however, colonialism and the legacy of residential schools that have led to individual vulnerabilities including substance abuse, depression, and physical and sexual abuse, are widely believed to be some of the greatest risk factors for suicide in Nunavut (Kirmayer et al., 2007; Kral, 2016; NISPS, 2016; Tester & McNicoll, 2004). Kral (2016) explains:

Suicide among Inuit has taken place in the context of the negative colonial repercussions of many Indigenous peoples. Many are manifesting risk factors and mental disorders, and their relational bond, ungajuk, or sense of belonging,
**ilagijauttiarniq**, has been disrupted. Family and romantic problems have resulted, and suicides are tied to these problems. (p. 691)

Children and youth in Nunavut are particularly vulnerable given their low levels of knowledge or awareness of alternative coping strategies (Healy, 2016). This is compounded by an intergenerational gap, or a distance within the relationships, that exist between grandparents, parents, and children (Kral, 2013). Hicks (2009) has summarized suicide among youth as follows:

If one were to pose the fundamental question ‘Why are Inuit societies generating such a high proportion of suicidal young people?’ among the answers would have to be ‘Because they have high rates of adverse childhood experiences.’ For 50 years now, the Arctic has been a rough place to be a child. Many (but by no means all) children in the region have had (and continue to have) a much higher number of adverse childhood experiences of various kinds than do their peers in southern Canada. (p. 484)

Child welfare—or state intervention dedicated to the protection of children and youth from abuse and neglect—is arguably intended to address those factors that make the Arctic such ‘a rough place to be a child.’ This would be consistent with the Department of Family Service’s mission to “bring together programs and services that support families” (emphasis added) (Department of Family Services, n.d.a). Indeed, literature related to the safety of children and youth in relation to suicide indicates an important role for social workers and the child welfare system (Blackstock, Brown & Bennett, 2007; Turpel-Lafond, 2016; Walmsley, 2005). Yet the work undertaken within child welfare across the country has been largely criticized. Most commonly this is due to...
a focus on child apprehension (removing children and youth from their families and placing them in foster care), as opposed to prevention, early intervention, or support for addressing the wider issues related to child and youth safety and wellbeing—the same things that are associated with suicide (Blackstock, Brown & Bennett, 2007; Kirmayer et al., 2007; Tait, Henry & Loewen Walker, 2013). This is problematic given that childhood separation and family disruption have been identified as further risk factors associated with suicide (Gould, Shaffer, & Greenberg, 2003). For many youth, the result of such separation has been described as a sense of ‘futurelessness’ (Humphreys, 2014). In practical terms, this suggests the one thing child welfare has been criticized for focusing on, may also be the one thing that should be avoided at all costs in order to address one of greatest dangers to children in the territory.

Although suicide is a devastating and pervasive social problem in Nunavut, it exists alongside a range of other issues that also leave children and youth at risk. For example, Nunavut possesses the highest rate of teenage pregnancy in the country (20% of all births in 2009 were to young women under the age of 19, compared to 4% of births in Canada overall) (Statistics Canada, 2009a). The territory holds the highest rates of violence (over 9,897 victims of violence per 100,000 people in 2010, compared to 1,175 per 100,000 in Canada), and intimate partner homicide (213.2 homicides per 1,000,000 people in 2011, as opposed to 5 per 1,000,000 in Canada) (Nunavut Court of Justice, 2013; Sinha, 2012). This is in addition to the highest rates of smoking (increasing from 54% in 2010, to 62% in 2014, compared to the Canadian average of 20% in 2010 and 18% in 2014 respectively) (Statistics Canada, 2016a), and the highest rates of youth school drop outs (50% in 2007 and 2010, compared to 6.2% in British Columbia).
(Gilmore, 2010). These statistics help paint a picture of what life can look like for many Inuit families, but also demonstrate how protecting children amid so many serious issues can be a monumental task for parents.

Complicating this context even further are issues related to the isolation of Nunavut’s communities; all are only accessible by plane. This creates substantial challenges related to the provision of traditional forms of supports and services (Hatt, 2015). The remoteness and isolation of the communities can be even greater when fog during the summer months, and snow and wind during the winter months, can make it impossible to land planes for days and even weeks on end (Hatt, 2015). Technical problems related to flight availability and the maintenance of planes can further complicate this situation. Although this can mean daily frustrations pertaining to a lack of fresh food in the stores, missed flight connections, and slow mail delivery, there can be more serious implications. During my last trip to Arviat, a young woman died from a common medical issue while waiting the five days it took a medivac plane to land due to fog. Needless to say, isolation compounds many of the challenges Inuit already face on a daily basis.

One of perhaps the most pressing issues facing Inuit, however, continues to be that of food security. Over 60% of Inuit households are reported to be ‘food insecure’— or in other words, they do not have enough food to feed the people in their home (“Nunavut food security,” 2014; Wallace, 2014). Almost three quarters of preschoolers in the territory live in food insecure homes (Council of Canadian Academies, 2014). This prevalence of food insecurity is reported to be more than three times higher than the Canadian average (Guo et al., 2015), and higher than for any Indigenous population in
any developed country (“Nunavut food security,” 2014). Notably, because Nunavut’s population is so young (almost 60% of the territory’s residents are under the age of 25 years old), it is most often children and youth who do not have enough to eat (Arriagada, 2016).

Although many things contribute to Inuit families not being able to meet their needs for food, including climate change, young age and population growth, a key factor remains poverty associated with a lack of employment (Guo et al., 2015; “Nunavut food security,” 2014). Poverty, or economic deprivation, in Nunavut has been described as “chronic” (Hiebert & Power, 2016, p. 104) and “rampant” (Harding, 2007, para. 8), and explained as a new phenomenon by Battle and Torjman (2013). This is because:

Many Inuit argue that poverty—[when defined as lack of income— did not exist in the past. Inuit clearly had no or limited cash income in their indigenous settlements. They were self-reliant through subsistence hunting, fishing and trapping. Theirs was a life in which community figured prominently and people looked out for one another. (Battle & Torjman, 2013, p. 5)

Although poverty may not have existed, historically, many Inuit did at different times experience a lack of food. Starvation of Inuit has been documented at different points throughout history (Laugrand, Oosten, & Serkoak, 2006; “Semi-annual report,” 1933; Stevenson, 1949; Tester & Kulchyski, 1994). Although starvation among Inuit has not been reported since the 1960s, food insecurity is a common problem, and today, malnutrition, including the presence of rickets (“Rickets return,” 2005), anemia (Chrisofides, Schauer, & Zlotkin, 2005), and obesity continue to exist (Drewnowski & Specter, 2004; Fergusson, 2011; Singer et al., 2014). These health concerns are all
consistent with the relationship established between poor health and the inability to afford healthy food (Beaumier & Ford, 2010; “Nunavut food security,” 2014; Owens et al., 2012; Wallace, 2014). Taken together, the range of serious issues impacting Inuit in Nunavut highlight a context that can make it difficult for many families to survive, let alone thrive.

2.2 Inuit Culture and Traditional Knowledge – A Way Forward

2.2.1 Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ)

Any discussion of life in Nunavut that focuses solely on the challenges Inuit families face, however, remains incomplete. Instead, a holistic perspective that assesses these challenges alongside the strengths Inuit communities possess is far more consistent with Inuit culture, but also with what is considered a strengths-based approach in social work (Bernard, 2006; Tagalik, 2009-2010a). Strengths based social work practice refers to a “revision,” or a practicing of social work in a way that privileges the “capacities, talents, competencies, possibilities, visions, values, and hopes, however, dashed and distorted these may have become through circumstance, oppression, and trauma” (Saleebey, 1996, p. 297). A strengths-based approach sits in opposition to conventional thinking and assessment, which has been associated with pathology and a focus on deficits (Graybeal, 2001; Saleebey, 1996). Inuit traditional values are consistent with this approach to social work as they center on concepts such as interconnectedness, adaptability, perseverance, sharing, cooperation, and resourcefulness, among many others (Best Start Resource Centre, 2017; Tagalik, 2009-2010a; Tagalik, 2009–2010b).

These values are based in Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ) and commonly understood as Inuit traditional knowledge (Arnakak, 2002; IQ Task Force, 2002; Tagalik,
IQ has been described as “the Inuit way of doing things: the past, present and future knowledge, experience and values of Inuit Society” (IQ Task Force, 2002, p. 4). Inuit have expressed the importance of IQ to their cultural wellbeing and as a key determinant to their social and physical health (Healy & Meadows, 2008; ITK, 2007; Kral, Idlout, Minore, Dyck, & Kirmayer, 2011). Consequently, traditional values drive local and grass-root projects, and programs aimed at addressing an array of issues in the territory (for example, see the Miqqut Project in Rankin Inlet3 and the Ilisaqsivik Society in Clyde River4). The Government of Nunavut (GN) has acknowledged the importance of IQ for the territory and has reportedly relied on Tuttarvitt, an interdepartmental group that advises the GN departments on how IQ can be incorporated in the work of the government (Government of Nunavut, n.d.a). Having sustained Inuit over generations, practices and beliefs associated with IQ are now widely understood as essential to healing, and the building of healthy families and communities (Tagalik, 2009a; Health Canada, 2010). In this way, IQ is described as directly related to kinship and a preservation of family organization (Arnakak, 2002; Bell, 2002). This is because wellbeing for Inuit “is understood in terms of the experience of spending time with family—talking, sharing food, and experiences on the land” (Kral, Idlout, Minore, Dyck, & Kirmayer, 2011, p. 433). IQ has also been explained as representing a “persistent resistance to non-Inuit ways of doing things” (Tester & Irniq, 2008, p. 52), and consequently, IQ has become “a key concept in the quest for solutions to social and political problems” (Healy & Meadows, 2008; Oosten & Laugrand, 2002, p. 23). This is

3 The Miqqut Project through the Nunavut Literacy Council can be found here: http://ilitaqsiniq.ca/projects/miqqut-project/
4 See the Ilisaqsivik Society here: http://ilisaqsivik.ca
largely because Inuit culture has been explained as existing ‘at odds’ with dominant Western culture (IQ Task Force, 2002).

Unfortunately, this conflict between Inuit culture and dominant Western or Qallunaat (non-Inuit) culture is based on what are opposed core values (IQ Task Force, 2002). Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ) is fundamentally about relationships; relationships between Inuit and the land, with family, with oneself (spiritually) and with the larger social group (Bell, 2002). This can be contrasted with depictions of dominant Western society, such as that by Jameson (1991) and Harvey (1990), as a culture of consumption, focused on individualism, and driven by power within a political economy. In Inuit culture, a depth of networks and relationships work to “preserve kinship systems; the foundation of Nunavut’s society” but also to encourage Inuit to pursue the ‘good life’ (Arnakak, 2002, p. 36). To do so, maligait (or maligaq), piqujaq and tirigususit are important. These “refer to what had to be followed, done or not done, in Inuit culture” (Oosten & Laugrand, 2002, p. 21). Maligait or ‘rules’ include: working for the common good, maintaining balance and harmony, respecting all living things; and continually planning and preparing for the future (Tagalik, 2009a). Taken together with the following principles, they form the “conceptual philosophy” of IQ (Tagalik, 2009a). This includes:

- *Pijitsirniq* or the concept of serving;
- *Aajiiqatigiingniq* or the concept of consensus decision-making;
- *Pilimmaksarniq* or the concept of skills and knowledge acquisition;
- *Piliriqatigiingniq* or the concept of collaborative relationships, working together for a common purpose;
- *Avatimik Kamattiarniq* or the concept of environmental stewardship; and
o Qanuqtuurunnarniq or the concept of being resourceful to solve problems.

(Arnakak, 2002; Tagalik, 2009a)

Historically, colonial and racist beliefs held by many Qallunaat often meant a devaluation or dismissal of these values, and of Inuit knowledge itself. Although this was not always the case, many Qallunaat believed they possessed superior knowledge and ways of doing things and consequently often framed Inuit traditional values and practices as ‘primitive’ (Livingstone, 1938). This is evidenced by archival accounts of L. D. Livingstone in the Arctic during the 1930s, who wrote to correct criticisms that had been levied by the RCMP and missionaries at Inuit regarding childbirth practices and the role of Inuit midwives (Livingstone, 1938). Livingstone clearly did not support the assertions that Inuit were ‘primitive.’ The intent of framing Inuit in a negative light at the time was, however, important to the promotion of Western practices and beliefs, and through this, the assimilation of Inuit into the dominant Canadian society (Rutherford, 1994; Tester & Irniq, 2008; Tester & Kulchyski, 1994; Tester & McNicoll, 2004).

In keeping with goals of assimilation, some Qallunaat settlers perceived themselves as ‘role models’ in the promotion of what they believed to be ‘civilizing’ Western standards and values. Often this involved disregarding, overlooking, denying, and marginalizing IQ concerning children and childrearing (Rutherford, 1994; TRCC, 2012). As an example, Marjorie Hinds, a teacher in the Arctic during the late 1950s and 60s, made comments to this effect in a report regarding her education of Inuit children. She described the children as “dirty and smelly” and believed that the priority of their education should be on health and hygiene (Hinds, 1958). Although she described herself “as a friend, and not as a critical white person bent on teaching the natives [sic] what they
should do,” she also described her work as focused on teaching cleanliness, nutrition, and “why it is undesirable to give away babies or other children” (custom adoption) as well as “why girls should be asked first whether they want to marry a certain man” (Hinds, 1956). Hinds, a product of her time, demonstrated both a desire to help educate Inuit, as well as a disdain for Inuit ways. However, she also appeared to recognize that one should not force Qallunaat beliefs onto Inuit. Her work highlights a simultaneous lack of awareness of her social location, but also a desire to support Inuit from within their own culture, not unlike some social workers in the Arctic today (Johnston, 2009). Importantly, it has only been recently that IQ has become more widely understood by Qallunaat as a ‘strength’ and “as a platform upon which society collects skills, knowledge, values, beliefs and collective experiences, [in order to] continually enhance the ability to be successful” (Tagalik, 2009a, p. 3; Martin, 2009). Today, IQ is discussed in every arm of the Government of Nunavut. This includes the Department of Family Services, of which child welfare is a primary function (Government of Nunavut, 2010–2011).

**2.2.2 Bringing IQ into the Government**

Child welfare work in Nunavut, alike child welfare work across Canada, is typically centered around investigating reports of child abuse and neglect (Kozlowski, Milne & Sinha, 2014; Johnston, 2009). Children can be apprehended from their parents or caregivers under the Child and Family Services Act for a range of reasons (Consolidation of the Child and Family Service Act, 1997). These include if a child has experienced physical, sexual or emotional harm (abuse), or if a child is likely to experience this harm by a parent or caregiver, or if the child’s parent is unavailable, unable or unwilling to care for the child and the extended family has not stepped in to do
so (neglect), among other things (Consolidation of the Child and Family Service Act, 1997, s. 7(3)). Although Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ) is discussed within the Department of Family Services, it has yet to be incorporated in any meaningful way within the child welfare legislation or policy. For example, the Department of Family Services has stated they aim to “explore Inuit-specific approaches to child protection” (Department of Family Services, 2016a, p. 2). One possible reason for this may be due to the difference between the beliefs and values underlying both IQ and Inuit culture, with that of the current child welfare system. As Table 1 demonstrates, opposing worldviews result in different ways of encountering social issues (IQ Task Force, 2002)⁵.

Table 1 Key Differences Between Inuit culture and the Institutional Culture of the Government of Nunavut (GN)⁶

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Essential Elements</th>
<th>Inuit Culture</th>
<th>Institutional Culture the Government of Nunavut (GN)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>Inuktitut</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Structure</td>
<td>Simple – Flat</td>
<td>Hierarchical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values</td>
<td>Pijitsirmiq; Aajiigatigiingniq; Pilnimmaksarniq; Piliriqiqigitiiniq; Avatimik Kamattiarniq; Qanuqtuurunnarniq</td>
<td>Effective, efficient, economical, value for money, accountability customer service, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision-Making</td>
<td>Guided by traditional leaders: consensus-based</td>
<td>Guided by elected representatives or senior public servants; “command and control”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authority</td>
<td>Based on experience and respect of the community</td>
<td>Based on position in the hierarchy and credentials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services</td>
<td>Provided in the context of the family and social structure: relationship-based</td>
<td>Provided by professional caregivers: client-based</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic Approach</td>
<td>Holistic: things seen as inter-related.</td>
<td>Reductionist: divides things into individual parts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

⁵ Developed in 2001 to “address what it saw as state failure to operate with IQ as a foundation,” those selected initially to participate in the IQ Task Force “were not reappointed” (Tester & Irniq, 2008, p. 58).

⁶ Note: This table has been adapted from The First Annual Report of the Inuit Qaujimajatuqanginnut (IQ) Task Force (IQ Task Force, 2002).
### Inuit Culture vs. Institutional Culture of the Government of Nunavut (GN)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Essential Elements</th>
<th>Inuit Culture</th>
<th>Institutional Culture of the Government of Nunavut (GN)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Healing</td>
<td>Provided by family members, peers and community specialists</td>
<td>Provided by doctors, nurses and professional care-givers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although the characteristics associated with both cultures have been simplified here and are not exhaustive, they highlight key differences that may be relevant to the organization, structure, and management of child welfare in the territory. For example, the majority of decision-making power held by administrators and managers within the territory is maintained through the Government of Nunavut’s (GN) hierarchical structure (Phaneuf, Dudding, & Arreak, 2011). This means little decision-making power and authority is allocated to front-line social workers, and when it is, it is not distributed based on relationships, experience or respect, as it would likely be if the system was structured according to IQ. Instead, decision making power is structured according to merit, typically associated with the highest levels of education or previous experience working in the field of child welfare in southern provinces (Johnston & Tester, 2015). Despite such conflicts, the GN has stated clearly:

> The government is committed to Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit as a guiding principle of public government. IQ embodies Inuit traditional knowledge and values, and guides the government in framing decisions, policies and laws that reflect the key philosophies, attitudes and practices of Nunavut’s Inuit majority. (Legislative Assembly of Nunavut, 2007, p. 2)

However, an adoption of IQ would likely run counter to the GN’s existing institutional culture and values (as laid out in Table 1). This is perhaps why discussions within the government concerning IQ tend to focus primarily on an application of IQ principles alone and not on a larger Inuit worldview (Government of Nunavut, 2012a). Indeed, the
GN has stated, “The government is committed to eight Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit guiding principles” (Government of Nunavut, 2012a). This suggests the GN may no longer be as concerned with basing its work upon Inuit culture as perhaps it once indicated, and as described within the Bathurst Mandate, a guiding document for the creation of the territory, but now instead with a numbered (and measurable) set of principles (Government of Nunavut, 1999). However, this focus on IQ in terms of only its principles, or as something that can be applied without specific cultural direction or depth of knowledge, has been described as a misunderstanding of IQ (Martin, 2009). Martin (2009) has suggested that rather than demonstrating a commitment to IQ, the GN has in fact ‘codified’ IQ by focusing solely on its principles. Martin (2009) further indicates this may have also been done in an attempt to make IQ “accessible to southern governments, and easily applicable in various bureaucratic settings,” but in the process, may have led to the loss of much of the meaning (p. 190). This suggests the GN may be overlooking how “traditional knowledge is not static” (Oosten & Laugrand, 2002, p. 24). In other words, “barbecues and picnics for GN employees, where someone plays the drum to celebrate IQ day, are not the way to implement IQ” (Arnatsiaq, 2002).

2.2.3 Child vs. Family Centred Child Welfare Work

Despite conversations surrounding IQ in the territory, child welfare work in Nunavut appears to be highly similar to the form and practice of child welfare practiced throughout the rest of Canada (Gough, 2007; Johnston & Tester, 2015). This approach is typically described as ‘child-centered’ social work and it is associated with the goal of prioritizing the protection of children over other concerns, such as keeping families together (Walmsley, 2005). Although the child-centred approach can be associated with a
range of different values and ideological beliefs, commonly it invokes concepts such as a focus on children’s needs and rights, and on empowering and involving children in the child welfare process. It is often employed by way of taking children’s views into consideration regarding their placement within foster homes, and through a focusing on child advocacy (D’Cruz & Stagnitti, 2008; Rasmusson, Hyvonen, Nygren, & Khoo, 2009; Walmsley, 2005). This approach has evolved in part due to criticisms that child welfare work was historically paternalistic and bent on ‘child rescue’ treating the child as “a dependent waif and an object of interest, on whose behalf adults speak and act” (D’Cruz & Stagnitti, 2008, p. 156). Concerns for ‘child rescue’ have been consistent with the perspective held by many Indigenous peoples regarding the ‘Sixties scoop’ (Johnston, 1983). During that time, many social workers perceived their role as saving children from their parents—parents who were often struggling with different forms of oppression, poverty, and the trauma and impact of residential schools (Blackstock, Brown, & Bennett, 2007; Johnston, 1983; Sinclair, 2007). A movement towards this child-centered approach, as it purports to focus on ‘the best interests of children,’ was widely adopted by social workers in the child welfare field (“Hearing the voices,” 2010; Rasmusson, Hyvonen, Nygren, & Khoo, 2009). It has been perceived as putting the child—and her needs and rights—first. Unfortunately, this privileging the child has meant that families, and the needs of mothers, have come second, or even not considered at all (Swift, 1995).

Others, on the other hand, have described child welfare generally as a historically child-centered approach—one associated with ‘child saving’ interventions that began with the creation of residential schools in Canada in the late 1800s (Sinha & Kozlowski, 2013; Walmsley, 2005). Thus, one can see how there are notably a range of
interpretations and understandings of the term ‘child-centred.’ The different uses of this term, alongside the different perspectives to working with children have undoubtedly contributed to what has been described as a confusion among social workers as to “who is the client...the child, or the family...or both” (Koster, 2011, p. 3). This is consistent with my own experience. I have encountered many social workers in my career that adamantly voice their understanding of child welfare as a government response that exists for the child. The result is a perception that the child, and not the child’s parent(s) or extended family, are the social workers’ clients. Alternatively, other child welfare social workers have indicated to me that they view the child holistically, and in relation to their parents and families. These different perspectives can hold real implications for practice.

For example, as Libesman (2013) describes, situations such as those involving domestic violence can pit those operating from a child-centered approach against those who intend to support mothers and their children. This is what Smith (1990) refers to as “displace[ing] the centrality of women,” where violence against women comes to mean violence against children, and subsequently becomes a children’s issue rather than a long-standing women’s issue (p. 205). Baskin (2013) points to this issue in a quote from a former child welfare social worker:

I think that we’re looking at who’s the client, and therein lies one of the biggest issues for all of us... this one sees the woman as the client, this one sees the child as the client. But again, isn’t that creating the silos that we’re saying that we don’t think are helpful? Our clients, if you want to call them that, are the family. And why aren’t all agencies looking at the family as the unit that they’re trying to assist? (p. 419)

The focus on child-centred child welfare work is not without controversy. Armitage (1998) for example, in reference to child welfare work in British Columbia, described child welfare as having undergone:

A radical change of direction as a result of the Gove Inquiry into Child Protection and the measures taken by the provincial government to implement its recommendations. Basically, a vision of a child welfare system that recognized and built on community and family strength was replaced by one that relied on administrative expertise, reorganization, and investigation. (p. 93)

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\(^7\) A report concerning the prevalence of sexual offences against children in Canada. The report pointed to a lack of standards for handling child abuse (Badgley, 1984).
Others such as Swift (2012) appear to agree. As an individualist approach to the care of children, some have described this direction as highly problematic when understood in relation to Indigenous families and communities (Cameron, Freymond, Cornfield, & Palmer, 2007; Libesman, 2014). This is consistent with work by Kline (1993) who has explained that child welfare “naturalizes the removal of First Nations children from their extended families” because Indigenous mothers do not always meet social workers’ expectations associated with being a “good mother” (p. 307). This is understood to occur because what can be considered to be in a child’s ‘best interests’ by one social worker, may be something quite different for another worker. This is also consistent with de Leeuw’s (2014) assessment of the child welfare system as having been “carefully produced, maintained, and historically [designed based on a] contiguous set of logics premised on assumptions of neutrality, good intentions, and common sense” (p. 60).

Research supporting this point by Trocmé, Knoke, & Blackstock (2004) has further indicated bias and racial stereotypes may influence decisions by social workers when working with Indigenous families. In this same vein, when motherhood is largely constructed as “a privilege” and not a right by social workers, motherhood for marginalized women has been both “devalued and discouraged” (Kline, 1993, p. 312). Further, when it is a single mother in contact with the child welfare system, one might expect an increased focus on children and family support, but instead, as Lessa (2012) explains, this group can be “cast...as a social problem” (p. 148). This suggests that privileging a ‘child’s best interests’ in these circumstances can become directly related to how the parent(s)—particularly mothers—are assessed by social workers. Given that it is disproportionateness single Indigenous mothers that come into contact with the child
welfare system in Canada (as described in more detail below), this suggests serious implications. It can translate, once again, into concern for children to be saved, and mothers to be punished. Others, however, such as Sullivan (1998) have disagreed. Ultimately, the placing of children’s needs (or rights as it is often expressed), first, has been long debated (McKenzie & Flette, 2003; Trocmé & Chamberland, 2003).

Held up as an alternative to the child-centered approach is the family-centered approach (or family preservation approach) (Sullivan, 1998; Trocmé & Chamberland, 2003; Walmsley, 2005). This approach is based on beliefs that the strengthening of families to prevent child apprehension, where possible, should be the focus of child welfare social work. As Barter (2001) explained, this has meant:

A shift away from child rescue and [towards] a recognition that the needs and interests of parents and their children were interrelated and complementary rather than conflicting. Family strengthening was intended to ensure that worthwhile interventions were in place, in partnership with parents and significant others, to facilitate the treatment of children and their families while in their own home or in alternative placements outside of their home. (p. 265–266)

The family-centered approach is built on a framework that takes the child’s family environment and development, family strengths, and a child’s need for permanency all into account (Michalopoulous, Ahn, Shaw, & O’Connor, 2012). It suggests programing and supports be provided to families when children are identified at risk so as to protect them within the context of their families whenever possible (Walmsley, 2005). This approach has been understood as consistent with an Indigenous worldview that places emphasis on collectivity, family, and community (Cameron, Freymond, Confield, &
Palmer, 2007; Libesman, 2014; Shangreaux & Blackstock, 2004). Others, however, such as Trocmé & Chamberland, (2003) have offered perhaps a bit more nuance. They explained:

The analogy of a pendulum swinging between family-centred and child-centred approaches to child welfare practice is well accepted, but in our opinion, poses a false dilemma that confuses issues...[it] fails to recognize the complexity and diversity of need among children and families receiving child welfare services. (Trocmé & Chamberland, 2003, p. 2)

Walmsley (2005) offers a similar sentiment and calls for a more holistic and culturally-based approach to child welfare—one that focuses on both the child and the family within Indigenous communities.

Such concerns are in keeping with calls for an approach to Indigenous child welfare that begins with reconciliation and self-determination; where individual rights are positioned within communal rights, and a holistic worldview (Blackstock, Brown, & Bennett, 2007). In keeping with this, many academics and advocates now point to a need for decolonized social work approaches that are consistent with Indigenous cultures as described in the previous chapter (Chandler & Lalonde, 1998; Grey, Coates & Yellowbird, 2010; Reyes Cruz & Sonn, 2011; Waldegrave, 2009). Relying on workers that know the community, the culture, and the language of children and their families are also held up as highly valuable to what can be considered ‘more’ culturally-relevant child welfare. As Pauktuutit Inuit Women’s Association (2005) have expressed how “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” (p.13). This is because what is often thought by those in the dominant Western culture to be “culture free” is instead laced with, if not entirely encompasses, Western logic, prescription, and assessment—whether or not those in the dominant culture can perceive it (Wexler, 2011, p. 160). In keeping with this, some have pointed to the importance of focusing on cultural continuity as a key component within healing (Kirmayer, Simpson, & Cargo, 2003; Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, 2005; Sinclair, 2004). Where this has been examined in practice, via localized programming that aims to address social and cultural disruption—specifically issues that often bring families into contact with child welfare system—positive effects have been demonstrated (Auger, 2016; Brascoupe & Weatherdon, 2015; Broad, Boyer, & Chataway, 2006; “Evaluation of Community Based Healing,” 2009). Examples of this include the Métis Child and Family Services Authority in Winnipeg, Manitoba, and the Yukon Government’s LIFE program (Live-In Family Enhancement) that provides a foster care environment for both children and their parents (Metis Child, Family, and Community Services, 2018; ‘Solving the Puzzle,’ 2018). As a further example, the Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation has challenged the traditional use of child apprehension, and instead works to remove parents from children’s homes when the parents and children cannot remain together due to safety concerns. This approach “combine[s] a western traditional model of service with Elder’s wisdom, traditional teachings and cultural practices,” and it has “resulted in fewer children in foster care and reduced apprehension of children” (Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation Family and Community Wellness Centre, 2017, para. 3). Consequently, alternative models that involve a connection to one’s culture are increasingly understood as a key ingredient to promoting
healthy strong Indigenous children \textit{and} families (Snowshoe, Crooks, Tremblay & Hinson, 2016).

\textbf{2.2.4 Family Support in Nunavut}

The Department of Family Services (commonly called ‘social services’) in Nunavut is responsible for child welfare. At one time the work of this Department (and previously, the Department of Health and Social Services) had included community corrections work (probation services), income assistance (‘welfare’ services), family services (e.g. couples counselling and mediation), guardianship (authority for those who cannot care for themselves, such as adults with cognitive disabilities etc.), adoption, as well as child welfare (the authority to intervene in cases of child abuse and neglect). When I began working with the Government of Nunavut in 2006, I provided all these services with the exception of income assistance. Over time, some of these duties have become their own positions—namely income assistance and corrections services. Others were transferred to specific locations (e.g. adoptions work was largely centralized in Iqaluit). Today, Nunavut social workers have come to focus almost exclusively on child protection investigations and the work associated with them (Department of Health and Social Services, 2006; Johnston, 2009; “Lakehead provides,” 2012; Phaneuf, Dudding, & Arreak, 2011). Although the Department reports a continuation of some of this wider scope of work, much of it occurs in relationship to or as a result of child protection (Department of Family Services, 2014). For example, family violence services are often examined and only provided in light of promoting safety for children. For some communities, this has meant a reduction or elimination of supportive services that may have previously been provided (e.g. the larger, faster growing communities) as they
struggle to meet their legislative requirements for child protection first, and all other supports and services are only provided if and when social workers have ‘extra’ time (Johnston, 2009). Consequently, despite the positions for social workers as titled Community Social Service Workers (CSSW), many understand their job to be exclusively that of a child protection worker (Johnston, 2009).

This shift in social work in Nunavut is not unique to the territory. It appears to be part of what has been described as an ongoing retrenchment of social services in Canada and associated with an uptake of neoliberal ideological beliefs present in government (McBride & McNutt, 2007; Rice & Prince, 2013). This, as increasingly consistent with the provision of social services internationally, has been strongly criticized (Beland et. al., 2014; Jennissen & Lundy, 2011). McKeen (2006) explains how, given this shift, social work has become:

A process that was conditioned from the beginning by the narrow terms of the topic (i.e. child health and development), [and] the conceptual norms of the mainstream social policy community. [Then it] subtly shifted to embrace a casework doctrine that assumes that social problems and the programmes of social cohesion can be addressed solely by treating the supposed deficiencies of the individuals. This change amounts to a shift in public imagination concerning the very essence, knowledge, and understanding of social policy, wherein social policy has become social casework, writ large, and structural understandings of social problems have been all but eliminated from the calculation. (p. 881)

This direction for social services, including within child welfare in Nunavut, tends to support decisions associated with reducing government costs and offloading support
previously provided by government to families, communities, and local non-profit organizations (Harris & Unwin, 2009; Johnston & Tester, 2014). A managerialist approach, or the promotion of corporate management techniques, such as in Nunavut, are often used as a means to create what is believed to be a greater efficiency within social service organizations. Yet these have been criticized for the negative impact such approaches can hold for relationships (Dominelli, 1993). I have written about this in relation to Nunavut previously (see Johnston & Tester, 2014; Johnston & Tester, 2015). Unfortunately, as McKeen (2006) describes, this can have the effect of “pav[ing] the way for a policy agenda that creates and perpetuates more poverty, inequality, social divisiveness, and personal stress than it resolves” (p. 882).

As an approach for child welfare, this focus on the narrowing of social work via managerialism, to that of child welfare investigations, appears to be particularly problematic. This is because poverty, and the subsequent social exclusion that tends to result from it, has long been associated with an increased risk of child abuse and neglect (Drake & Pandey, 1996; Lefebvre, Fallon, Van Wert, & Filippelli, 2017; Philp, 2001). Further, the majority of those families that come into contact with child welfare, tends to most commonly be due to what is classified as ‘neglect,’—a problem that research demonstrates has been directly tied to impoverishment (Drake & Pandey, 1996; Lefebvre, Fallon, Van Wert, & Filippelli, 2017). The overrepresentation of Indigenous children in government care has been associated with this link (Brittain & Blackstock, 2015; Sinha et al., 2011; Trocmé et al., 2006). This is because far more Indigenous children are living in poverty than non-Indigenous children in Canada (38% of Indigenous children were living in poverty in 2010, compared to 17% of non-Indigenous
children) (Macdonald & Wilson, 2016). Further, Indigenous women are at particular risk of encountering the child welfare system (O'Donnell & Wallace; 2011; Townson, 2009). This has contributed to Indigenous children being twice as likely as non-Indigenous children to be placed in foster care (Trocmé, Knoke, & Blackstock, 2004; Turner, 2016). Despite Indigenous peoples comprising only 5% of the Canadian population, almost 50% of all children and youth in care of the government are Indigenous, and 20% of substantiated reports of abuse and neglect are regarding Indigenous children (Aboriginal Children in Care Working Group, 2015; Blackstock, Trocmé, & Bennett, 2004; Sullivan & Charles, 2010; Trocmé, Knoke, & Blackstock, 2004; Turner, 2016). However, child neglect is far more prevalent than abuse, and the link between poverty and child neglect “is particularly strong”—especially regarding Indigenous families (Drake & Pandey, 1996; Sinha, Ellenbogen, & Trocmé, 2013, p. 2082). This has resulted in the number of Indigenous children in care today surpassing the number of children in care at the height of the Sixties scoop, now owing to the new term ‘millennium scoop’ (Brittain & Blackstock, 2015).

The number of Nunavummiut children in care of the Government of Nunavut (GN) represent a similar situation. In 2006, 197 children were reported to be in care of the GN (Mulcahy & Trocmé, 2010; Rae, 2011). Having steadily increased, in 2016, 408 children were reported to be receiving government services and 234 in some form of government placement outside their immediate family (e.g. in foster care, extended family placements, or group homes) (Department of Family Services, 2017). This involvement constitutes a rate of over 15 per 1,000 children in some form of foster care (or out of home placements), as compared to the Canadian average of 9.2 per 1,000.
children (Mulcahy & Trocmé, 2010; Rae, 2011). Over half were reported to be placed outside of the territory (Gregoire, 2016). Although research consistently points to structural factors having much to do with Indigenous children coming to the attention of child welfare workers, there remains little to no support for families once they do—aside from child apprehension. Sullivan and Charles (2010) have stated:

> Irrespective of provincial budget cuts, admissions to care are driven by legislative mandates that do not expire when budget projections are surpassed. Thus, while there are deficient resources to support family efforts to remain together, the funds to support Aboriginal children in care are seemingly inexhaustible. (p. 10)

While this statement may not take into consideration how existing resources are typically stretched to accommodate increased Indigenous children in care and the reduction in other supports and services to meet this need, as well as the ever-expanding caseloads that then occur, the implication remains an increasing number of children in care with fewer supports available to prevent this from occurring (Blackstock & Trocmé, 2004; Ordolis, 2007; Sullivan & Charles, 2010). Recently this approach has been described by the federal Minister of Indigenous Services, Jane Philpott, as one that offers “perverse incentives” to governments (‘We must disrupt,’ 2018). This is consistent with my experience of social work in Nunavut. Until recently, it appears that a largely similar number of social workers have been sought each year (with the exception of Iqaluit) for communities that are growing almost exponentially in population (Department of Family Services, 2017; Nunavut Hansard, 2016). This suggests that until this point, there has been a continuation of funds for child protection investigations—the primary task of Nunavut social workers, but yet no real additional funds or positions created for family
support or mental health needs⁸. It also suggests an increasing workload for existing social workers. As the Office of the Auditor General has pointed out, there are no strategies for the long term (Office of the Auditor General of Canada, 2014). This is evidenced by Inuit children and youth who continue to be placed in foster homes, both within and outside the territory, but with little attention or follow up after that point (Jackson, 2016, 2017). Thus, the child welfare system remains largely unchanged, despite years of repeated calls by national organizations, Nunavut politicians, and Nunavummiut, for additional funding, training, supports, and services for families (Bobet, 2009; George & Ducharme, 2017; Nunavut Hansard, 2017).

2.2.5 Government Child Welfare Challenges

When children in government care are sent outside of their Nunavut communities for foster care, often to southern behavioural treatment centres, this is typically due to the lack of foster homes or specialized training (Department of Family Services, 2016a; Gregoire, 2016; Jackson, 2016, 2017; Phaneuf, Dudding, & Arreak, 2011). However, this does not only occur in just a few instances. Instead, in 2014, almost one quarter of all the children in care were placed outside the territory (70 of 292 children in care) (Department of Family Services, 2016a; Gregoire, 2016). Although children and youth in Canada are routinely transferred to foster care and treatment centres in different provinces, in Nunavut this can have a particularly negative impact on families. Most obviously, the cost of travel to visit their children (often upwards of $10,000) can be prohibitive, leaving many families to have minimal if any physical contact with their children while in care.

⁸ As noted later in this text, a few support-based positions may be being developed in some communities in Nunavut (7 of the 25 communities) (Department of Family Services, 2017).
The lack of a social worker in a family’s home community in Nunavut, can make it more difficult if not impossible for children and families to stay connected as well (Jackson, 2016, 2017). In my experience, families that could not afford telephone service in their home often struggled to even speak with their children on a regular basis. The distance and difficulty communicating and visiting with their children can arguably have a negative effect on children. It can impact their relationships with their families, their language skills, as well as their cultural understandings and retention—similar to what many Inuit children experienced in residential school (Jackson, 2017; Rae, 2011; TRC, 2015d).

Unfortunately, support for young people and their families in Nunavut to prevent their involvement with the child welfare system is lacking (Gough, Shlonsky, & Dudding, 2009; “Strategic Plan,” 2016). Until recently, the GN did not provide any formal programs specifically for children and youth or families at risk of child apprehension beyond what individual social workers could provide (Johnston, 2009; Gough, 2007; Gough, Shlonsky, & Dudding, 2009). Given the high caseloads of most social workers in the territory, this is often not possible. Although it appears a small amount of funding has been allocated for support-based positions in some communities (7 of 25 in Nunavut), hiring people into these positions remains an ongoing challenge (Department of Family Services, 2017). Additionally, in some communities, and often on a limited short-term basis, a mental health worker may be available. However, it is also understood that mental health services are almost entirely absent in the North (Bodor, 2009: Eggertson, 2013; Rohner, 2016). To make up for this shortfall, supportive programming occasionally is provided via community schools and non-profit
organizations (see for example, the Arviat Wellness Centre, and Ilitaqsiniq—the Nunavut Literacy Council in Rankin Inlet). These organizations, however, can also face many challenges, including those related to hiring and retaining staff, and securing funding for this same work.

The lack of supports for families commonly available in Nunavut communities demonstrates how ill-prepared many communities are when it comes to addressing the social issues they face. Calls by the Mayor of Gjoa Haven, Nunavut, for a mental health facility in the territory following some critical incidents in his community, is evidence to this point (George & Ducharme, 2017). Concerns for staffing shortages, a lack of training and resources, as well as the requirement for social workers to often work alone has been raised repeatedly (“Half of Nunavut’s,” 2009; Hansard, 2007; Phaneuf, Dudding, & Arreak, 2011). The Office of the Auditor General (OAG) has on two occasions (in 2011 and again in 2014) criticized the Government of Nunavut for not adequately addressing these and other issues, such as caseloads that are too large for social workers to adequately manage, and a lack of engagement of the communities within the child welfare system more generally (Office of the Auditor General of Canada, 2011, 2014).

“A major consequence” of the existing child welfare system, as described by the OAG (2011), was that “community social service workers are not able to meet the requirements of the [Child and Community Service] Act,” the territorial legislation governing child welfare (Office of the Auditor General of Canada, 2011, p. 14). This reaffirms concerns put forward by social workers for their ability to truly help and work with families (Johnston, 2009; McKenzie, 2016). Recommendations by the OAG (2011) put towards the GN’s Department of Family Services have included the need to “engage parents and
communities in a dialogue focused on keeping children safe,” and to “develop, as needed, community-based, territory-wide, or issue-specific strategies aimed at preventing and identifying abuse and ensuring that children and their families are receiving the protection to which they are entitled” (p. 50). Unfortunately, as of 2014 the Office of the Auditor General (2014) indicated the Department of Family Services “has done little to engage parents and communities” (p. iii) and made “unsatisfactory” progress towards community-based solutions (p. 20).

One of the greatest struggles for the GN appears to be finding and retaining staff within the social work field. While social workers report struggling to cope with workloads, in many communities, social work positions often routinely sit vacant (“Half of Nunavut’s,” 2009; Hansard, 2007; Phaneuf, Dudding, & Arreak, 2011). Challenges recruiting social workers and retaining them has been long discussed by the GN (Johnston, 2009; Hansard, 2007; McKenzie, 2016). Many of the social work positions in Nunavut end up being filled by Qallunaat from southern Canada. This can be problematic. Typically, Qallunaat social workers arrive with little to no experience working with Inuit, or even Indigenous communities, and struggle to make sense of the culture, social organization, and work (Johnston, 2009). Many workers cite difficulties adjusting to Inuit culture, Arctic weather, and the 24-hours of darkness during winter months (Johnston, 2009; McKenzie, 2016). Others point to issues of feeling overwhelmed by the challenges Inuit families face and describe feeling incapable of helping families given their limited role, funding, and power to effect change (Johnston, 2009; McKenzie, 2016). Further, many of these ‘southern’ Qallunaat social workers stay in these positions for only short periods of time—a matter of a few months to a few years
(Johnston, 2009; McKenzie, 2016). These issues are not new. In fact, they are consistent with research conducted by Zapf (1993) regarding northern social work in Canada over two decades ago.

Unfortunately, it is also difficult to recruit and retain Inuit social workers from Nunavut as well (Johnston & Tester, 2015). Many Inuit who may have an interest in social work often lack the formal credentials required for employment. This can be largely credited to the difficulty accessing a Social Services Worker Certificate/Diploma program in the territory. For those who do complete this education, a gap exists in relation to employment with the Government of Nunavut (Johnston & Tester, 2015). This gap may have much to do with the limited opportunity to work in one’s own community (where often only one or two social work positions exist). It may also be related to the role social workers are expected to fill and the structure of the work and system itself (Johnston & Tester, 2015). As Swift (1995) has pointed out, the individualized focus of child welfare work separates women and mothering from the structural issues and context within which they work. This individualized focus, alongside such a large part of social work centring on child welfare investigations, may not be desirable for Inuit. This is because Inuit typically possess significant and long-standing relationships within their communities, which this focus of the work may serve to disrupt (Gerlach, Browne, Sinha, & Elliott, 2017).

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9 In Nunavut, this is currently provided by the Arctic College but for most, this means leaving their home communities, their families and friends for up to two years to access schooling in Cambridge Bay where classes are held.
2.3 Northern Development and Employment

2.3.1 Jobs as the Solution?

Given the relationship between poverty within Indigenous communities and child neglect and apprehension as described in the previous section, an increased income by way of employment has been often understood as part of, if not the primary, antidote to such social problems (Antwi-Boasiako, King, Black, Fallon, Trocmé, & Goodman, 2016; Eckenrode, Smith, McCarthy, & Dineen, 2014; Government of Canada, 2016; Lefebvre, Fallon, Van Wert, & Filippelli, 2017; Macdonald & Wilson, 2016; Schumaker, 2012). The suggestion is that increased income via employment for parents is typically associated with less poverty and, therefore, could conceivably lead to fewer children coming into government care (MacKinnon, 2015). Although poverty is also understood to be multidimensional, as explained below, common discourse remains focused on addressing it through employment as opposed to state support or relief. In Nunavut, where we find the highest poverty in the country, this is particularly relevant to discussions of child welfare and makes the topic of mining employment that much more important (Impact Economics, 2012).

More recently, employment has been understood as a significant component of larger political strategies aimed at both addressing poverty and the tackling of a host of social problems (“Dignity for all,” 2015; Fang & Gunderson, 2014; MacKinnon, 2015; Richards, 2007). However, employment alone cannot be understood as a panacea for these problems because—as is increasingly the case—even full-time employment does not necessarily lift people out of poverty. This is the case for 1.5 million Canadians in 2001 who, despite working full-time throughout the year, were unable to make an income
above the Canadian low-income cut off (LICO)—the defacto poverty line (Fleury & Fortin, 2004). Thus, it can be understood as a “very unproductive suggestion that poverty can be solved if people would just get up in the morning and go to work” (Nunavut Roundtable on Poverty Reduction, 2012, p. 4). In Nunavut, poverty can be considered widespread if the reliance on income assistance (or ‘welfare’) serves as a measure or proxy indicator of the poverty in the territory. Almost half (48% in 2008) of all Nunavummiut access income assistance (Canada Without Poverty, 2015; Nunavut Roundtable on Poverty Reduction, 2012). Further, this provision of funds has not kept up with food costs in the territory, and in 2012 the amount of income assistance provided by the GN ($7,684 per year) to someone in the capital of Iqaluit was half of what was provided in the Yukon ($16,092 per year) and Northwest Territories ($17,334 per year), and even less than what was provided in British Columbia for a single person ($7,952 per year) (Office of the Senior Judge, 2015/2016). It should be noted, and as it is explained in the following chapter, that those on income assistance in Nunavut are only required to pay $60 towards their housing (Impact Economics, 2012). However, there is much more to poverty than income alone (Battle & Torjman, 2013). Poverty, particularly in the case of Nunavut, has been associated with social exclusion and health disparities. This has been described as including barriers by way of language, and access to education and information (e.g. the ‘digital divide’) (Canada Without Poverty, 2015; MacKinnon, 2015). In 2011, the Government of Nunavut and Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. supported the creation of the The Makimaniq Plan: A Shared Approach to Poverty Reduction and the Department of Family Services produced a Report on Poverty Reduction (2014–2016) (Department of Family Services, n.d.b; Nunavut Roundtable for Poverty Reduction,
This Report on Poverty was prepared by the Minister of Family Services in Nunavut, who was coincidentally also the Minister Responsible for Poverty Reduction. More recently, *the Nunavut Food Security Strategy and Action Plan (2014–2016)* was created (Nunavut Food Security Coalition, 2014). Finally, the *Makimaniq Plan 2 (2017–2022)* was also created (Nunavut Roundtable for Poverty Reduction, n.d.b). All of these documents point to the complexity of poverty in the territory, which serves to reinforce the understanding of poverty as what is often understood as a ‘wicked’ problem, or one that can be difficult to solve. Although the ability to meet one’s needs is often related to income, poverty is not just a matter of individuals possessing low incomes (Crump, 2016). As an example, the Report on Poverty Reduction includes some outcomes for success such as community-level collaboration, public access to information, access to childcare, as well as individual, family, and community wellbeing, and a strengthening of the Inuktitut language (Department of Family Services, n.d.b). The report does not, however, define or measure poverty reduction in the territory (Crump, 2016). Nor does it refer to the relationship between poverty and child welfare. Although the problem of income assistance providing too little money to families, the recommendation is to reform the program but not necessarily provide any increase in direct financial support from the state for income assistance (or ‘welfare’) to families. For example, it reads:

> We envision a program that can better support individual development and help more of us to set and achieve our goals. We want to review how much can be earned before it is deducted and other changes that would benefit individuals returning to work. We also want to work collaboratively to develop additional supports for individuals transitioning to work, partnering with employers to
provide targeted support and training for new employees and with non-
governmental organizations that may have a role to play in workforce support and
development.

It appears a straightforward increase in financial support may viewed less positively than
other alternatives (e.g. lessening ‘claw backs,’ and training or educational opportunities).
Perhaps this is because in Nunavut, where in 2008 to 2009 over 50% of all residents
accessed monthly income assistance payments, this amount would be substantial (Impact
Economics, 2012). Indeed, a refusal to raise income assistance rates commonly occurs to
minimize additional costs to the state and lend support to concerns associated with
‘welfare dependence’ (Lindbeck, 1995; Macdonald & Wilson, 2016).

2.3.2 Historical and Material Conditions

Since 1945, financial support has been available to Inuit mothers to help them
care of their children. Today this comes through the Canada Child Benefit (CCB). The
first program of this nature in what is now Nunavut was called Family Assistance (FA). It
was intended to address economic hardship and child malnutrition\(^{10}\) by providing a small
amount of money to all mothers in Canada (McKeand, 1945). This form of financial aid,
however, was debated among government officials at that time for its potential to
encourage Inuit dependency upon the state (McKeand, 1945; Robertson, 1952)\(^{11}\).
Administered by Northern Agents, FA was considered desirable by some because it
provided Inuit an opportunity to learn to manage money—as money was largely foreign
to many Inuit at the time (McCook, 1952). It also enabled families to purchase basic

\(^{10}\) Some have described it as also satisfying other purposes, such as encouraging mothers to leave their war-time employment and return to caring for their children in the home, the subsidy was perceived by some feminists at the time as a means for paying women for their home-related labour (feminist Eleanor Radbome for example) (Oakley, 1974).
\(^{11}\) Other programs included Old Age Security, Blind Persons Allowance, Disabled Persons Allowance etc.
supplies such as tea, tobacco, and flour (Tester & Kulchyski, 1994). The management of money was also understood as an essential part of the movement of Inuit towards a greater engagement in what was considered Canada’s modern economy. However, out of fear that Inuit would not be able to manage money on their own, the delivery of the FA program was initially offered not by cheque as in the rest of Canada, but by way of credit at trading posts (McCook, 1952). This decision was based on concern that “Inuit were...incapable of managing their own affairs; that simply handing over the money would result in the purchase of useless ‘luxury items’ and that child[ren] would not benefit” (Tester & Kulchyski, 1994, p. 342). This use of credit was finally replaced by payment via cheques in 1960.

The paternalism associated with the management of money here can be understood as part of a larger response by the state towards Inuit concerning their ability to meet their needs. Unfortunately, during this same time, shifting caribou migration patterns, the collapse of the fox fur trade following WWII, and a debt-system operated by trading posts meant some Inuit may have been existing “in a state of destitution” and exhibiting “signs and symptoms of malnutrition” (Harvey, 1948, p. 1; Tester & Kulchyski, 1994). When reports of starvation in areas near and around Rankin Inlet made newspaper headlines and served to embarrass the Canadian government on an international stage, the government opted to ‘take care’ of Inuit (Bonesteel, 2006; Laugrand, Oosten, & Serkoak, 2006; Tester & Kulchyski, 1994). Unfortunately, this did not include helping Inuit to make decisions based on what they wanted, or what knew about the land and area, and consequently led to far more difficult circumstances for many families to manage (Laugrand, Oosten, & Serkoak, 2006; Tester & Kulchyski,
1994). For example, some Inuit were relocated to areas that offered far worse conditions for hunting and, therefore, had to make their way back to the previous location they had lived and been moved from (Laugrand, Oosten, & Serkoak, 2006). Such responses often resulted in living in a “completely changed environment” as families found themselves residing in one location, as opposed to living what was previously a nomadic lifestyle of travelling in relation a family’s needs (Bonesteel, 2006; Richards, 1956, p. 2).

When Inuit came to live near and within settlements, often related to these relocations, even the Canadian government had mixed feelings about it. The increasing movement of Inuit from the land into communities was both encouraged and resisted at different times. Although the government would encourage Inuit (and even coerce) Inuit to remain in these communities later on, it appears some within the government may have been initially unhappy with this decision. Often there was concern for the romantic relationships that developed between Inuit women and Qallunaat government agents. One state agent (welfare officer), Harrison (1959), described these relationships as a “social problem” (p. 3). This concern may have been related to the government’s fear for increasing the dependency of Inuit on government relief if Inuit did not continue to travel to hunt etc. (Tester & Kulchyski, 1994). The government response was to limit its involvement in Inuit lives (and consequently, its financial responsibility), and impose a policy of non-fraternization (Keeling & Boulter, 2015). The government did this through legislation titled An Ordinance Respecting Actions for Seduction in 1948. This took the form of policies of “dispersal” that prohibited Inuit from spending time at permanent settlements in the Arctic (Keeling & Boulter, 2015, p. 39). Such policies contributed to what has been described as an “era of neglect” by Tester & Kulchyski (1994) (p. 337). It
was only when they were challenged, such as by Whitfield (1961), who was having a relationship with an Inuk woman when he was fired for doing so, and threatened to go to media that this policy was modified slightly (Sivertz, 1961). The policy was finally understood as discriminatory on the basis of race (Miller, 1961). Whitfield (1961) had commented that when “one British subject should be prohibited from walking with another on racial grounds…[it] seems appalling.”

Much of this was related to the Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources’ (DNANR) approach to how it would support Inuit in the 1950s. The approach has been explained as follows:

Where primitive Eskimos in remote areas are relatively free from contact with white civilization, it is planned to leave their present economy as undisturbed as possible. In areas where there is already permanent contact, integration with the white economy will be encouraged. Between these two extremes, employment of Eskimos will be encouraged provided it does not interfere unduly with their normal life. (“Advisory Committee,” n.d., p. 35)

This decision appears to be an attempt to bring together the two rather polarized perspectives concerning Inuit at the time. One perspective maintained that Inuit should preserve their culture and self-sufficiency (Keeling & Boulter, 2015). This was reported as part of a belief to “keep the Eskimos in the igloo, an Eskimo always, a romantic —and presumably docile—anachronism in a changing world” (Mowat, 1958, p. 1). Such thinking translated into policy at the time intended to “encourage this sturdy race of people to continue to be independent, self-reliant and self-supporting as they have been since the dawn of their history” (Memorandum re Eskimos, n.d., p. 1). Although this
refers to a recognition for Inuit strengths and agency, it is also likely related to the government’s desire to avoid financial responsibility for Inuit. The cost of northern administration was routinely of concern to bureaucrats in Ottawa (Tester & Kulchyski, 1994).

Increasing paternalism, particularly given the rise in public attention to what had become more difficult social and material conditions for many Inuit families within settlements also held a considerable impact on policy decision making. Many discussions concerning why and how to support Inuit occurred at different levels of government. As Acting Chief of the Arctic Division, Richards (1956) wrote:

I would like to answer a question which might very probably be asked at this point: Why should the Government of Canada make plans for the Eskimo [sic] people? I think it is because they are a group who have always lived in isolated in regions where activities of other Canadians are now influencing their lives. This influence takes place in ways which can and do bring disadvantages or even disaster, if steps are not take at least to ameliorate the impact of civilization. Preferably the steps we take should direct the force of this impact into channels that not only avoid being injurious, but which will be beneficial. (p. 3)

This paternalistic reasoning supported the other perspective —and agenda—of modernizing Inuit from their ‘primitive’ ways (Keeling & Boulter, 2015). Despite the tension between this and that of ‘dispersal,’ the state increasingly moved away from policies of non-interference, and those policies that can be associated with the modernization agenda, prevailed. In fact, following Diefenbaker’s election in 1957, policy changes occurred largely in light of possible mining opportunities for oil and
northern development—upon which Diefenbaker’s election campaign was partially based (Tester & Kulchyski, 1994)\textsuperscript{12}. To carry out this economic development project in the North, the state looked to solutions including the formal creation of communities and resettlement of Inuit, the introduction of Inuit to a wage economy, and ultimately, the provision of government relief (Bonesteel, 2006; Tester & Kulchyski, 1994).

The settlement of Inuit into permanent communities and development of industrial employment increasingly became understood as a solution to the economic problems experienced by Inuit, but also as a means to generate profit for Canadian companies (Bonesteel, 2006; Damas, 2002). Consequently, the work of encouraging Inuit to become employed became the chief task of many northern social workers in the 1960s (“Session at,” 1960). Modernization by way of wage-based employment was understood to be necessary to provide Inuit equal rights and opportunities as those in the rest of Canada (Bonesteel, 2006; Richards, 1956). Modernization was also deemed important for the survival of Inuit:

The Eskimo [sic] people have a limited culture and more particularly no written record of their history. What we are attempting to give them is much more important that what they had. The Eskimo people...must keep up with progress and change. If they do not, they will die out as a race, they will stay as Indigenous

\textsuperscript{12} Although many Inuit had been working for some time at Distant Early Warning (DEW) line sites, for the Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC) and for the state, by the 1960s concerns for Inuit gaining employment was of great interest in politically-economic decision-making. Although oil was first found in the Northwest Territories in 1919 (in Norman Wells), oil in Arctic was not found until the 1970s (Cranstone, 2002). Resource extraction, such as mining for radium, uranium, gold, ore, which was first explored in the North in the 1930s, quickly became the focus for discussions concerning employment (Cranstone, 2002). Following World War II, mining began in what is now Nunavut at the Rankin Inlet Nickle Mine (Keeling & Sandlos, 2015). As evidenced by its inclusion in the Government of Nunavut’s annual reports, mining has largely remained the focus of interest regarding concerning employment to this day.
peoples and northern development and their share in it will by pass them [by].

(Orange, 1963, p. 2)

This notion of extinction related to Indigenous peoples has been an ongoing historical theme within dominant western culture at that time (Wesson, 2013). The modernist perspective, therefore, was associated with benevolent support or help. However, this was typically tied to the goal of assimilation, and can be summed up in an article in the Edmonton Journal, which stated:

The sooner [Inuit are] integrated into the white population, the faster [they will] advance socially and economically. Otherwise, he will only remain on the fringes of the white man’s northern camps doing menial jobs and being held in unhappy suspension between one world he does not understand and another in which he has lost his old skills to survive. (“Tories plan,” 1957).

Increased participation in wage employment also served other purposes as well, namely it provided an important labour pool for resource development opportunities.

2.3.3 Northern Rankin Inlet Nickel Mine (NRINM)

One of these opportunities was the creation of the Northern Rankin Inlet Nickel Mine (NRINM) in 1957 in Rankin Inlet, Nunavut. Around this same time child welfare legislation was introduced to the territory (described in the subsequent section). Some Elders who worked at the NRINM continue to live in Arviat today. Although it was hailed “an experiment in Inuit modernization,” the mine closed after only 5 years (in 1962) when the price of nickel fell on the international market (Keeling & Boulter, 2015, p. 38). While in operation, the NRINM was the first mine in Canada to employ Indigenous peoples, employing both Qallunaat from southern Canada and Inuit from the
surrounding area (Dailey & Dailey, 1961; Keeling & Boulter, 2015). Although it has been noted that some Inuit learned of the mine and arrived in Rankin Inlet with an interest to learn more about the possibility of employment (Damas, 2002; Rodon & Levesque, 2015), other Inuit reported being coerced and brought to the camp with little to no say in the matter (Tester, 2016). Some families arrived from outlying areas via boats sent by the mine to find and collect workers (Tester, 2016). Ultimately, both relocation and migration were at play (Damas, 2002). Some of those who arrived by boat described being required to leave their possessions behind, as they traveled to what was to be a new ‘modern’ life (Tester, 2016). This included leaving dog teams, which had the immediate effect of making Inuit largely dependent upon locally-sourced Western food upon arriving in Rankin Inlet. All other aspects of life were entirely different in this new settlement as well (Dailey & Dailey, 1961). Inuit, who had previously lived according to their own schedules, the weather, and the availability of resources, suddenly found themselves involved in shift work and living by the clock (standardized time) (Tester, 2016). The change from a life that was previously spent out on the open land, to a life confined largely underground in dark tunnels has been described as both difficult, but also positive—at times (Rodon & Levesque, 2015; Tester, 2016). As Keeling and Boulter (2015) note, Inuit “did not merely suffer through or resist mineral development; they participated (willingly or otherwise) and, in so doing, became miners” (p. 38).

For many Inuit, life in Rankin Inlet while working at the mine meant living in a three-room ‘matchbox’ house (Tester, 2009). These homes were typically heated by small oil heaters that were both dangerous and expensive (Dailey & Dailey, 1961). Described by Damas (2002) as “scrap lumber ‘shacks,’” these buildings had no running
water or toilets, and sewage was collected in bags via ‘honey buckets,’ that when full were tied and left outside (p. 97). Tester (2006) has described how living in this form of housing during the spring and summer when plastic bags of sewage broke open, turned dirt roads between homes into what today would constitute a “public health disaster” (p. 8). Although many Inuit lived in these homes that had been built by the mining company, others lived in a separate area of town where houses were pieced together from available scraps (Damas, 2002; Dailey & Dailey, 1961). It is noteworthy that Inuit who lived in the scrap housing were paid less than those living in the mine’s ‘Eskimo village’ settlement area (Damas, 2002). By the late 1950s, there were over 300 Inuit living in Rankin Inlet (Damas, 2002), composing 70% of the mine’s workforce (Carter & Friesen, 2014; Keeling & Boulter, 2015).

Adjusting to settlement life was challenging for many Inuit and Rankin Inlet had its share of social problems. This included homelessness or “misfits…[people] treated more or less as bums,” and issues associated with child protection and poverty (Neville, 1959). These challenges were likely made worse by the poor housing that was completely unlike what Inuit were accustomed to when they had lived on the land. This was described by one northern service officer:

Families living in well-built snow houses were infinitely better off than those living in patchwork shelters consisting of tents, wood, cardboard, etc. The latter, all of which included a jumble of the white man’s ‘culture’ were squalid and dirty, while the snow houses were extremely spacious and clean. (Grant, 1959, p. 1)
Williamson (1974) described housing conditions for Inuit within Rankin Inlet as so bad that children’s ability to learn was “seriously inhibited” and “less than that necessary for the full health and vigour of a child” (p. 106). He further commented on the reports by Inuit who found their homes “cold, leaky, improperly insulated, and generally badly-built” (Williamson, 1974, p. 122). These conditions have since been understood to cause serious health problems in children (Braubach, Jacobs, & Ormandy, 2011; Krieger & Higgins, 2002).

The living conditions in Rankin Inlet for Qallunaat workers, however, were much different. Qallunaat families were housed in an area altogether separate from Inuit and provided multi-room homes with heat, running water, and sewage lines (Dailey & Dailey, 1961; Keeling & Boulter, 2015). Qallunaat received substantially higher salaries than Inuit at the mine as well (Dailey & Dailey, 1961; Tester, 2016). This was consistent with employment around the same time that occurred in other communities as part of the creation of the Distant Early Warning (DEW) sites (military radar stations constructed during the Cold War). For this employment:

> It was agreed that for some years an Eskimo employee should be paid a lower wage than is paid to an employee brought in from outside for the same work, because the Eskimo will for some time be handicapped by lack of education, lack of familiarity with English, and lack of technical training. (“Wages,” 1956, p. 4)

However, Dailey and Dailey (1961) point out the salary for Inuit in Rankin Inlet was in fact even less than what Inuit would have received at the Distant Early Warning (DEW) Line sites. They explain that at the Northern Rankin Inlet Nickle Mine, “By northern standards the wages paid to the Eskimo [sic] are low. During construction of the DEW
Line, some companies paid as high as $12.00 per day minimum, the lowest $7.00. The mine [however,] pays $6.00.” (p. 80). These explanations could support the notion of Inuit occupying—what might be largely understood as trainee positions, or positions of lesser authority than their Qallunaat colleagues. However, as a research by Tester (2016) indicates, some Inuit who worked at the mine from the time it opened until the day it closed, never received a raise during their work despite moving beyond what would have been understood as trainee positions into advanced positions that would have likely required distinct skill sets. This is consistent with concerns that “the money economy” Inuit experienced from working at the mine “did not radically add to the material stability of their lives…their earnings often no more than equaled, and in some cases, fell radically short of their expenditures” (Williamson, 1974, p. 121). The implications for families and children given their reliance on Western food in itself, are obvious.

When taken together with the geographical separation of Qallunaat and Inuit housing, poorer wages, and the poorer quality of the housing provided to Inuit workers, a segregation of Inuit and Qallunaat and discrimination appears to have occurred. Williamson’s (1974) work supports this assertion. Keeling and Boulter (2015) pointed to this in their research, which documented segregation of social activities, so as to “limit and monitor” the contact between Inuit and Qallunaat (p. 47). This was depicted by Dailey and Dailey (1961):

Most whites at Rankin Inlet have absolutely no idea of how the Eskimo [sic] lives. White personnel are forbidden to enter the Eskimo settlement without the superintendent, and any Eskimo woman who seems at all ‘familiar’ is warned by
the mine. In several instances, the Northern Service Officer was forced to remove these ‘undesirables’ from the mine. (p. 95)

This report goes on to explain further:

Eskimo [sic] and white neither eat together at the mine nor attend moving pictures in one another’s company. The majority of Eskimo...eat in a separate dining room where the food is prepared by Eskimo women who are hired for this purpose by the mine. Whites attend movies in the recreation room on Monday, Wednesday and Friday evenings; Eskimo on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday. (Dailey & Dailey, 1961, p. 95)

Elders, in research by Keeling and Boulters (2015), however, described social events attended by both Qallunaat and Inuit, though this may have been following the relaxing of initial segregation policies in place. Other forms of discrimination, such as serving Inuit only four cans of beer while working at the mine, “while permitting an extra two cans to be consumed by white men” also occurred (Williamson, 1974, p. 128). For many Inuit this experience of working at the mine may have led to their first encounter with alcohol. From 1960 to 1962, two reports by Inuit women that experienced domestic violence in relation to the use of alcohol were documented (Williamson, 1974). Given the size of the homes and the role of women in caring for children at this time, it is likely that children would have been present and witness to these situations. This is consistent with reports by Neville (1959) that brought attention to situations concerning child welfare at this time. The segregation of Inuit and Qallunaat also appears to be consistent with research by Damas (2002) who indicated Qallunaat workers at the mine may have thought of Inuit workers as their “rivals” (p. 96), and research by Rodon & Levesque
(2015) that points to hierarchical relationships between Inuit and Qallunaat during this same time. However, as one newspaper article in The Northern Miner at this same time described, the situation in Rankin was “integration without assimilation” (Eskimos integrated,” 1958, p. 1). This article advanced claims that there was no discrimination at the mine site and described the NRINM as “setting the pattern for future mining development in the Arctic” (Eskimos integrated,” 1958, p. 2). Such perspectives serve to minimize the conditions under which families and children lived during this time.

When the Rankin Inlet Nickle Mine closed in 1962 the community changed dramatically. Seventy Inuit lost their jobs (Keeling & Boulter, 2015). Gibson (1978) explained how when this occurred “there had been no contingency planning and there were no immediate solutions when the mine closed” (p. 19). This is despite a report initiated in 1958, four years earlier, by anthropologist Robert Dailey and his wife Lois to the government warning of such a situation. In their report, they foresaw the likelihood of resource exhaustion, and detailed their recommendations for alleviating the impact of such an event on Inuit, who were now accustomed to wage employment (Dailey & Dailey, 1961). They stated: “quite honestly, in my opinion some of the people might have been better off in the long run had they never entered the field of wage employment” (Dailey & Dailey, 1961). When the mine closed, the majority of Qallunaat workers departed for southern Canada and other employment opportunities (Carter & Friesen, 2014; Keeling & Boulter, 2015). Although it appears that some Inuit also moved on to other communities and opportunities, approximately half of the Inuit families remained in the community (Damas, 2002). This may have occurred for a range of reasons, one being that many Inuit no longer possessed dog teams required for travel. Importantly, the
drastic changes that had both occurred for families as they came to live in Rankin Inlet, can be understood as likely parallel to the changes the families experienced when the mine closed.

The lack of economic opportunity in the settlement of Rankin Inlet now meant many families were suddenly in need of income assistance (Damas, 2002). Having adjusted to a wage economy, while also lacking the necessary equipment to return to a land-based means of survival, many Inuit struggled to feed themselves and their children by traditional means (Keeling & Boulter, 2015). In a letter to the Department of Finance in Ottawa, from the then Deputy Minister in 1962, the town of Rankin Inlet was described as a “disaster area” (Phillips, 1962, para. 2). Yet, public health and medical services constituted little more than a “primitive first aid” (Williamson, 1974, p. 144). It is unlikely to be a coincidence that high infant mortality within the community was of concern to government officials during this same time (‘Minutes,’1962\(^{13}\)). This placed the government in an awkward position. Despite not wanting to financially support Rankin Inlet as a town, the state was required to provide for the people now living there. This contributed to what Gibson (1978) has described as, “the failure to assess and prepare for the broader and longer-term effects of the Rankin Inlet project...[It] resulted in significant costs that were borne by the Inuit residents of Rankin Inlet and, indirectly, by Canadian taxpayers” (p. 20).

\(^{13}\) In a nearby town of Baker Lake, infant mortality was noted in 1960 to have reached sixteen deaths out of twenty-five live births since 1959 (Ryan, 1960).
2.4 Food and Meeting a Family’s Needs

Having often been required to rely, or largely relying upon Western store-bought food for the years they were employed at Rankin Inlet mine, many Inuit families experienced “hard times” once the mine closed (Rodon & Levesque, 2015, p. 17). This included food insecurity. Mining employment had offered limited opportunity to hunt given the mine’s operating schedule of 24-hours a day, 7 days a week (Tester, 2016). Although some Inuit had continued to access land-based traditional food sources (i.e. char, caribou, muktuk or ‘blubber’), others had come to depend to a large extent on the meals provided through the mine, and/or food available at the local store (Tester, 2016). Over time this has contributed to some Inuit developing a preference for Western food over the traditional Inuit diet. This has continued to the present day and is now the case for many, particularly young, Inuit (Prestwich, 2013; Pufall et al., 2011).

In Nunavut more generally, food can typically be purchased through two grocery stores in each community: The Co-op, and the Northern Store. Some communities have additional options. These stores are important to the communities beyond providing food. They sell a range of goods and supplies, such as bullets and material for hunting, baby food, furniture, clothing, and fur, and fabric. Community residents can order and purchase large items such as skidoos and boats from these stores as well. The stores also serve as a hub of activity in the communities, as they typically house a post-office and bank machine for dispensing cash, as well as provide limited banking services. Some contain a small fast-food outlet, and all offer a meeting place or location to network and connect with others. Although communities vary in size in Nunavut, generally, communities possess much of the same infrastructure. This includes a health centre, an
elementary and high school, a police detachment, a small radio station, a community hall, a social service office, a hamlet office and garage, a hotel and a restaurant, and a couple (or few) churches. Larger communities tend to have more businesses or services, such as banks in the communities of Rankin Inlet, Cambridge Bay, and Iqaluit. A couple communities have additional organizations, such as Igloolik, which hosts the Nunavut Research Institute, or Cambridge Bay which is now home to the Canadian High Arctic Research Station (CHARS). Due to a decentralized model of government in Nunavut, different departments of the government are located within the three regions in Nunavut, with headquarters typically found in Iqaluit, the capital. In some communities, additional businesses have opened with a varying degree of success.

Arviat, although now considered the second largest community in the territory in terms of population (the first being Iqaluit), has fewer businesses, organizations, and infrastructure than other large communities such as Rankin Inlet or Cambridge Bay. There is a small library, and the remnants of a pool that is no longer used. Arviat also hosts a couple additional businesses, such as the Quickstop and Arctic Connections—two small convenience stores, as well as the Eskimo Point Lumber Supply. There is a small gift shop, three small hotels, and a bed-and-breakfast. The fast-growing population of Arviat—approximately 2,800 (Nunavut Tourism, n. d.), climbed from 1,810 in 2011, to over 2,500 in 2016 (Statistics Canada, 2016a, 2016b, 2017a). This increase in population, together with the limited businesses and organizations that exist in the community, means job opportunities within the community can be far and few between (Statistics Canada, 2017b). This is consistent with the limited access to employment throughout the territory.
2.4.1 Mining as the Solution!

Interestingly, just as the government historically focused on industrial employment as a solution to supporting Inuit through economic hardship, today both the federal and territorial governments have continued to take a similar approach. In 2011, then Prime Minister Stephen Harper described the North as a “great treasure house” in reference to mining in Nunavut (Cudmore, 2014, para. 6). He was also quoted as stating: “Our government is the first since that of Prime Minister Diefenbaker to put the north at the top of Canada’s agenda. We put it there and we will keep it there, and the north’s best years are only beginning” (Woods, 2011, para. 21). As part of this, the federal and territorial governments supported the creation of an Office for the Chamber of Mines in Iqaluit to encourage mining development in the territory (Woods, 2011). This focus on mineral extraction in Nunavut has been described as holding positive direct and indirect benefits for Nunavummiut. These benefits primarily include job and business opportunities (Nunavut Economic Forum, 2013). Perceived as the ‘economic driver’ for Nunavut, mining has been cited by the previous territorial Premier, Peter Taptuna, as necessary for addressing unemployment within communities and as essential to preventing young people from having to rely upon income assistance (Murphy & Gregoire, 2015). In essence, mining is touted as important in relation to the jobs it offers Inuit and that these jobs will address the wide-spread poverty in the territory. In 2011, however, when the mining sector was described to have been “performing particularly well” (Impact Economics, 2012, p. 1), more Inuit were employed in the tourism sector, than in both the mining and construction sectors combined (Nunavut Economic Forum, 2013).
Given the political push towards mining in Nunavut, it is not surprising that mining remains largely understood as critical to the economic future of Inuit more generally. This is consistent with work by Keeling and Sandlos (2015) who report mining has been typically understood as essential to the assimilation of Inuit into the national economy. Hall (2012) agrees. He explicitly describes the northern mining industry as “part of Canada’s project of internal colonization in pursuit of capital accumulation; a project that, rather than be softened by environmental and social concerns, has intensified and expanded in the neoliberal era” (Hall, 2012, p. 377). This is consistent with the Government of Nunavut’s encouragement and promotion of Inuit employment in the mining sector to young people via the creation of mining education within high school science curriculum (Dawson, 2013). Mining training programs have also been incorporated within the territorial college. This includes through educational programs such as Trades Access Program, Pre-trades Program, Introductory Mine Training, Mineral Exploration Field Assistant, and Camp Cook, all available for those “seeking entry level positions into the mining industry” (Nunavut Arctic College, 2012, p. 56). Such positions, however, are described by Pegg (2015) as part of the problem with mining as an industry—for not “liv[ing] up to its rhetorical promise” (p. 376). Pegg (2015) explains that mining “is capital-intensive, rather than labor-intensive sector. Thus, the actual number of jobs created is quite small in comparison to the size of revenues created” and further, these jobs are not typically for those who are unskilled or semi-skilled (Pegg, 2015, p. 380). This is consistent with the work of Reinecke and Fryer

14 This material is titled ‘Mining Matters.’ It was developed in collaboration with the Agnico Eagle Mining Corporation (Dawson, 2013, April 11).
(2016) who determined “most Inuit employees are still in unskilled and semi-skilled positions,” which tend to be paid lower than skilled positions held by Qallunaat (p. 8). Others, such as Rodon and Levesque (2015) offer a similar sentiment in relation to Nunavut as they question the benefits associated with mining for Inuit. They point out how, “mining companies have difficulty reaching their employment targets... [largely because] Inuit make up a declining proportion of the mine workforce, and turnover rates remain quite high” (p. 32). Czyzewski and Tester (2014) speak to this same issue of turnover in their work on the impact of resource extraction on women. They explain that turnover is a vast problem for mines, and that it has even been cited as being largely relevant to decisions to close mines earlier than anticipated (e.g. Meadowbank Mine). Although mines in the territory have reported decreases in turnover rates, these rates appear to fluctuate greatly. For example, through personal communication with Czyzewski and Tester (2014), representatives from Agnico Eagle (AE), a corporation that owns two mines in relatively close proximity to Arviat, reported a decrease in turnover from 25% of all Inuit employees in 2011, to 8% in 2013 at their Meadowbank mine. This figure is rather consistent with the evaluation provided by Stratos (2015) which stated that since 2010, turnover of Inuit employees was consistently greater than for non-Inuit employees (26% versus 7% in 2014). However, in promotional material by this same company, the decrease in turnover was described as 26% in 2014, down to 12% in 2015 at this same mine (Agnico-Eagle, 2016). On the other hand, representatives of AE also report 229 Inuit departures from the company in 2011—including both permanent and temporary workers at the mine (Agnico-Eagle, 2016). Importantly, these 229 departures were from a total of only 276 Inuit workers AE had hired in 2011: this suggests a
turnover of 80% (Agnico Eagle, 2016; Bell, 2012). This is perhaps more consistent with a Mining Industry Human Resources Council (n. d.) presentation that included descriptions of mines in Canada as typically “full of white dudes” (p. 7). AE has indicated, however, that turnover rates have since fallen due to new measures in place to encourage continued employment but what these rates are exactly are unknown (Agnico Eagle, 2016).

Given this range of numbers—all reportedly provided by the same company—what ‘turnover’ in fact means, and how it is measured, remains unclear. Whether turnover is indeed falling, or if the goalpost has simply been moved, is also unknown. Attempts to clarify this with AE have not been successful15. The company would not comment on this issue via telephone. This possibly stems from a fear of a negative appraisal. Stratos (2015), however, reports that there are many reasons for why employees leave their jobs. This has included relationship and family issues, dislike for the work, and lack of social supports (e.g. child care). Czyzewski and Tester (2014) offer an alternative and important suggestion:

What is seldom articulated in relation to family and the impacts of industrial culture on Inuit is the implications of the logic of industrial culture for what constitutes the core of Inuit culture; the extended family. The family was a coherent and cooperative unit, focused historically on hunting, with a division of labour, respect and expectations focused on the maintenance of good relations essential to the survival in environmentally demanding circumstances. The most significant (and often disturbing) impacts of mining are therefore those that affect

15 Repeated emails and telephone calls have provided no answer to these questions; thus this study must rely upon existing public documentation.
families and interpersonal relations...for Inuit, work is a means to an end, not an end in itself. [This means] employment is often forgone for the sake of the family. (p. 62)

Taken alongside the high turnover of Inuit employees, this suggests that mining employment may not be as economically, socially, or culturally relevant or suitable to Inuit families as government policymakers may make it out to be. The turnover appears to point to the challenges workers experience with this form of employment, but also to this tension as Czyzewski and Tester (2014) point out—that mining requires a (continued) cultural shift for Inuit, just as it did in Rankin Inlet in the 1950s. It appears that the need for this cultural shift may play into what has become an increasingly polarized perspective regarding this sector in general (Kemp, 2009). Consequently, the ‘benefits’ to Inuit families associated with mining continue to be contested.

2.4.2 Mining in Nunavut Today

Currently there are two active mines in Nunavut: Mary River mine, near Pond Inlet, owned by Baffinland Iron Mines Corporation, and Meadowbank, near Baker Lake, owned by Agnico Eagle Inc. Construction on a new project, Meliadine mine, near Rankin Inlet, owned by Agnico Eagle Inc., is also currently underway. Inuit workers in Arviat travel by plane to both Meadowbank and Meliadine mines for employment. Meadowbank, initially slated for closure after nine years in operation, announced a possibility of closing three years ahead of schedule, causing “anxious times” for many workers (Nunavut Economic Outlook, 2013, p. 19). Although Meadowbank has been able to stay open, the potential for its closure serves as a reminder how closing a mine can have significant impacts on communities (Rodon, 2013). Other less-positive
implications of mining and mineral extraction on Indigenous communities have been
detailed in work by Rodon and Levesque (2014). For example, a range of links have been
made between mining and social issues, such as increased divorce rates, extramarital
affairs, and sexually transmitted diseases (Rodon & Levesque, 2014). Although an
increased income from mining employment can mean families are able to afford more
necessary goods, such as food, this increased income has also been tied to gambling, and
sex work (Gibson & Klinck, 2005; Czyzewski & Tester, 2014). It has also been
connected to violence, poor health and mental illness, and suicide (Gibson & Klinck,
2005; Nancarrow, Lockie, & Sharma, 2009). The community of Baker Lake, where half
of the Inuit workers for Meadowbank live permanently, has also seen “the highest
increases in the rate of criminal violations (total violations per hundred people) since
Meadowbank began production. Rates of mischief, disturbing the peace, harassment and
threats, impaired driving, and drug violations more than doubled or tripled” (Stratos Inc.,
2015, p. 8). The work schedules and the necessary separation of families, given remote
worksites, has been described as particularly hard on relationships. It can lead to strains
associated with not being able to participate in family events and special occasions
(Gibson & Klinck, 2005). An impact on cultural activities have been identified as well.
For example, hunting and participation in cultural activities can be difficult given the fly-
in, fly-out (FIFO) work schedule, given that workers are in effect absent from their
families and communities for half of every year (Gibson & Klinck, 2005). The
Government of Nunavut’s 2013 Economic Outlook report described some of these
concerns in its description of the impact of mining on families and communities:
The stresses on family can create many problems. Without some form of child support (or daycare), FIFO work all but eliminates the chance for one’s spouse to work, which can cause financial problems, resentment, and boredom...extramarital affairs, tension between couples, and jealousy affect [mining] staff...These actions and feelings can have terrible consequences that include substance abuse, violence against women, and sexual assault. From the mine operator’s perspective, problems with relationships are a constant source of absenteeism and turnover. The FIFO work also has broader effects on a community. At any given time, it could mean that 50 to 100 men are absent from the community. This can result in a gender imbalance that is a source of problems. (p. 73)

This indicates that the GN is well aware of the possible social implications associated with mining employment. Further, for Inuit who work at a mine, their ability and the time they have to be out on the land can be limited given their work schedules. This can mean many families must rely more on local stores for their food, as opposed to hunting for much of the food they consume (country food). This reliance on stores can have economic impacts on families. Importantly, as Ozkan and Schott (2013) point out:

Most studies that inquire into the value of country food such as caribou, whale or seal meat only look at its replacement value in the store. This leads to a significant underestimation of the value of country food. Northern Aboriginal people value hunting and acquiring country food and forfeit time and money to do so. (p.1270)

This suggests being on the land is more than just a means to attain one’s food. It also reflects the relationship or bond Inuit hold to the land, as perhaps best indicated by the
title of Brian Aglukark’s (n.d.) article: *Inuit and the Land as One*. However, as hunting remains an expensive activity, some Inuit find their employment from mining can be what financially enables them to go out on the land (i.e. purchase snowmobiles, gas, bullets etc.) (Gibson & Klinck, 2005). Finally, environmental concerns regarding mining have an impact on Inuit families as well. Concern for their ability to hunt and access food and water or ice from the land have also been cited as concern to many Inuit (Bernauer, 2011).

Despite mining employment being declared by politicians as economically beneficial to Nunavummiut, as previously described, there is no consensus as to whether this is true in the case of Nunavut. Indeed, international research indicates countries that are more reliant on mining tend to have higher poverty (Elo & Beale, 1985). It is of great relevance that rather than being a panacea for rural poverty, resource extraction has instead been associated with the creation and persistence of poverty (Pegg, 2006; Rural Sociology Task Force, 1993; Lichter & McLaughlin, 1995). This is consistent with research by Perdue and Pavela (2012) who found higher poverty in countries that mined a higher percentage of coal relative to other countries. This is despite jobs in the mining sector often being considered “good jobs” with what was considered high pay (Perdue & Pavela, 2012, p. 378). Parlee (2015) described this as “the resource curse” (p. 425).

Pegg’s (2006) research reflects these same issues. Such research suggests that a dependency on the mining sector can contribute to negative socio-economic outcomes for those most in need. The World Bank, which holds poverty alleviation as one of its mandates, recognizes the problems associated with mining, yet continues to advocate for mining as a positive economic opportunity for those areas that face hardship (Pegg, 2006;
World Bank and International Finance Corporation, 2002). This may contribute to why some policymakers continue to perceive resource extraction as a remedy to poverty (Parlee, 2015). This perspective may also be related to an ideological political approach to poverty reduction that suggests the answer is always employment, that benefits ‘trickle-down,’ or where “poverty reduction [is understood] as the indirect outcome of growth,” with little concern for the existence of structural inequalities (Saad-Filho, 2010, p. 2). Beyond the immediate provision of jobs within a mine itself, there are typically indirect business opportunities and jobs that stem from the resource sector as well, such as the transportation to and from the mine, and food services needed for the mine. However, Pegg (2006) explains, that to rely on this as offering vast benefits to those living in poverty relies on a “causal logic...[that] resource extraction [leads to] » development of downstream businesses [which leads to] » jobs, economic growth, and tax revenues [which leads to] » poverty reduction” (p. 381). This logic has yet to be proven and instead, given the literature cited and research presented within the remained of this thesis, remains contested. Nonetheless, these perceptions appear to have largely driven northern development in Canada

Importantly, the range of social, cultural and economic impacts associated with mining all appear to disproportionally affect women as well. Gibson and Klinck (2005) explain that this is because:

Women are especially vulnerable to inequity as they experience more of the negative effects of a mine...[For example], the burden of shift rotation stress and addictive problems (especially alcoholism) that mine work causes in men, is
passed on to women through abusive relationships, increased conflict, and an abdication of household and child rearing responsibilities. (p.133)

Deonandan, Deonandan and Field (2016) offer a similar sentiment:

Not only do women not share in the benefits [of mining], their concerns are frequently not addressed in the negotiations...[this stems in part from] male-dominated band councils [that] have relegated women’s voices to the margins in negotiations with extractive companies, and as a result, women’s interests are not always represented, nor their needs addressed. (p.8)

Similarly, women do not possess an equal opportunity to participate in mining employment due to a lack of childcare, both within the community or at the mine site (Nunavut Bureau of Statistics, 2008; Rodon & Levesque, 2014). They also typically hold a greater vulnerability to inflation (Rodon & Levesque, 2014). This is consistent with work by Buell (2006), who has stated, “Aboriginal women, as the primary caregivers in communities, have the least to gain, and the most to lose as a result of development” (Buell, 2006, p. 22). At minimum, this suggests attention to the needs and experiences of women should be of particular concern to the Government of Nunavut regarding current and ongoing development of mining in the territory.

2.5 Socio-economic Challenges Facing Mothers in Nunavut

2.5.1 Mothering While Poor

For mothers in Nunavut, the challenges associated with feeding, clothing and caring for children can be enormous. In part this is because the amount of money to which many women have access via income assistance, or ‘welfare,’ is understood as inadequate given the cost of food within the territory (Chan et. al, 2006; Rennie, 2015).
So how much are the mothers receiving? The total amount of income assistance a family receives depends on a few factors in Nunavut: the community they live in, the number of people in their family, and the cost of their housing. For those living in public housing, their rent and utilities are paid by income assistance aside from a $60 monthly payment that is often deducted from their welfare cheque (Impact Economics, 2012). For example, in Iqaluit, a single person living in public housing would receive $344 for food, plus a $50 clothing amount, for a total of $394 per month (L. Journal, personal communication, July 19, 2017). A single mother would receive slightly more. This is because the Canada Child Benefit (CCB) in the territory is combined with the Nunavut Child Benefit (NUCB) into one monthly payment. The maximum amount of child benefits for children under 6 years old is currently $6,400 per year (or $533.33 per month) (Government of Canada, 2017), and the NUCB is $330 per year for each child under the age of 18 that lives at home (or $27.50 per month) (Government of Nunavut, n.d.b). This means a mother and child in Arviat on ‘welfare’ typically receives less than $1000 to live each month. This amount must be understood in light of the high cost of living in the territory, as represented by a higher Consumer Price Index in the territory (2.9%) than in the rest of Canada (2.3%) (Government of Nunavut, 2018). In practical terms, the average price of a 2.5kg bag of flour in southern Canada in 2017 was $4.91, where in Nunavut at this same time, the average price was $13.81—a cost of almost three times as much (Government of Nunavut, 2017d). Although those across Canada can find it difficult to afford meet their basic needs when in receipt of income assistance, it is evident that a family of any size in Arviat that must rely on income assistance can experience a significant financial strain.
For many, such struggles can mean having to turn to extended family members and friends for financial support when their monthly payments run out, or alternatively, to other community members, or a boyfriend or male partner. Unfortunately, this reliance on others can leave some women in a position of increased vulnerability such that they may be forced to endure sexual and/or physical violence or other things so as to access the resources they need to feed and care for their children. The Government of Canada has recognized this relationship between women’s—particularly mothers’—economic dependence and the experience of violence (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2008).

Given the vast food insecurity experienced by women (Beaumier & Ford, 2010), and the rates of domestic violence towards women in the territory (6,701.8 in 2013 per 100,000, a rate 13 times higher than in the rest of Canada), it is likely this is the case for some Inuit mothers in Nunavut (Statistics Canada, 2013).

For many women, mothering while poor has other implications as well. This includes implications within their relationship to the child welfare system. Kline (1993) has written extensively about this, and pointed out:

Child protection workers are directed to identify and design treatment for the problematic behaviours of individual caregivers, not to document and develop responses to problems of poverty, racism, and violence, and the way these affect women's lives. Not surprisingly, then, child protection discourse tends to blame individual mothers for child neglect. It is filtered into the judicial process through child protection workers, who play an important role in constructing cases, and in providing evidence of child neglect in court proceedings. This professional discourse has particularly persuasive value with judges in this context because it
tends to reinforce mother-blaming aspects of the dominant ideology of motherhood. (p. 320)

As Kline (1993) describes here, the intersection of poverty, racism, and violence all factor into how mothers are both perceived and managed within the child welfare system. She also connects this assessment of ‘bad mothers’ to the breadwinner model, which emphasizes women as caregivers. Kline (1993) then argues how poverty, racism and violence “naturalize the removal” of Indigenous children from their families (p. 307). Swift (1995) agrees. These positions are also consistent with a colonial history that, as Warburton (1997) has explained, served to define roles for Indigenous peoples. Warburton (1997) stated:

During European colonization, Aboriginal women, whatever their pre-contact status, were subordinated within the patriarchal organization of reproduction established by the newcomers. State administration of Aboriginal matters became structured around concepts which viewed Aboriginal men as potential wage labourers...and women as their subordinate spouses and caretakers of children. (p. 121)

As Swift (1995) explains, fathers continue to be traditionally understood within Western dominant society as the breadwinners. When traditional roles are not adhered to, mothers, tend to be perceived as “unworthy” when in need of financial support (Swift, 1995, p. 155). For example, single unmarried mothers can face a social stigma. Children, however, are deemed ‘worthy poor’ and are consequently, perceived as “innocent victims” (Swift, 1995, p. 158). This results in what Swift (1995) describes as a “model [that] simultaneously supplies the causal variable for neglect—a needy child who has not
been adequately parented—and warrants the investigative, authoritative approach” of child welfare (p. 162). Child welfare’s use of apprehension (or removal) of ‘innocent’ children from ‘unworthy’ mothers can then be perceived as an appropriate treatment or intervention for these families.

Although the ‘male breadwinner model’ associated with capitalism was foreign to Inuit until industrial employment in the North, a gendered division of labour can be understood as consistent with traditional Inuit culture—to a point. Historically, Inuit men would typically hunt and return what was caught to their wives to prepare. Women would make warm clothing, as well as care for children while the men were away. Roles within traditional Inuit culture related to gender have been described as distinct, but complementary (Briggs, 1974; Guemple, 1986; Quintal-Marineau, 2017). Although greatly simplified here, these roles ensured tasks were distributed in relation to the collective needs of families. As Mancini-Billson and Mancini (2007) explain, “gender segregation of skills existed, but it was not as rigid or linked with inequality of the sexes” as in dominant Western society (p. 235). This is consistent with writings by Ekho and Ottokie (2000). With the creation of the Rankin Inlet Nickle Mine, however, shifts appear to have occurred. Dailey and Dailey (1961) explain:

With the change in subsistence pattern, a new division of labour between men and women has inevitably arisen. Males are now involved in a regimented labour routine which systematically removes them from interaction with the family unit almost daily, and females, for their part, have lost or relinquished several of their former economic functions to the Hudson’s Bay Company. Women no longer make clothing nor have other responsibilities which they performed when these
people were hunters and trappers. These have been eliminated as their husbands and grown sons have turned to wage employment. (p. 99)

Mancini-Billson and Mancini (2007), however, have explained how the roles of men and women have shifted even further since this time. They assert that today this has meant a greater sharing of certain tasks for many couples. They also acknowledge; however, many Inuit women experience the same chauvinism and “double burden” as women worldwide (Mancini-Billson & Mancini, 2007, p. 212). This double burden occurs when women provide financially for their family but must simultaneously also provide the majority of the childcare and household labour. For many Inuit women, negotiating two worlds—that of mother who engages in care-based labour and childrearing, and that as a modern working woman (outside of the home)—constitutes a range of challenges. Grey (2010), herself an Inuk woman, refers to this negotiation as a “tug of war” (p. 25) and states “the challenges of motherhood, working outside the home, and trying to get the best out of both of these worlds have not been easy but have become a way of life for me” (p. 24). Mancini-Billson and Mancini (2007) have further explained this societal shift:

After resettlement, Inuit were no longer dependent on what a man could bring home from the hunt, but on wage labour, store-bought food, and welfare...[And the average man — ] he watched his well-worn role breakdown as he came to rely on twentieth century means of earning a livelihood. [Now] if he finds a job, it may be seasonal or temporary... [whereas] women move more easily than men do into the wage-labour sphere. (p. 208)
Where women have been described as largely homemakers from the 1950s through to the 1990s in Nunavut, they have also been described as having moved into paid employment more easily in some situations than men (McElroy, 1975). Today, women and men are described to share more equally in the labour force within their communities (Quintal-Marineau, 2017). Women also outpace men in the territory for education (3.4% of women hold university degrees, compared to 1% of men), which may have a relationship to the gender wage gap decrease from .87 in 2011 to 1.03 in 2011 (Quintal-Marineau, 2017). This, however, is not the case in relation to mining—or work outside the community. Mines continue to employ far more men than women as previously explained. Although there are reports that the number of Inuit women working at the mines have been increasing (Stratos Inc., 2016), other reports suggest that these positions continue to be in the fields of administration or human resources, and that women may face discrimination and barriers in terms of accessing certain work schedules and training opportunities (Malbeuf, 2017; Mills, Dowsley, & Cameron, 2013; Sheutiapik, 2011).

Some of the jobs related to mining that some Inuit women tend to be employed within can exist within the communities as well. For example, at the time of writing this, there was one position in Arviat that involved recruiting and organizing workers for travel to and from the mine sites. Notably, this position could be described as a form of mothering workers given that it involved making sure workers were picked up and taken to the airport in time to catch their flights to the mine site. Even with the gains made by women, men continue to be more than half of those employed in the territory (Mining Industry Human Resources Council, 2014; Quintal-Marineau, 2017). This appears to be consistent with a statement made by the Library of Parliament (2008) that “it is important to
consider the relationships that exist between economic growth and human development. Women and men in the Arctic do not necessarily benefit from such economic growth and are affected unequally by such development” (p. 3). For some Inuit today, such social, cultural and economic shifts have resulted for some in an almost ‘role reversal’ and greater sharing of childcare responsibilities between men and women, particularly when women hold the only full-time employment within a family (Mancini-Billson & Mancini, 2007). For others, such as those often connected to mining, a perpetuation or solidifying of the male-breadwinner model within the territory appears to be occurring. Given the statistics surrounding poverty, food insecurity, and violence presented earlier, however, neither of these directions appear to have necessarily improved the lives of women in the territory.

2.5.2 The Ideology of Motherhood

Although what mothers ‘do’ is far from universal given the range of cultures and contexts within which mothers live, there appear to be some consistencies within the mothering experience that suggests parallels might be drawn to allow for some more generalized understanding. One of these consistent experiences has to do with how mothers are perceived or feel they are perceived by others (Fox, Nicholson, & Hefferman, 2009), particularly when mothers are young (Rutman, Strega, Callahan, & Dominelli, 2001), or when they have had a history of drug use (Fowler, Reid, & Minnis, 2014). Feeling negatively judged or held to what can be, or feel like, impossible standards can be a common sentiment for many mothers, especially if they are poor (McIntyre, Officer, & Robinson, 2003), or in relation to specific child care-based tasks, such as infant feeding (Grant, Mannay, & Marzella, 2017). Research by Denison, Varcoe,
and Browne (2014) indicates this judgment can be so strong it can act as a deterrent for Indigenous mothers to access healthcare. This is largely tied to experiences of racism and discrimination (Denison, Varcoe, & Browne, 2014). These experiences are important because they speak to social pressures and expectations mothers may come up against, but also to how mothers may be viewed or understood by social workers and the child welfare system as well. Despite a range of contested motherhood ideologies, the perpetuation of “the traditional mother ideology [that is] defined as a ‘good mother’ [namely, the] full-time, at-home, white, middle-class, and [woman who is] entirely fulfilled through domestic aspirations” appears to continue (Johnston & Swanson, 2006, p. 509).

Many of the associations of mothering that feed into the possible understandings social workers may possess working with mothers in child welfare can be connected to what has been termed ‘intensive mothering’ (Johnston & Swanson, 2006; Hays, 1996). This is the requirement for women to provide “child-centered, expert-guided, emotionally absorbing, labor-intensive, and financially expensive” approaches to caring for their children (Hays, 1996, p. 148). Hays (1996) explains that this ideology contributes to the reproduction of the existing gender hierarchy, while simultaneously offering no compensation to mothers who sustain it. This “ethos of modern mothering,” as Fredrick (2016) has explained, is now “an all-consuming project, demanding mothers manage their children’s development in ‘partnership’ with medical and scientific experts” (p. 75). She has further explained how:

Reflecting postmodern society’s preoccupation with controlling risk...the needs of women are displaced as mother and baby are increasingly vied as separate and
competing beings. Non-normative mothers, including women of color, poor mothers, queer mothers, and women with disabilities come under particular scrutiny, as they are systematically defined as ‘risky’ mothers who are inadequate for the task of ideal mothering...hardships including illness, disability, accident—and almost any imperfections in mother or child—are viewed as the product of mothers’ individual choices, and mothers who are perceived to fail at the neoliberal project of self-discipline are subject to both state and social policing. (Fredrick, 2016, p.75)

To avoid the punitive responses from those in authority (e.g. the medical and child welfare systems) for ignoring or ‘violating these norms,’ mothers try different things. Some turn to consuming information and materials, others set unrealistic standards for themselves, while others cope amid a great deal of stress associated with being the ‘perfect’ mother. Fredrick (2016) refers to this as the “perfection project” (p. 75–76). Although these intensive mothering expectations are both created within and commonly discussed from a white dominant cultural perspective, they remain relevant to Inuit women (Johnston & Swanson, 2006, p. 509). This is because Inuit women routinely encounter white culture not only on social media, but within the health care system, the education system, and perhaps most importantly, within the child welfare system. These beliefs are prevalent in society and, like any ideological beliefs, they find their way into the institutions that govern, such as child welfare. As Kline (1993) explains:

In contemporary discourses of motherhood...the expectations of 'good' mothering are presented as natural, necessary, and universal. The 'bad mother,' by corollary, is constructed as the ‘photographic negative’ of the 'good mother,' again with the
operation of racism and other such factors rendered invisible. Moreover, the realities of poverty, racism, heterosexism, and violence that often define the lives of mothers who do not conform to the ideology are effectively erased. (p. 315)

White dominant culture and the associated perspectives of mothering (and judgement) may, therefore, be present at a local level within Inuit communities by way of interactions with many of the ‘helping professionals’ they encounter—many of whom may be in positions of authority. As Inuit Elder Atuat Akittiq (2017) explains:

People from Western culture understand their laws well, so they diligently abide by them. This is how they were raised. Now these people, who were raised with their laws, values and beliefs, are able to say to Inuit that we are not doing things right and they criticize how we live. This criticism has resulted in Inuit who do not care about their well-being anymore and who sneer at Inuit culture, criticizing our laws and way of life. (Akittiq & Karetak, 2017, p. 118)

This remark highlights how interconnected the ethnocentric and colonial promotion of white dominant culture and associated beliefs can be with the experience of being judged. It further reflects how such judgements can have real consequences on individuals and their emotional health, as well as one’s relationship to their own culture.

Ideas associated with intensive mothering extend to what is often referred to as the ‘myth of motherhood;’ a term used to describe the many values and beliefs of white Western society that are associated with ‘ideal’ mothering. Similar to intensive mothering, this myth has been used to describe the social construction of motherhood, where mothers are expected to be at all times, for example, sacrificial (of their own needs), and nurturing (Ahall, 2015). The ‘myth’ has also been used to describe how
women tend to live under a real, and often self-imposed, pressure to be, among other things, always available to their children—physically, financially, emotionally etc. (Douglas & Michaels, 2004). Women, upon becoming mothers, largely understand their new role as requiring them to operate under a degree of surveillance. Douglas and Michael (2004) have explained: “Everyone watches us, we watch ourselves and other mothers, and we watch ourselves watching ourselves…[m]otherhood has become a psychological police state” (p. 6). This can particularly be the case, when as Hays (1996) points out, the navigation of the private and public spheres for mothers produces cultural contradictions (e.g. when eating something such as uncooked fish—a common form of country food in Nunavut). Oftentimes the result here can be one of women (primarily) watching women.

Yet few mothers are able, financially, emotionally or otherwise, to provide the sort of “continual love and stimulation” that has been set up as the ideal (Oakley, 1974, p. 209). Where mothers do not meet this ideal or provide these expectations fully has been long critiqued. One example of this can be that of maternal deprivation theory, devised by Bowlby (1940), or the belief that there are negative consequences for children’s development when children are ‘deprived’ of a mother’s love (note, not a father’s love). This approach included a range of factors that were considered particularly harmful to children. For example, mothers having children out of wedlock, experiencing difficult economic conditions, being divorced, and or being employed full-time outside the home were considered to have negative effects on children (Vicedo, 2011). This approach served to both blame mothers, and to offer an answer or explanation for any issues or problems regarded in the child by referencing the mother and her actions again (Vicedo,
Although this theory can now be understood within the social context in which it was created, it continues to hold influence. For example, as an alternative to the ‘neglectful’ mother, foster care/daycare can be understood as a way to provide deprived children from poor places or racialized communities what they may be missing in their homes. Yet for those women who are or were required to work to support their families, there remains an association with deprivation theory. The contradiction here is that wealthier mothers, or those who do not need to work outside the home for economic reasons (aka ‘good mothers’), should not be separated from their kids through daycare because this will deprive children; an approach that has been tied to both race and class (Raz, 2013). It becomes evident here how all mothers can be implicated.

Mothering within such expectations can be particularly challenging for women who experience marginalization in society. For poor women, Swift (1995) explains:

They cannot even sell their labour in the market-place, their living conditions are at subsistence level; and the usual hedges against state intrusion, such as special assistance for children with learning or health problems, licensed child care, or cleaning services, cannot be purchased. (p. 163)

This is important because it highlights how poor women are less capable of presenting to the public a perception of the ‘good mother’—thus, idealized notions of motherhood intersect with class. To be a good mother is, therefore, to not be poor but also to not present to others as poor. This is because mothering ‘correctly’ involves a level of consumerism not possible for those in lower-socioeconomic groups. In dominant Canadian society, being a good mother can often be associated with remaining at home with her children through a year of unpaid maternity leave (at minimum), and thus,
having paid employment to return to afterwards. Or purchasing learning-based toys, providing one-on-one and specialized care, such as through private daycare centres, and enrolment in music classes, activity centres, and play gyms that charge monthly fees. It can involve car seats that ‘expire,’ but are required by law, and a host of ‘necessary’ clothing, and accessories, which make baby and child-related items one of the largest industries in Canada and worldwide (“Baby product market,” 2017; Straus, 2012). Striving to be a good mother in this context is not just expensive, but entirely out of reach for many women, particularly many Indigenous women who tend to be some of the poorest in Canada (O’Donnell & Wallace, 2011). Fredrick (2016) explains:

Perfect motherhood involves the display of markers of normalcy, including a middle-class status with a nuclear, heterosexual family. The perfectly normal mother is also expected to possess a healthy, typical body that enables her to independently carry out the demands of modern mothering. Scientific motherhood also encourages a preoccupation with ensuring normalcy in children, a project for which mothers are held chiefly responsible. (p. 76)

These pressures placed on women must also be viewed within the context of what has been described as a constant erosion of state support (Elliott, Powell, & Brenton, 2015; Hayes, 1996). It is, therefore, not surprising that poverty and moral stigmatization of mothers, particularly racialized mothers, continue to go hand in hand (Elliott, Powell, & Brenton, 2015; Hayes, 1996; Silva, 1996). As Browne, Smye and Varcoe (2005) have stated, the “negative stereotypes [of Indigenous mothers] tend to endure today” such that Indigenous communities are associated with poverty and substance abuse. But “since race is no longer an acceptable context in which to discuss popularized mis/representations of
Aboriginal peoples, they are increasingly framed as ‘cultural’ characteristics” (Browne, Smye, & Varcoe, 2005, p. 21). From my own experience, Inuit mothers who report being encouraged to use formula rather than breastfeed their children when giving birth at southern hospitals can be related to this point—and offers an example of how this appears to suggest they face structural racism and assumptions that they abuse substances. Thus, ‘good mothers’ continue to be understood largely as white middle to upper class women in heterosexual relationships.

The centering of white women within notions of idealized mothering have also been connected to colonialism and colonial relations, such as in the work of de Leeuw (2009), Rutherford (1994), McElhinny (2005) and Stoler (2002). These authors point to how historically, colonial agents sought to problematize Indigenous mothering and childcare that did not conform to the standards for Western middle-class child rearing. Within this, Indigenous mothers and women of color were often portrayed as dirty, “overly indulgent,” in need of instruction and education, and “as threats to their own children, and, thus, the state had the right to assume their role” (McElhinny, 2005, p. 191). Although throughout history, and in many instances, this charge was led by men, as is described by McElhinny (2005) regarding the work of doctors in the Philippines, women appear to have also been intimately involved in the “management of sexuality, parenting, and morality” around the world (Stoler, 2002, p. 110). As Oakley (1974) explains “not all reiterations of the myths of motherhood come from the mouths or pens of men, [though] most of them do” (p. 209). Historically, it appears that the authority for what constituted the correct delivery and care of children often fell to men—fathers, male medical doctors, and male state administrators were positioned as the authority on
mothering, due to what was understood as their superior knowledge. This was particularly the case for childbirth, as Mennill (2014) explains:

> The health of Canada’s citizens grew to be seen as integral to the success of the nation, mothers increasingly engaged in educational advice about pregnancy and child-rearing offered by a wide range of experts who constructed, via their expertise, standards and ideals...Both vaginal and surgical childbirth were kept firmly within the realm of medical expertise. (p. 26)

She further explains that while, “constructed as crucial, mothers were to be docile and acquiescent. This contradictory ideal extended into the idealization of childbirth, wherein expert advisors encouraged mothers to submit to overwhelmingly male medical doctors” (Mennill, 2014, p. 42). This occurred despite women having long done such work and having provided the majority of childrearing (Ribben, 1994). Importantly, who should hold authority and power over issues related to birth and motherhood continues to be debated. As an example, Inuit women have been long calling for the ability to give birth in their own communities, as opposed to being flown to hospitals in southern Canada (Johnson, 1994; Douglas, 2006). However, an image of a room full of older white men who signed legislation on this issue in Washington, D.C. in 2017, highlights how little authority women continue hold when it comes to motherhood within society today (see figure 3).
Although men played a critical role in reproducing values and beliefs associated with idealized motherhood in the earlier part of the 20th century and continue to do so in many situations today, women also played and continue to play a role maintaining these beliefs (Oakley, 1974). Many middle and upper-class Western women, with what were believed to be their natural moral understandings related to care, worked to reform Indigenous mothers in Canada. This is described in more detail in the next chapter in reference to feminism. Importantly, many of the approaches to caring for young infants that were often frowned upon by colonial agents and shamed by non-Indigenous middle and upper-class women, may today be promoted and often held as the standard for middle and upper-class women from the dominant culture. For example, ‘babywearing’ (the carrying or wrapping one’s child to their body) is a traditional form of carrying children for many Indigenous women. Jacobs (2011) addresses this point. She explains how Indigenous women, such as the Navajo often bundled and carried their infants on cradleboards or devised other ways to carry children, so they could keep their babies with them and/or continue to work. However, historically, this was perceived by white women
as a demonstration of their incompetence at mothering and was thought to mean Indigenous women “were very careless with their babies” (Jacobs, 2011, p. 121). I have heard similar sentiments by Qallunaat women regarding the carrying of Inuit children in an *amouti*, or a large pocket within a mothers’ traditional parka. Another example is that of breastfeeding. Indigenous women in Canada in the 1960s reportedly had the highest rates of breastfeeding in Canada, but this is no longer the case. Today, fewer Indigenous mothers breastfeed compared to non-Indigenous mothers despite breastfeeding being promoted by health agencies including the Government of Canada (Eni, Phillips-Beck, & Mehta, 2014; “Infant Feeding,” 2015). Inuit women in particular have the lowest rate of breastfeeding in the country (66% of Inuit women breastfeed compared to 80% for the rest of Canada) (Asuri, Ryan, & Arbour, 2011). This serves an example of how, as Eni, Phillips-Beck and Mehta (2014) explain, “societal messages imprint on women’s bodies and perceptions of bodies affecting the likelihood that they will breastfeed and the feelings they associate with it” (p. 204). This suggests a politicizing of both women’s bodies, materials and actions.

In my own experience as a mother, I have witnessed mothers publicly criticize other mothers for ‘wearing their babies wrong,’ for purchasing baby food rather than make their own organic purees (or vice versa), for allowing their children to watch television, and/or for not using (or using) cloth diapers. But this is not isolated to southern Canada. One Inuk mother commented to me that she was ‘sad’ for my child because I did not put him to sleep with a bottle. These examples demonstrate how the construction of ‘good’ mothering is constantly in flux and appears to be dependent on
societal trends and localized understandings. Smith (1987) helps us to understand this phenomenon:

Women’s voices tend to conform to the approved standards, and these in the last analysis are men’s. In consequence, women’s opinions are sharply separated from their lived experience. As they begin to develop their own opinions, they have to check them against their collective experiences as women rather than merely their personal experience. But it has not been easy for women to find their own voices convincing. It is hard for us to listen to each other. (p. 35)

Although this may essentialize the female experience, it appears to suggest a perpetuation of patriarchy deeply set within the standards of motherhood. It also appears to point to the relationships that exist between class, colonialism, capitalism, patriarchy, and mothering. These may, as Ribbens (1994) states, continue to allow both men and women to “reinforce each other in their implicit evaluations and understandings of what childrearing is all about” (p. 12).

The ideological understanding of doing motherhood ‘right’ is overwhelmingly present within dominant Western society and it has likely infiltrated and can be arguably associated with the development of child welfare. This is because white middle and upper-class women often took on the role of ‘experts’ when it came to childrearing when hired as some of the first social workers in Canada. Referred to as ‘friendly visitors,’ the first social workers made house calls to impoverished families and prescribed treatment for their moral failings, typically “moral advice on such things as the value of working hard” (OASW, n.d., para. 1). Societal beliefs at that time, particularly those held by the middle and upper-classes, often associated poverty with what were deemed to be a
family’s moral failures (Jennissen & Lundy, 2011). Many of these ‘friendly visitors’ positioned themselves as idealized or perfect women and mothers, who had a specialized knowledge to bestow on marginalized families. Subsequently, ‘treatment’ or intervention with families that were deemed ‘immoral’ often included the encouragement of a mother to place her children in orphanages, and—particularly for Indigenous families—in residential schools (Bradbury, 1982). Sullivan and Charles (2010) have stated, “residential schools are another example of a ‘rescue’ movement gone terribly wrong...[Yet] even in a racist society most ‘helpers’ are not openly racist. They can usually justify their actions ... this justification of ‘helping’ has led to horrible consequences. (p. 4). For some social workers, or those that worked in this field, this intervention was believed to be necessary to avoid passing along one’s impoverishment to the next generation, but also essential for the health and wellbeing of the children. Kelm (1998) explains:

The discourse of inadequate mothering, which fueled debates over abortion and infanticide in Britain for example, had long been operative in the area of colonial relations and supported residential schooling for Native [sic] children [in Canada]. In this way, residential schooling was seen as leading the First Nations to health, both by removing children from the clutches of supposedly negligent and ignorant parents, and by teaching them Euro-Canadian standards of cleanliness and care......some residential school [even] organized health clubs, where students were rewarded for gaining weight. (p. 62)

The perpetuation of these beliefs remains visible within criticisms levied at Canadian child welfare for adhering to dominant Western culture, and heterosexual, middle-class
standards of care (Kline, 1993). Further, the argument has been made that these beliefs and standards of care have benefitted men (Hays, 1996; Luxton, 1980; Smith, 1977). This is because female caregiving as a form of unpaid labour has enabled men to have a family, as well as be cared for within a family environment, without necessarily being required to provide the caregiving and household labour associated with it.

The promotion of good mothering has held implications for children as well. The notions surrounding childhood, and what the role children were to play in society also changed over time. Work was a key part of the lives of young children into the 20th century in Canada even though the replacement of it with schooling and play began during the mid 19th century (McIntosh, 1999). With the creation of the Children’s Aid Society, and studies of some of the first orphanages in Canada among other things, children and childhood began to be reconstructed (McIntosh, 1999). Shifts from infant schools (the first preschools) in the first half of the nineteenth century, to the use of créches (the first childcare workers for poor women), and then to the first kindergarten programs in 1883, all demonstrate this reconstruction (Beach & Bertrand, 2000). They also represent a movement from perceiving children as ‘mini’ workers, to malleable beings in need of care (something that also coincided with the rise in Victorian attitudes), to eventually, innocent beings in need of proper learning experiences and positive environments for their own development (Beach & Bertrand, 2000). This corresponded to societal shifts in thinking; Calvinist ideas of individual moral responsibility gave way to more “‘progressive’ views of human failing, which [included] looking to environmental causes for explanation” (Welon, 1986, p. 232). Children at this time came be viewed as innocent, and thus, in need of protection (Welon, 1986). This perception or ‘discovery of
the child’ has been linked to the lessening of need for child labour in rural areas, and the phasing out of children in the labour market. As Welon (1986) explains, “the structural basis for the perception of children as ‘partially formed’ adults disappeared” (p. 232). By the 20th century children were expected to attend school, but labour still often played a role in their lives, for even into the 1940s some children financially supported themselves from 14 years old on (Sitara, 2016). This was often the case for Indigenous students in residential school who “always worked more than they studied” (Sitara, 2016, para. 7).

Unfortunately, the child welfare system in Canada appears to have continued to uphold many of the dominant notions concerning these same notions concerning children and mothers. Such notions continue to influence what are often described as ‘high risk’ mothers; namely those mothers who live in poverty (Kline, 1993; Swift, 1998). Just as residential schools were justified and maintained over time, so too does it appear that this has this occurred for the child welfare system in Canada. This is despite serious critiques from Indigenous scholars and activists. de Leeuw (2014) comments on this issue in her description of the child welfare system. She states that it has been “carefully produced, maintained, and historically contiguous set of logics premised on assumptions of neutrality, good intentions, and common-sense vis-a-vis Indigenous child and families legitimizes child welfare work” (de Leeuw, 2014, p. 60). She calls it a system “so fully naturalized as to be mostly invisible, especially to settler-colonialists” (de Leeuw, 2014, p. 60). This is not the only critique, however. Many have questioned child welfare and whether it is a system that works for children —particularly Indigenous children. As an example to the contrary, critics point to the likelihood of children to leave the child welfare system for the justice system, a relationship between the two institutions often
described as a “pipeline” (Totten, 2012, p. 212). Additionally, the number of children that fail to complete their high school education, become teenage parents, end up living in poverty, or become homeless after leaving government care are routinely pointed to by those with concerns for how child welfare ‘benefits’ children in the long-run (Barker et al., 2014; Patterson, Moniruzzaman, & Somers, 2015; Rutman, Hubberstey, & Feduniw, 2007). Numerous studies confirm that children involved with the child welfare system typically fair worse than other children in terms of their educational outcomes, and in their mental and physical health. For example, they are more likely to experience a plethora of issues such as substance misuse, sexual exploitation, and teenage pregnancy (Brittain & Blackstock, 2015, p. 64). Such findings indicate the child welfare system does not necessarily leave those children that it apprehends from their parents in better situations. For Indigenous children who continue to be disproportionately represented within the child welfare system, these issues can reverberate within their families and communities over time resulting in what has been described as intergenerational trauma (McKenzie, Varcoe, Browne, & Day, 2016; Menzies, 2007; RCAP, 1996). Importantly, Inuit have voiced “visceral anger” towards the child welfare system in Nunavut (Phaneuf, Dudding & Arreak, 2011, p. 10). They have expressed a desire for a system that takes Inuit cultural considerations into account (Phaneuf, Dudding, & Arreak, 2011). This is consistent with my experience (Johnston & Tester, 2014). It is also consistent with the work of de Leeuw, Greenwood, and Cameron (2010) and Kline (1993). It indicates the existing system in Nunavut does not take Inuit culture into account and instead continues to privilege Qallunaat logic, value and beliefs.
2.6 Inuit Culture & Resistance

Leading up to the recent election in Nunavut of MLAs from different communities to sit in the territory’s legislature, many candidates spoke to local newspapers regarding their reasons for running for office. Of these, a large number of candidates commented on the need for greater Inuit representation and involvement in government (Strong, 2017). Jack Anawak of Iqaluit commented on the need “to ensure Inuit benefited from the creation of Nunavut,” and Karen Kabloona of Baker Lake explained, “Nunavut will succeed when we finally have Inuit participating fully in government...more current and future jobs filled by more Inuit” (Strong, 2017, para. 15). Jonathan Palluq of Uqqummiut (Pangnirtung) indicated he’d like to change the language requirements in the territory. He said, “Schooling is in English or French...what about our language?” (Strong, 2017, 25). Finally, Paul Okalik stated, “We’re not going to convert non-Inuit to Inuit...but we’re going to educate them (Qallunaat) and show them there are better ways to handle some issues in our society, and that’s our role [as Inuit.]” (emphasis added) (Strong, 2017, para. 29). All of these comments point to a tension within the relationship between Inuit and Qallunaat surrounding culture, language, and decision-making power in the territory. They also represent a large shift in the relationship between Inuit and Qallunaat.

Rosemarie Kuptana, previous president of the Inuit Broadcasting Corporation and the Inuit Circumpolar Conference, has spoken about the historical relationship between Qallunaat and Inuit (Kuptana, 1993). She stated it is “best explained by the concept of ilira. Inuit use ilira to refer to a great fear or awe, such as the awe a strong father inspires in his children or the fear of the Qallunaat previously held by Inuit” (Kuptana, 1993, p. 126).
7). Anderson and Bonesteel (2008) have further explained that this fear or awe of Qallunaat did not mean Inuit acquiesced to Qallunaat rule. Instead, they described Qallunaat as often possessing a “government-knows-best attitude” that historically involved, “a lack of cultural awareness or inability to take into consideration social norms of behaviour when entering into consultation at the community level” (p. 156). They point out, “even where government officials may have felt they had the concurrence and full cooperation of Inuit in certain circumstances, this may not have been the case at all in the Inuit view” (Anderson & Bonesteel, 2008, p. 156). This is consistent with Kuptana’s (1993) description. She further explains how historically it would have been “unthinkable for Inuit to challenge the authority of the powerful Qallunaat,” but that today Inuit are coming to realize there is a need to stand up to and resist Qallunaat and Qallunaat culture (Kuptana, 1993, p. 5).

Although this resistance may be becoming more overt as indicated by the recent political platforms, long-time resistance to Qallunaat culture and control is well documented by Kulchyski and Tester (2007) concerning Inuit rights to game management. Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ), traditional knowledge, has also been described as a “practice of resistance” to Qallunaat culture and colonial order (Tester & Irniq, 2008, p. 50). Although some, such as Levesque (2014), argue IQ is less about resistance to colonial order and more about Inuit both “assuming control over structures [and] to adapt them to their own use,” such debate again highlights the tension within relations between Qallunaat and Inuit (p. 115). This tension was noted within a territorial review of social services. Following consultations held with almost 1,000 people in the territory, the Child Welfare League of Canada found there was a need for the GN to
“reflect the strengths of Inuit culture [so as] to develop a more culturally competent approach” to child welfare in the territory (Phaneuf, Dudding, & Arreak, 2011, p. 4). Concerns for more cultural understanding to be applied to child welfare services in the territory have also been reiterated within political discussions by MLAs in the territorial legislative assembly (Nunavut Hansard, 2016a, 2016b; Nunavut Hansard, 2017). As a result, small changes were made to the Child and Family Services Act (to be described within Chapter 5), and a Child and Youth Advocates Office for the territory was created.

2.6.1 Culturally Relevant Child Welfare

These changes can be directly related to Inuit resistance, but also to the large increase in research that points to the importance of culture to child welfare services. For example, the work of McKenzie, Varcoe, Browne, and Day (2016) recommends transforming Euro-centric child welfare to that of a “culturally safe practice by social workers” (p. 13). This includes developing “a complex understanding of culture...[including] attention to the impacts of colonial processes and practices” (McKenzie, Varcoe, Browne, & Day, 2016, p. 13). This is consistent with the Touchstones of Hope project led by Indigenous scholar and advocate Cindy Blackstock (Blackstock, Cross, George, Brown, & Formsma, 2006). The work of this project, which brought together 200 Indigenous leaders to discuss child welfare, contributed to a shift in understanding in the field of child welfare regarding harms to Indigenous children when they become involved with the child welfare system. Focused on reconciliation, Touchstones of Hope laid out what is now widely understood as essential components to the restructuring of the child welfare system to better serve Indigenous children and families. Namely, it points to an emphasis placed on culture and language, self-
determination, non-discrimination, structural interventions, and a holistic approach be incorporated within child welfare policy and practice (Auger, 2012; Blackstock, Cross, George, Brown, & Formsma, 2006). Where this project has been reviewed and interpreted by Indigenous communities through participatory action research, it has been noted that “Indigenous communities know what is best for Indigenous children, [and that] programs and policies need to be revised or developed in order to include Aboriginal values in service delivery” (Quinn & Saini, 2012, p. 24). This has included an agreement for “an inclusive, holistic child welfare system focused on the whole extended family and not just on the children and youth” (Quinn & Saini, 2012, p. 19). Such an approach appears to be vital to the strengthening of Indigenous communities (Simard, 2009). It is also consistent with international research in the field, such as that by Long and Sephton (2011) and Raman et al. (2016). Overall, this research points to how important Indigenous culture can be to both the design and overall approach of child welfare service provision—to policy and to practice.

Applying this literature to Nunavut suggests a culturally-relevant child welfare system, or one that is informed by Inuit culture, is needed. It requires an understanding of the values and beliefs of Inuit families and childrearing. It should also incorporate understandings from traditional Inuit practices and require those who work within the child welfare system to also have an understanding of Inuit culture. Without this, misunderstandings—often tied to ethnocentrism and dominant culture values—can occur. Historically and today, such misunderstandings are common. For example, Inuit youth typically hold more freedom than youth in southern Canada (Condon; 1987). This can mean young people often move around their communities on their own (without an
accompanying adult). Inuit typically perceive this freedom as part of encouraging independence and autonomy in children. It is also consistent with the findings of Johnston (1983) regarding the parenting of Indigenous children in Canada prior to the Sixties scoop. However, such freedom has been a cause for concern in Nunavut and has led to the initiation of intervention by state officials within child welfare. Historically, this occurred with the creation of the Child Welfare Ordinance (1953). This Ordinance made illegal some traditional Inuit parenting approaches that were embedded within Inuit culture (Sissons, 1962). For example, children could be apprehended by state representatives if they were “found wandering about at late hours” or if they were considered to have “no home or settled place of abode or proper guardianship” (Child Welfare Ordinance, 1953, p. 54). Given the foreign concept of standardized time to Inuit at this time, and the likelihood of Inuit being accustomed to living according to it being either light or dark, due to the 24-hours of daylight or darkness in the summer and winter respectively, the legislation did not make sense. Also, the independence afforded Inuit children did not necessarily require children return to their parents’ home each night to sleep (Condon, 1987; Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, 2006). Instead, children were, as they are often today, afforded a freedom to visit friends and extended family members, providing for significant bonds and relationships to be developed (Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, 2006). Given the existing intergenerational gap or disconnection that often exists between Inuit youth and their Elders today, one could suggest policies such as this Ordinance and the enforcement of them by social workers may be at least partly responsible for serving to disrupt the relationship bonds between children and their extended family that such independence encouraged. As explained by Kral (2012),
policies such as this can be linked to the real and lasting consequences of colonial control over the Arctic, such as youth suicide.

In my experience, the independence of Inuit children and youth, continues to be an issue for some Qallunaat social workers. Often interpreted as ‘overly permissive,’ or even understood as ‘parental neglect,’ some Qallunaat social workers I have encountered expressed concern for children who were provided this degree of freedom. A similar reference has been made by the Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada (PIWC) (2005) in their statement, “to the uninformed observer, Inuit parents may appear indifferent or overly lax with their children” (p. 16). In response to concerns that such independence constitutes a risk to children’s safety, the PIWC has further explained that within Inuit culture:

A large amount of freedom does not mean that Inuit children are not disciplined. Young children will be restrained if they persist in a potentially dangerous activity. Subtle verbal clues by older members of the family indicate to the child when their behaviour is inappropriate. Teasing is also used as an effective means of drawing attention to a child’s poor behavior. (Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, 2006, p. 16)

Unfortunately, interventions within child welfare, when cultural misunderstandings occur, can have serious impacts on children, parents, and the community. This is not to suggest that there are not occasions when some parents may need to think a bit more critically about this freedom, including where and what constraints within it may be needed for their children or specific situations. For example, I remember finding two very young children at my door one afternoon. They had wandered a little too far from their
home. Although this situation did not warrant child apprehension; however, one can understand how such an intervention may have occurred were they to encounter a Qallunaat social worker with no experience or understanding of Inuit culture.

Importantly, although state interventions, such as residential school, have had devastating effects on the transmission of intergenerational knowledge and culture between generations, some cultural traditions and practices within Inuit families and communities have, in some cases, not only survived, but thrived (Johnston, 1983; RCAP, 1996a, 1996b; TRC, 2012). Inuit children and youth, for example, largely continue to have this high level of freedom within their communities despite over 50 years of child welfare legislation that has worked to reduce it. In the process, however, Inuit culture, by way of the emergent everyday activities, or “a description of a particular way of life, which expresses certain meanings and values not only in art and learning, but also in institutions and ordinary behavior,” has also changed dramatically (Williams, 1998, p. 48). In fact, as Tester (2006) has explained, between the 1950s and 60s alone, Inuit experienced greater social change than any group of people in the world. Consequently, Inuit children today enjoy video games, wear popular name-brand clothing, and enjoy pizza alike most other children in Western society.

Within this context, child welfare continues to exist under claims of ‘neutrality,’ all the while endorsing dominant Western culture values and practices (Dominelli, 2007). de Leeuw, Greenwood, and Cameron (2010) have explained how the child welfare system offers little to the deconstruction of colonial discourse regarding “Indigenous deviance” that is present within child protection institutions, and child welfare discourse generally (p. 286). de Leeuw (2014) has further reminded us “it was common-sense of
the day that underpinned the policies and laws of what is now referred to by some as Canada’s ‘national crime’” regarding residential schooling (p. 63). Consequently, she argues:

Child-welfare policies and practices are always and also material, grounded, and embodied, which means they always exist in a tensioned relationship with differing ontologies. Child welfare must be evaluated not as abstract, but as material, lived, and in-place incursions that, ultimately, impact families, communities, and lives in the real world. (de Leeuw, 2014, p. 73)

To do this requires an intimate understanding of Inuit life and culture, including childrearing, as it relates to the child welfare system.

2.6.2 Cultural Childrearing

Specific literature related to Inuit culture and childrearing, as previously mentioned, often has to do with ‘the formation of a child’ or ‘making’ of a child—a culturally distinct concept from that of ‘raising a child’ typically associated with dominant Western culture (Ekho & Ottokie, 2000; Karetak, Tester & Tagalik, 2017). Given beliefs concerning Inunnguiniq (or making a human being), the focus for many Inuit in relation to childrearing has been on raising respectful adults, but perhaps most importantly, children that will “be able to survive well” (Akiitiq & Karetak, 2017, p. 113). Joe Karetak (2016), an Inuit Elder from Arviat explains, “We should always keep in mind that we are capable of raising 3 types of people: hardened rocks, fragile eggs, and human beings” (p. 6). He further explains that ‘hardened rocks’ and ‘fragile eggs’ can create great problems for families and communities. This knowledge he explained, served to help stabilize Inuit communities for:
As an individual, as soon as you can believe that the greatest reason for making a human-being is based on values and beliefs, on true solid foundation, we will see that caring not only for your own self, but for all people, and into the future will stabilize and show respect for the past. Soon people will see how well this program of *Inunnguiniq*: making a human being is, as it was right from the beginning of time, right today and into the future. (Karetak, 2016, p. 7)

Elder Mark Kalluk from Arviat adds to this point in his description of how:

The parental role and responsibilities centred on *Innuguiniq*, or the making of a capable human being. In order to survive well, there must be ethics that guide you. Those ethics emphasize your ability to stand on your own, to become capable and to contribute to the well-being of others. That was always the greatest focus, and as parents our key function was to prepare our children in every way. (Karatak, Tester, & Tagalik, 2017, p. 46).

Note here the importance placed independence that aims to prepare children for adulthood. This is something not taken into consideration, nor supported, by the territorial child welfare system. These explanations are consistent with information shared by Uqsuralik Ottokie (2000), and Arviat Elder Alice Ayalik, who describe childrearing as: “Our parents guided us to be human beings” (Karatak, Tester & Tagalik, 2017, p. 100).

This guidance of children within Inuit culture has also been written extensively about by anthropologist Briggs (1970, 1998). One of her texts, *Never in Anger: Portrait of an Eskimo Family*, details the parental (and extended family) response to children’s behavior. For example, she wrote: “Positive attitudes toward scolding (*huaq*) appear
rather infrequently. Even in a disciplinary context, people tend to feel negatively toward the idea of scolding...‘teach the child; don’t scold (huaq) him’” (Briggs, 1970, p. 330). This is very consistent with my own experiences in the North. Inuit parents rarely scold children. They would instead often use other techniques, such as to ignore or gently tease children when they demonstrated less positive behavior. Although “parents now and then expressed momentary annoyance when a child was obstreperous or disobedient, they rarely showed anger” (Briggs, 1998, p. 5). Briggs (1998) explains 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” (p. 5). As Elder Rhoda Akpaliapik Karetak has explained, “The children that are raised to become capable human beings are responsible and they are not easily angered” (Karetak, Tester, & Tagalik, 2017, p. 132). Consequently, the making a child has historically, and typically today as well, relied on large extended families as well as the community to reinforce similar values and beliefs. Collectively, adults display similar gentle responses to less positive behavior. The Pauktutiit Inuit Women of Canada (2006) have described this parenting style within The Inuit Way. Condon (1987) has similarly written about Inuit parenting approaches and the relationships that develop from them concerning in his research in the Western Arctic. He has stated that “the vast majority [of youth] indicated that they got along well with parents and rarely had conflicts with them” (p. 103). Research by Mancini-Billson and Mancini (2007) drew similar conclusions. Parallels can be drawn here between these cultural beliefs and childrearing practices, to other Indigenous populations in Canada (Gough, Blackstock, & Bala, 2005).
Inuit parenting approaches and techniques, however, can come into conflict with Qallunaat expectations and institutions. This can occur, for example, when children choose not to attend school. Teachers can become frustrated with parents who refuse to force their children to attend, or to discipline their children by way of southern Canadian dominant norms (Berger, 2009). This has been a long-standing concern by Qallunaat as a principal in 1949 explained, “Parents have been willing to have their children attend school. In most case, however they will not force the children to attend, just as they will not force them to do anything” (Robinson, 1949, p. 1). In some situations today, I have found teachers will turn to social workers to enforce a child’s attendance. Historically, teachers also turned to the police (Robinson, 1949), and had the government restrict family allowance cheques as a means to pressure parents to acquiesce (Tester & Kulchyski, 1994). Today, a similar policy is in effect. Families, such as that of Lucy Kittosuk, have seen their income assistance (‘welfare’) cheque cut substantially unless they participate in what the GN considers a ‘productive choice;’ which includes attending school, seeking employment, volunteering, or receiving counselling (Hwang, 2018). In Kittosuk’s situation, not having adequate childcare and leaving the territory for a medical appointment was enough to have her cheque cut from $600 to $100 per month (Hwang, 2018). As Aluki Kotierk, President of Nunavut Tunngavik Inc., has recently pointed out, parents are held responsible for sending their children to school, but schools should have the same responsibility of encouraging students attend (Kotierk, 2018). She explains:

When an Inuk walks into a school in Nunavut, they should be able to recognize themselves, their realities, and their lives in the language and resources used to teach them. Schooling should be delivered in Inuktut, in all subject matters, with
curriculum that is Inuit-centric and with messaging that positively affirms Inuit identity…I truly believe that Inuit are trying our best in a world that does not affirm who we are, in a world that does not value our world views, in a world where we are trying to assert ourselves both as Inuit and as part of the global community. (Kotierk, 2018, para. 11–12)

This points to the larger tension between cultural differences of Qallunaat and Inuit in the level and degree of autonomy provided to children to make their own decisions. This contributes to differences in what constitutes ‘good parenting.’ This has been written about by both Brody (2000) and Berger (2009).

When it comes to parenting in Nunavut, complications can also arise in relation to the child’s name. Children are often named after someone who is deceased, but who was also greatly respected (the child’s namesake). It is believed that the child takes on the spirit of this person (Ekho & Ottokie, 2000; Alia, 2006). This metaphysical significance of naming within Inuit culture has been understood by Qallunaat since the 1950s (Williamson, 1958). However, more recently, Alia (2006) has explained:

A child is not a complete person until he or she receives an atiq—a namesake name. The whole naming system is based on sauniq—namesake commemoration so powerful it amounts to a form of reincarnation. The namesake, or atiq, can continue life through many people of either gender. When a child is named, he or she becomes the sauniq or ‘bone’ of all those who have shared that name. People linked by names are bound together in a complex and permanent set of relationships. The namesake ties are so strong that kinship terms, dress, and
behaviour often follow the relationship rather than the individual’s biological sex. (p. 247–248)

Subsequently, when a child is named after a grandmother for example, the parents of the child might refer to him/her as ‘Ananaksaq’ (or ‘Aanaatsiaq’ or ‘Anaana’). Given this relationship, scolding one’s grandmother would then be understood as particularly inappropriate.

Making a human being includes ensuring children understand the importance of interdependence and collaboration within communities. In keeping with these beliefs, and as part of a collective culture, many Inuit share money earned through an individual’s employment with their extended family members. Inuit families tend to engage in supportive relationships to a much greater extent than those in the rest of Canada (Tagalik, 2009–2010a). This has been necessary for Inuit to sustain a highly interdependent society (Tagalik, 2009–2010a). Searles (2008) has written about this Inuit ‘ethic of sharing’ and contrasted it with “the Qallunaat way” in reference to the individualistic dominant Canadian society, which tends to focus on private property and personal possessions as mentioned previously (p. 248). He has described these contrasting ways of interacting as “two distinct worlds” (p. 248). The sharing within Inuit culture, as he explains, is typically taught by parents and grandparents to children from birth. This is consistent with the work of Karetak and Tester (2017). They explain:

From an Inuit perspective, greed is a very negative aspect of life, and

tunnganarniq is designed to protect us from becoming victims of our own greediness. When food is scarce, and conditions are bad, it is the weak and less capable who will suffer greatly. Failure to practice and maintain tunnganarniq
will result in an imbalance in society. People who are treated badly because others are greedy and refuse to share will become resentful and perhaps angry. Their anger and resentment can destroy the harmony important to living together. Much of the conflict in Western society is the result of inequalities. (p. 13)

In my experience, even those with very few financial resources of their own, still never hesitate to share with others. When I had only worked with Inuit for a short period of time, I remember feeling dismayed to watch a mother give her last bit of money to her brother when she required it for food for her children. Today, I understand how the obligation to share what one has is deeply rooted within Inuit culture. Regarding food, Attuq Akittiq, an Inuit Elder of Arviat, Nunavut, has explained:

Inuit believe that you are merely creating trouble for yourself if you are stingy and do not share your meat when you have plenty to share with others. We were commanded to share our meat, so we will live a prosperous, healthy and blessed life, as long as we live. (Karetak, Tester, & Tagalik, 2017, p. 65)

This is consistent with Briggs’ (1970) writing on the topic of jealousy and greed (piyuma, tuhuu). She explains that these are both considered “very bad” but can be “a major source of tension” at the same time (p. 337). Sharing, however, is not confined to food but includes everything, including wisdom and understanding (Karetak, Tester, & Tagalik, 2017). Sharing is a very much a part of mothering too. Women typically become mothers by sharing their bodies, their food, and their nutrients with their babies. Later they share the care of their children with others, and they share songs, stories, and information with their children. Consequently, mothering and inunnguiniq or the ‘making a human being,’
overlap, and play a critical role in these values being shared between generations (Angalik, 2017, p. 88).

3. Theory and Location

3.1 Theoretical Positioning

I apply a feminist Marxist and postcolonial theoretical perspective to the range of challenges and concepts that Inuit communities in Canada continue to face. To do this, I begin with feminist Marxist perspectives, such as those held by Smith (1977), Connell (2009), and Luxton (2014), to which I have applied more post-colonial considerations in keeping with the work of Arvin, Tuck, and Morrill (2013), Grande (2003), Anderson (2010), and Moreton-Robinson (2010). These scholars build on the ideas and concepts put forward by Smith (1999), Harvey (1990), Beal (1970, 1981), Fanon (1961), O’Connor (2001), Memmi (1965) and Marx (1867). Texts discussing social policy and policy change, Indigenous governance and self-determination, child welfare policy and practice, mothering and childrearing, female labour, and Indigenous and Inuit cultures, as well as archival documents and current events, have further informed my thinking and research. Below I demonstrate how I have come to fit feminist Marxism and post-colonial perspectives together and relate them to the experiences of mothers in Arviat, Nunavut.

3.1.1 Feminism

Given the historical attempts to rid Indigenous people of their culture and language as exemplified by the goal of “kill[ing] the Indian within the child,” such as occurred through residential schools in Canada, it is the birth and parenting of Indigenous children that has been described as a political act of resistance (Anderson, 2009; Udel,
Research that begins from this understanding of what mothers have had to (and arguably continue to) encounter as they raise their children can offer a contextualized perspective to the complexities and realities of mothering that occurs in a society long understood to be racist, sexist and classist (Kline, 1993; Swift, 1995; Stoler, 2002). Thus, this research benefits from feminist theory, specifically feminist theory that emphasizes the experiences of Indigenous women in relation to men, but more importantly, in relation to the state. The need for a feminist-Marxist analysis concerning the labour involved in mothering is also important in relation to child welfare, given the significant focus within the existing literature on the framing of women—especially Indigenous women—in relation to the work of childrearing as discussed in the previous chapter (Kline, 1993; Swift, 1995). Feminist-Marxism can be understood as the examination of Marx’s work in relation to the experiences of women, or the study of capitalism in light of women’s labour. Or as Luxton (2014) has stated, “what most people refer to as managing the competing demands of paid employment and informal care—or living our (women’s) lives—under capitalism” (p. 139). This informal care is typically located within the domestic sphere and often involves the care of children. Given this, an Indigenized feminism, alongside a feminist-Marxist analysis is useful to understanding the experiences of Indigenous mothers specifically. However, Indigenous feminist theory has intentionally distanced itself from mainstream feminism, such that any examination of patriarchy and capitalism begins from a point of decolonization. Jaimes-Guerrero (2003) described Indigenous feminism as a ‘Native Womanism,’ or a focus on ‘re-envisioning a pre-patriarchal, pre-colonialist, and pre-capitalist society, as well as for Native women’s self-determination in reclaiming their Indigenous (that is
matrilineal/matrifocal) roles that empower them with respect and authority in Indigenous governance” (p. 67). For many Indigenous women this can mean seeking a “negotiated renewal” of what were traditional values and systems within one’s culture (Grey, 2003–2004, p. 10). This is important because as Goeman and Denetdale (2009) explain:

We affirm the usefulness of a Native feminism’s analysis and, indeed, declare that a Native [sic] feminist analysis is crucial if we are determined to decolonize as Native peoples...for Native women, there is no one definition of Native feminism; rather, there are multiple definitions and layers of what it means to do Native feminist analysis. However, as Native feminists, our dreams and goals overlap; we desire to open up spaces where generations of colonialism have silenced Native peoples about the status of their women and about the intersections of power and domination that have also shaped Native nations and gender relations. (p.10)

Clark (2018), while building upon Nason’s (2010) red feminism, refers to Red intersectionality as providing “the tools to theorize not only the past but the current forces of colonialism as found within reserve politics, lateral violence, and identity politics” (p. 80). Thus, feminism and an Indigenous-centered feminist analysis are essential to the thesis. By beginning from an Indigenous-centered feminist Marxism, I attempt to ensure that Inuit women’s’ experiences, struggles, and successes are explored in a way that takes colonialism, their labour, socio-economic positioning, and the context (societal structures and expectations), as well as the gendered associations that intersect with class and race, and the space and place within which Inuit women live, into account. I agree with academics such as Arvin, Tuck, and Morrill, (2013) who have stated, “there cannot be
Despite these important connections, feminism is often understood as the “‘f’ word” within Indigenous communities (Ross, 2009, p. 39). This is because Indigenous women have been socially, culturally, morally, historically and economically constructed, most often in negative ways throughout history—often by feminists. First wave (1840s-1920s), second wave (1960s to 1980s), and third wave feminists (1980s to 2008) have not been described as allies to Indigenous women. Nor did feminists during these waves necessarily use their power to advance the status of, or concerns held by Indigenous women (Forestell, 2016). Instead, as I explain below, some non-Indigenous feminists capitalized on the challenges and problems experienced by Indigenous women; using them to their advantage in order to seek greater advantages and opportunities for themselves. Although Indigenous women are noted to have made up some of the first feminists and ‘early campaigners,’ historical accounts of first wave feminism have been largely associated with the struggles of white women (Forestell, 2016). The focus of white women at this time was placed primarily on property and voting rights, and education and employment within the increasing urban industrial economy (Forestell, 2016; Smith, 2013). As Baxandall and Gordon (2002) have explained:

Women of color rarely joined [feminist movements], in some cases because they had not been invited, and in some cases because they were offended by the whiteness of the agenda as well as the membership. Most white women simply did not see the whiteness of their outlook. Most early [consciousness raising efforts] tended to produce generalizations and even theories about women’s oppression which were actually particular to privileged, white, college-educated
women. These included an antagonism toward the family, which was a traditional refuge from racism for people of color, and idealization of paid work as liberatory, which ignored the fact that poverty and discrimination drove so many women of color into low-paying, monotonous, even dangerous jobs. (p. 5)

The first wave has been credited for having entirely ignored how Indigenous women struggled against domination prior to the 19th century (Forestell, 2005, 2016). Instead, Indigenous women held “an invisible presence” and were largely “hidden by the gendered logics of settler colonialism for over 500 years” (Arvin, Tuck & Morrill, 2013, p. 14). During this time, Indigenous women experienced, and arguably continue to experience, far greater challenges in relation to gaining recognition for basic rights due to not being perceived as equivalent to either white men or white women—simultaneously experiencing both racism and sexism. This has been described as possessing a ‘double burden’ (Indigenous Foundations, 2009). This is because feminism emerged within a context of European colonialism (Forestell, 2005). Historians and academics have pointed out how some middle and upper-class white feminists sought to leverage themselves and their needs or social positions through the maternal feminist movement (Durst, 2006; Fraser, 2014; McPherson, 2012; Phillips, 1991). This leveraging was done to achieve access to certain paid employment, such as the first social workers. For example, the maternal feminist movement provided middle and upper-class white women the ability to profess their ‘natural’ white superiority over Indigenous women; making their white maternal skills valuable (e.g. employment that involved teaching Indigenous women how to mother). In other words, the women’s Western culture, and the skills associated with mothering from this cultural lens, were promoted as important to the
political economy. For some, this involved professing to be both “superior to and responsible for” Indigenous women (Forestell, 2005, p. 12). This contributed to the categorization of white middle-class women as ‘good,’ and Indigenous and other racialized and poor women as ‘bad’ and ‘Other’ (Forestell, 2005; Kline, 1993; Swift, 1995). It also appears to have contributed to the context for establishing the first social work organizations (and employment) and policies for working with the ‘deserving poor’ in Canada (Durst, 2006; Fraser, 2014; Jennissen & Lundy, 2011; O’Connell, 2014). In this, one identify the relationships among gender, race, class and oppression.

Second wave feminism, which initiated notions of ‘equality,’ largely concerned itself with reproductive rights, education and employment rights and benefits, as well as the societal objectification of women, and childcare (Arvin, Tuck, & Morrill, 2013). This movement again was not inclusive of Indigenous women. Federally, Indigenous women could not vote until 1950 (for Inuit) and 1960 (for all First Nations) (Bonesteel & Anderson, 2008; Indigenous Foundations, 2009). Although second wave feminism appears to have formally drawn-in some racialized women, Arvin, Tuck, and Morrill (2013) have pointed out how it continued to overlook multiple and intersecting oppressions and remained white-centric. This is because many racialized women found white feminists attempted to speak for them, while lacking an understanding of their lived reality (Arvin, Tuck & Morrill, 2013; Tohe, 2000) or their histories (Barman, 2010). An example of this is the defining feminist voice of scholar Dorothy Smith who, in 1977, defined feminism as: taking the standpoint of women and not just understood in relation

16 Inuit, although legally and theoretically able to vote as of 1950, were not practically able to vote until 1962 when they finally gained ballot boxes in most communities (Eisenberg, 1998).
17 First Nation males could relinquish their status under the Indian Act (known as enfranchisement) and vote as of 1859.
to men, but from a place that is distinctively female, fighting against the oppression of women, and “the recognition of sisterhood” among women based on their sharing the same sex (Smith, 1977, p. 15). Although Smith’s feminism has greatly evolved since that time, it is this last notion of ‘sisterhood’ that has received the greatest critique. Such ‘sisterhood’ thinking, as Grey (2004) has pointed out, can be linked to ignoring race and class and assuming white experiences, perceptions, values, and goals were common to all women. Perspectives of those who were not white cis-gendered, able-bodied, and middle and upper-class women (i.e. women who are racialized, homosexual or transgender, low income, or disabled women etc.), have been described as not only left out of feminist discourse during this time, but altogether silenced (Nicholson, 1990). Moreton-Robinson (2000) has described this as how “liberal feminism [served to] dehistorize women” and erase the socio-material conditions many women experienced (p. 35).

While many white feminists were making assumptions for all women based on what they wanted, what Indigenous women wanted (and needed) at this time has been described as vastly different. For example, as Arvin, Tuck, and Morrill (2013) have explained “Indigenous communities’ concerns are often not to do with achieving formal equality or civil rights within a nation-state, but instead achieving substantial independence from a Western nation-state—indepedence decided on their own terms” (p. 10). Consequently, many of the issues Indigenous women were concerned about then, as they are now, can be considered “inseparable from the issues facing Indigenous peoples as a whole, [and] are resolved via decolonization and sovereignty, not (just) parity” (Arvin, Tuck, & Morrill, 2013, p. 10). Further conflicts have been identified as well. For example, Huggins (1994) explains how some white feminists desired to “recruit
into the women’s movement—Indigenous women who [we]re compliant and uncritical of white experts who [would] write and speak about them” (p. 174). Other notable critiques related to second-wave feminism by Indigenous scholars, such as Anderson (2010) and lewallan (2010), have been on the focus of rights as opposed to responsibilities, as well the need for a thorough examination of capitalism, commodification, and colonialism. Importantly, these critiques have contributed to a growing literature concerning Indigenous feminism that centers on anti-colonialism, but also led to a reluctance by some Indigenous women to identify as feminists or to “unequivocally reject feminism for Aboriginal women” altogether (Green, 2007, p. 14; Smith, 2013). This appears to have contributed to both the rise of third wave feminism and a rejection of ‘universal womanhood,’ but also a centering of whiteness as the norm and place from which everything relating to gender is to be examined (Rampton, 2015; Smith, 2013). Moreton-Robinson (2000) addresses this by explaining that feminism has been tied to privileges possessed by white women and this is “inextricably connected to the systemic racism they [white feminists who write on the topic of feminism] criticize but do not experience” (p. xx).

As a result, third-wave feminism has been described as intentionally inclusive, pluralistic, and focused on women’s choice without judgement, particularly as it re-examines sexuality (Snyder-Hall, 2010). This shift for feminism has also contributed to different and competing definitions and understandings of feminism. This has given rise to a “debunk[ing] of the stereotype that there is one lifestyle or manifestation of feminist empowerment, and instead offer[s] self-possession, self-determination, and an endless array of non-dichotomous possibilities” (Walker, 1995, p. xxxiv). This can be related to
what Simone de Beauvoir (1952) first said: “one is not born, but becomes, a woman” (p. xv). Connell (2009) expands on this approach to the social construction of gender. She explains that gender is not comprised of only boundaries or constraints, but inequalities that are structured and protected to ensure the interests of men. This means “gender is not about identity, or just about work, or just about power, or just about sexuality, but all of these things at once” (Connell, 2009, p. 11).

Building on this has led to recent (since 2013) discussions concerning a fourth-wave of feminism to address “assumptions of a gender binary and an exclusionary subtext: ‘for women only’” (Rampton, 2015, p. 1). This newest feminism seems to take seriously that “women should not position themselves ‘on the same side’ without any regard for the differences in power and privilege among women” (Grande, 2003, p. 342). It has also been described as demanding an explicit examination of feminism alongside racism, ageism, classism, ableism, and sexual orientation (Rampton, 2015). This means this feminism is intersectional. This is particularly important in light of an Indigenous feminism for as Clark (2018) has stated, “Indigenous ontology is inherently intersectional and complex in its challenging of the notions of time, age, space, and relationship” (p. 79). Although this may mean there is finally space for everyone within feminism (Rampton, 2015), critics have also called it an opportunity for ‘cyber-feminists’ to intentionally exclude some people, including women, from being within the feminist camp (Baumgardner, 2011; Simpkins, 2014). This is because, as Phillips and Cree (2014) explain, the fourth wave exists at the “intersection of popular culture and feminism” (p. 939). Phillips and Cree (2014) describe this wave as “an evolution of new cultures around sexuality, work, reproductive technologies, communication technologies, and what can
be seen as the continually changing market-driven commodification of all that is feminine and targeted at women” (Phillips & Cree, 2014, p. 939). This is because the fourth wave feminism is:

Accessible to waves of technology ‘savvy’ younger (‘generation-Y’) people...[It] is a desire to tackle the feminist backlash construction of feminism as ‘man-hating’ or ‘bra burning’ and to seek an equality that demobilizes the power of one gender over another and shames sexist and violent behaviour wherever it is found. (Phillips & Cree, 2014, p. 939)

Although this feminism tackles intersecting issues and includes an examination of capitalism in relation to patriarchy, this social media element raises important questions concerning the historical and material circumstances, as well as disparities, faced by many Indigenous women. For although fourth wave feminism may offer relevant insights, it may also simultaneously move feminist discussion and thinking further from the lived realities of many Indigenous women. It may do this by moving feminism more towards an urban and Western social location or perspective. For example, many Inuit women have only occasional and highly-limited, or no access to the Internet and technology necessary to engage in these discussions (Zerehi, 2015). In fact, many Inuit experience levels of poverty often associated with the ‘third world’ (“Nunavut suffers,” 2013; “This country’s,” 2008). These women may not be versed in the different waves of feminism nor have knowledge of feminism at all for that matter. Nor may these same Inuit women have necessarily spent time considering how feminism (or sex work, and

18 All women who exist in any relationship to dominant society today have experienced patriarchy in some form and thus, know feminism and the need for equality—but still may not be able to articulate what it is as a concept.
transgender-inclusivity for that matter) is debated and developed in this online context. Some Inuit women may associate this feminism as equally disconnected from their lives as first-wave feminists may have been to prior generations. Implications associated with class and privilege are obvious here. They suggest there may be a connection between feminism and what Hilden and Lee (2010) describe as “impenetrable jargon understood only by select people” (p. 61). The result appears to be an access and familiarity with feminism, particularly in light of its relationship to social media that may not be equal. Unfortunately, this also appears to be associated with the ‘calling out’ or shaming culture of addressing social issues via the fourth wave. This approach could be problematic if it also involves a lack of awareness for a woman’s social, material, and historical location—something that appears to be rather common due to the built-in anonymity of the Internet. Thus, where the fourth-wave and feminist social media experience may serve to simultaneously build communities of people, it may also operate to exclude and silence others. In this way, feminism seems to require ongoing and serious interrogation.

Beyond this social media element, and despite the history of adjustments and progress made towards inclusivity throughout the four waves, feminism appears to remain imperfect. Much of this continues to center around what Smith (2013) has explained as, “why white women get to define what feminism is.” Who is allowed in, or who is allowed to participate and exist under the ‘feminist’ umbrella, remains contentious, as the exclusion of pro-life organizations from the International Women’s March in 2016 suggests (see Crockett, 2017). Given the socio-economic realities of many Inuit mothers in Nunavut, one cannot ignore how some current work in feminism, such as public shaming for language deemed offensive, can appear to be disconnected from the
goals and needs of Inuit communities, such as the need for food and housing. Mancini-Billson and Mancini (2007) have explained:

Inuit women have not applied feminist strategies to gain influence in Canada, in Nunavut, or even locally. Rather than aligning themselves with the feminist movement and the network of southern Canadian women’s organizations, they have tended to distance themselves in order to focus on ethnic solidarity. (p. 220)

This points to racial oppressions and discrimination. Although this is not intended to suggest there is a hierarchy related to oppression, it does suggest that debating the nuances of different forms of feminism and feminist thought (or what has even been considered anti-feminism, as in the case of academic Camille Paglia), although important to inform our understandings and progress towards true equality of men and women, continues to be a luxury and privilege for those who do not have to struggle to meet their basic needs. This harks back to the discussion concerning the name of the Edmonton Eskimos team in the previous chapter. It further points to divisions between postmodernism and modernism, as I will discuss below. The result appears to be a disparity between feminists, but also who feminism may be working for and advancing, and who it may overlook. This suggests that those who might associate with being allies of Indigenous women, and desire to support Indigenous women fully, have yet to critically understand the privileges they possess. This can be illustrated by the struggles of Indigenous peoples in North Dakota, who, while attempting to stop pipelines running through their land and water, had to remind their white ‘allies’ that had travelled long distances to support them, that their protests and ceremonies were not to be experienced as a music or celebratory festival (O’Connor, 2016). This reflects the legacy and
endurance of colonialism and its impacts, as well highlights privileges largely associated with class—something feminist Marxists have drawn attention to as a ‘triple oppression’ (Lynn, 2013). Thus, a conflict between feminism for the majority or dominant culture white population, and a feminism for the most marginalized Indigenous women continues to exist. Consistent with the work of Bhambra (2014), it appears that a more holistic feminism, one that works to examine the intersection between gender, race and class, but does so in a way that both begins from, but also critically examines its relationship to (de)colonialism, is needed. I discuss anti-colonialism and decolonization more deeply later on in this chapter. Moving in this direction, however, would have implications for the definition of feminism again. As Minnie Grey (2010), Inuit scholar, activist and politician, has aptly concluded “it really boils down to this: women deciding who women are, and who, or what they want to be” (p. 21). This includes women not having to accept the ideas of other women. Fortunately, feminism also demands that women be understood as “authoritative speakers” on themselves (Smith, 1987, p. 35). Yet as Smith (1987) has demonstrated:

The making and dissemination of the forms of thought we make use of to think about ourselves and our society are part of the relations of ruling and hence originate in positions of power. [As] these positions of power are occupied by men almost exclusively...our forms of thought put together a view of the world from a place women do not occupy...It means that our experience has not been represented in the making of our culture. (p.19)

This is most clear within the case of child welfare, which as noted in the previous chapter, has been critiqued for disproportionately impacting and oppressing women,
despite being largely administrated by women (Kline, 1993; Swift, 1995). Here the impact of this may be partially attributed to a problem-solving model in child welfare where “focus on individual behavior or community dysfunction rather than service delivery or structural barriers” has been largely at play throughout the 20th century (Westhues, 2012, p. 43). It also historically has been largely based upon colonial and assimilationist notions, which laid the ground work for dominant norms, values and beliefs concerning women, mothers and childrearing, all placed on Inuit women.

Fortunately, feminism has also been described as “a key factor in alleviating poverty, improving women’s health and achieving economic growth,” demonstrating its importance to both women and children’s lives, but also to the goals and objectives of the state in terms of capital accumulation (Phillips & Cree, 2014, p. 939). In effect, this means it may be good ‘business’ for the state to embrace feminism and feminist-approaches towards social policy development. For moving women into the workplace and beyond the domestic (unpaid) sphere holds benefits for the state by way of an increase in tax dollars (serving the accumulative function of the state), but this move has also been found to lead to a number of additional benefits, including positive impacts on children such as fewer behavior and social problems, and fewer mental health issues (Lucas-Thompson, Goldberg, & Prause, 2010). These benefits can mean less pressure is placed on state-run health and social services. The childcare women often need in order to engage in this labour again meets this same accumulative function as it demands the employment of child care workers. At the same time, however, childcare also serves a legitimization function, which demonstrates a blurring of the distinction between legitimization and accumulation within post-modern society. Consequently, it appears there
can be no real discussion of mothering or child welfare within the existing capitalist society without feminism, but this discussion must also be, at the same time, critical of feminism and all manifestations of power.

3.1.2 Anticolonialism & Postcolonialism

Anti-colonialism based on postcolonial theory has been particularly salient to my analysis and understanding of the context in which Inuit women live in Nunavut. This is because colonialism, which aims to “impose the will of one people on another and to use the resources of the imposed people for the benefit of the imposer” is evident in the history and the present-day workings of the territory (and country) (Kete Asante, 2006, p. ix). As a colony of Canada, and since the 1950s and 60s, many policies and approaches have been used by the state to ‘manage,’ and arguably to control Inuit (Hicks, 2004). These policies and approaches have been described in work by Tester and Kulchyski (1994), Kulchyski and Tester (2008), Anderson and Bonesteel (2010, 2013), Hicks (2004), and Hicks, Bjerregaard, and Berman (2013). This work can be understood alongside writings about colonialism such as that of Memmi (1965) and Fanon (1961).

To discuss this, the term postcolonialism and its different meanings become relevant here. Postcolonialism has been critiqued for its prefix ‘post,’ which can suggest that colonialism is past or over and done with. Tamburro (2013) disagrees and explains, how post-colonial resistance can instead be understood as beginning with colonization and continues today (Ashcroft, 2001). She states, “The hyphen in post-colonial writing is a marker, which separates post-colonial from post-structural and post-modern. Post-colonial theory provides a theoretical home for the discourses and ideas of people who have been and continue to be effected by colonization” (Ashcroft, 2001; Tamburro, 2013,
On the other hand, postcolonialism has also been employed to describe how Indigenous peoples have been absorbed into dominant Western culture but through different means, such as through the commercialization of Indigenous art for example (Seppa, 2010). Although postcolonial theory can provide important insights to this research concerning the colonial relations currently existing between women, their children and the state, Howard (2006) offers an important critique. He explained how anticolonialism “takes issue, quite pointedly, with the manner in which postcolonial theory tames the political bite of resistance discourses,” addressing what can has been a “political paralysis” (p. 46, 48). Specifically, he referenced “the inability of postcolonial discourse to name, track, isolate, and resist ongoing colonial relations” (Howard, 2006, p. 46). He explained that post-colonialism can be considered radicalized through anticolonialism. Similarly, Simmons and Sefa Dei (2012) explain:

The ‘post’ conveniently implicates all, while the ‘anti’ identifies the ‘bad guy’ and carries with it a radical critique of the dominant, as the colonial oppressor whose antics and oppressive practices continue to script the lives of the subordinate and colonized even as we resist such dominance…[it] is implicating and revolutionary in its thinking. It also offers possibilities for colonized and marginalized subjects to design our own futures (p. 68).

In effect, anticolonialism attempts to address or undo colonialism, where postcolonialism has largely focused on assessing colonialism. Given this, an anticolonial focus, from within postcolonial theory, appears to be necessary to discuss historical and existing colonialism in Nunavut, as well as the persistent colonial structures, systems, and relations existing in the territory.
The work of Fannon (1961) and Memmi (1965) offer a theoretical foundation from which to begin here as these texts are of particular relevance to the current context of Nunavut. Fanon (1961) explicitly describes how colonialism benefits non-Indigenous peoples and creates structures that maintain these same benefits. He explains how colonists in Algeria denigrated the colonized, without recognition for the contradictions inherent in their beliefs and actions. He explained how colonists “derive [their] validity, i.e., wealth, from the colonial system” (p. 2), while simultaneously they owe their “very existence to the soil and subsoil of the underdeveloped world” (Fanon, 1961, p. 53). This is relevant to Nunavut as some Qallunaat tend to denigrate those Inuit who possess low-levels of education and call for increased education. However, many Qallunaat can also feel threatened when it comes to conceding their employment to qualified Inuit. Possibly out of fear for this, some Qallunaat, such as in the case of social workers, suggest that Inuit do not want their jobs (Johnston & Tester, 2015; Johnston, 2009). This is discussed in more detail in Chapter 6. Further, while not all mining corporations have been successful, the extraction of resources has resulted in ‘record profits’ for some transnational corporations in the territory, all the while many Inuit continue to experience immense financial struggles (“Agnico Eagle announces,” 2012; Canada Without Poverty, 2015; Impact Economics, 2012). Paradoxically, the help some Inuit may be provided in response to their needs (e.g. social services), creates high-paid employment opportunities to those who are largely from outside the territory (Qallunaat). In fact, Qallunaat make up the majority of social workers in Nunavut—an employment that offers some of the field’s highest salaries and greatest levels of professional autonomy in the country (GN, 2004; Legare, 2008; Rogers, 2012). This further occurs within a context where many Inuit
struggle to protect their land and resources. This is evidenced by Inuit in Clyde River, and their fight against the approval by the National Energy Board to allow seismic testing in the same waters where they obtain their food (Skura, 2016), as well as the battle to protect caribou hunting and calving grounds from mining companies (Webber, 2016). Also, many Inuit are reported to experience ongoing issues related to food insecurity in the territory (“Inuit go hungry,” 2014). It appears that much of the wealth of the territory—over 1.75 billion in 2010—may have flowed elsewhere (Government of Nunavut, n.d.c). For 71% of this amount comprised government expenditures, much of which appears to have made up the profits for transnational corporations and the salaries paid to Qallunaat workers, who comprise more than half of the workers in the territory (Government of Nunavut, 2004; Government of Nunavut, n.d.c; Legare 2008; Rogers 2012). A further 420 million in gold was produced at just one mine the following year (in 2011) (Government of Nunavut, n.d.c). Thus, Inuit appear to continue to struggle for what Fanon (1961) describes as both “land and bread” while the territory’s wealth appears to be—at least in large part—directed into Qallunaat pockets and out of the territory (p. 2).

Memmi (1965) also captures the essence of the colonial relationships that appear to exist between Inuit and Qallunaat in Nunavut. His description of a colony as a place “where one earns more and spends less... [and where] you go because jobs are guaranteed, wages high, careers more rapid and business more profitable” describes much of the Qallunaat experience of Nunavut—mine included (Memmi, 1965, p. 4). Memmi (1965) points to “leftist colonizers”, who can possess the “deceptive trait” of being politically ineffective and are often confused in their relationship and
understanding of being colonized (p. 41). This addresses my earlier points made regarding the narratives put forward by Qallunaat social workers and beliefs in this work as ‘helping’ (Razack, 2009). Thira (2014) has described this desire to help as the “fourth wave of colonization: Western ‘healing’” (p. 3). In such positions, Memmi (1965) explains, one tends to defend their work and “attempt[s] can be made by demonstrating the usurper’s eminent merits, so eminent that they deserve such compensation” (p. 53). Long standing attempts by social workers to draw even higher salaries and benefits associated with their perceived ‘merit’ (e.g. higher education) can be linked to this same idea (Johnston & Tester, 2015). Memmi (1965) further explains how paternalism comes after exploitation and allows colonists the ability to “relax, live benevolently...[as] the colonized could be only grateful to him for softening what is coming to him” (p. 76). This again picks up on a notion of modernization as discussed in the previous chapter, as well as my previous research with social workers in Nunavut which establishes much this same point (Johnston, 2009).

To those who may be unfamiliar with Nunavut, such descriptions may sound rather harsh, but in my experience, this is far from the case. The historical colonial attitudes, values, and beliefs held by some Qallunaat in Nunavut have included perceiving “natives [sic] reduced to the status of animals” and Inuit described as ‘deficient’ (Rutherford, 1994, p. 5). Although this does not represent the views of all Qallunaat that have and do live and work in the territory—indeed, there are likely many who would disagree with such statements, literature indicates that such perspectives did, and continue, to exist. As Rutherford (1994) explains, it is important to note that historically, some of the negative constructions of Inuit were put forward by women who
positioned themselves within a context that both valued white women and provided them greater power “if they projected an idealized image of superior womanhood” (p. 22). This likely contributed to white women feeling a pressure to present “the natives [sic] as historically barbarous and themselves as saviors” (Rutherford, 1994, p. 10). Lines can be drawn here to first and second wave feminism. Some of these same women, however, may have also demonstrated a “sensitivity to admit that [Inuit and Qallunaat women] were glaring at each other through a cultural prism” and even recognized how “ridiculous” white women may have seemed to Inuit women (Rutherford, 1994, p. 13). Unfortunately, the negative associations and representations of Inuit that are so inherent to colonialism appear to have shaped and continue to shape existing relations in the territory today, as described previously in terms of mothering and child welfare. This is consistent with my experience as a white woman in Nunavut. It is also consistent with work such as ‘Of the North,’ a film produced by Dominic Gagnon, that has been described as “perpetrat[ing] negative stereotypes, [and] perpetrat[ing] ignorance and miseducation about Inuit” (Barrera, 2015, para. 14).

Further, Memmi (1965) also writes that “everything in the colonized [person] is deficient, and everything contributes to this deficiency—even his body... [as it exposes a] chronic hunger of an entire people, malnutrition, and illness.” (p. 117). This, Memmi (1965) explained, is because the “social system perpetuates distress [and] even if [colonization] does not create it [i.e. poverty] — [how then can it] endure so long?” (p. 118). We can tie the poverty experienced by Inuit in Nunavut to Memmi’s (1965) description of deficiency explained here. As previously described, unemployment, long associated with impoverishment, remains the cornerstone by which many Qallunaat
perceive the issues Inuit experience. For example, some Qallunaat believe that Inuit are unwilling to work and, therefore, ‘modernize.’ Summed up by a superintendent of the now defunct Polaris mine in Nunavut: "[Inuit] want to maintain the culture...even so, the place is going to change. You're going to have to change with it. You can save what you can, but the world will modernize" (Bourgeois, 1998). More recently, a worker at Baffinland mine was described using a similar sentiment: “she’s the model modern Inuk: takes the job seriously, shows up for work on time (not something that can be said of all her fellow Inuit)” (Brown, 2014, para. 11). These statements by Qallunaat employers at two different mines suggest certain negative beliefs are associated with Inuit. They also reveal how some Qallunaat may tie notions of poverty to an individual’s work ethic, and a ‘willingness’ to modernize. They align with a long and embedded Western neoliberal understanding of poverty and echo 1950s concerns by Qallunaat that Inuit “have no ambition for steady jobs” (“The Eskimo Under,” 1951).

Settler-colonialism, increasingly discussed in reference to anti-colonial research with Indigenous communities, has been described by Wolfe (2006) as ‘settler-politics’—not motivated by race, but instead access to the land. This is consistent with the work of Coulthard (2014) and Alfred (2017). In this way, settler-politics can be understood, not as an event but instead a structure (Wolfe, 2006). This is also consistent with work by Arvin, Tuck, and Morrill (2013) and understandings of settler-colonialism as a way for “settlers to usurp the land and extract its value, [where] Indigenous peoples can be destroyed, removed, and made into ghosts” (p. 12). This perspective can be applied to Nunavut, where initially Qallunaat arrived through whaling and trading, today they arrive often through the work of mining and resource development; both have involved the
extraction of value from the territory. Different from imperialism, which also involves occupation, settler-colonialism has been explained as associated with the desire of colonists “to stay” (Veracini, 2007, p. 1). Veracini (2011) explains this distinction between colonialism and settler-colonialism as: “where colonialism reinforces the distinction between colony and metropole, settler colonialism erases it” (p. 3). Given the movement of workers into and out of Nunavut regularly from southern Canada, this distinction in relation to space has been increasingly erased.

Critiques of settler-colonialism literature are important to this discussion. Most notably, concerns such as those raised by Snelgrove, Dhamoon, and Corntasslel (2014) for “the framing of settler colonial studies itself, [as it] casts a shadow over the work that is being done by Indigenous scholars, who have been talking about the centrality of land, the specific nature of Indigenous experiences, and the role of settlers in dispossession for a long time” (p. 11). From here, it appears a line from can be drawn from how colonial relations have been produced and reproduced not only within Indigenous communities but within the academy. The reproduction of these relations has been described by Joe Karetak of Arviat, Nunavut:

Refusal to recognize the impacts of colonization on every Inuk simply strengthens and perpetuates colonization...Post-colonial syndrome is characterized by denial and even the colonized person defending and accepting the colonial contexts, saying we are better off now than the way we were before colonization. The acceptance of the colonial shift has enabled some to become “experts” for their peers, and perhaps because they are successful in the new system where they become gatekeepers for others and are institutionalized into this new way of
being. These people are particularly dangerous to healing and decolonizing efforts. (Karetak, 2016, p. 6)

Large-scale resource extraction activities in Nunavut serve as an example of these new systems within which some Inuit have become successful. The industry has tended to divide Inuit (Bernauer, 2012). Some Inuit have found employment in the mining sector and understandably, appreciate economic benefits it provides. Others, as Carter (2015) has pointed out, perceive the industry to be damaging to Inuit land and culture. This division among Inuit highlights the different perspectives and values associated with land. On one hand, land may be perceived as an essential part of Inuit life and culture, and on the other “as (solely) a commodity to be exploited for resources” (Carter, 2015, p. 6). This conflict appears to have resulted in a “contact zone” where both Inuit and Qallunaat must “navigate complex conversations around difference, development, and colonial encounters” (Carter, 2015, p. 7).

3.1.3 Marxism: Limitations, Variations and Possibilities

Recent social movements have helped to make public the increasing concentration of power in the hands of states, elites, and corporations, as well as the growing inequality between the wealthy and poor in society (e.g. Occupy Wall Street, Idle No More, and the 2017 Women’s March). Research increasingly examines this concentration of economic power. For example, a recent global wealth report determined the wealthiest top 10% of people in the world own 89% of all global assets, and that this inequality is increasing (Credit Suisse, 2016). These changes and this vast concentration of power in the global context suggest Marxist economic and social theory related to class struggle may be arguably as relevant today—if not more—than they were in the late 19th century. As
Misra (2007) explains, transnational corporations have come to hold more wealth and power than many countries, and this contributes to workers becoming increasingly exploited due to the drive for cheaper labour. Nunavut is not exempt from these same economic forces. As previously mentioned, the territory, where poverty remains wide-reaching, continues to produce “record profits” for transnational corporations (“Agnico-Eagle announces,” 2012, para. 1). Thus, Nunavut can be understood as a microcosm of this same global context.

Drawing on Marxist theory is relevant to an examination of the economic context of Nunavut. To demonstrate this, I begin with class conflict, which is inherent within these changes, and may be useful to how one understands some of the cultural changes occurring within Inuit communities as well (Foroohar, 2012; Khanna & Francis, 2016; Smith, 2015). This is because inequality can stem from a growing disparity between those who own ‘the means of production’ and those who have only their labour to sell. In Nunavut, we can see this increasing disparity in the news reports of Inuit families who scavenge for food at a garbage dump only 22 km from one of the territory’s mines (see ‘Rankin Inlet dump,’ 2014). It is obvious that for some Inuit families, the level of economic prosperity that was promised to stem from mining in the territory has not materialized (Chase, 2013; ‘Rankin Inlet Dump,’ 2014). This situation, however, is not atypical. As detailed in the previous chapter, international research on long-term mining communities has demonstrated, as Petkova, Lockie, Rolfe, and Ivanova (2009) point out, that local communities do not prosper from mining. Instead, “while some towns may experience less economic and social disruption than others, none have been able to use the current mining boom to leverage other economic development opportunities that
might provide additional insurance against welfare dependence” (emphasis added) (Petkova, Lockie, Rolfe, & Ivanova, 2009, p.226). O’Connor (1973) offers insight to this situation. His work has focused on the ‘crisis’ that ensues from state’s two contradictory purposes (capital accumulation and legitimization) and the gap that exists between state expenditures and state revenues. He has explained how although monopoly industries, such as mining, may be the “engine of capital accumulation and economic growth” (p. 23), they remain:

Irrational in the sense that [they are] accompany[d] by unemployment, poverty, economic stagnation, and so on. [Thus] to insure mass loyalty and maintain its legitimacy, the state must meet various demands on those who suffer the ‘costs’ of economic growth” (O’Connor, 1973, p. 8).

This means that with the growth of the monopoly sector, comes a growth of the social expenses (and state sector, such as social services) to support those who are unemployed and underemployed (O’Connor, 1973). Further, this growth tends to lead to antagonisms between those who work within the state and competitive sectors (e.g. small businesses etc.), with that of the monopoly sector—each increasingly desiring change to government priorities to favour their needs (O’Connor, 1973). This divisiveness does not benefit the working class. Instead, as O’Connor (1973) explained, the only way for the working class to achieve what it needs (e.g. adequate wages, social supports) is through class solidarity. In Nunavut, this divisiveness is increasingly playing out given the high unemployment and underemployment in many Inuit communities. Access to mining-employment has contributed to a wealthier class of Inuit (Czyzewski & Tester, 2014; Sudol, 2017). For some Inuit, mining employment has meant a higher standard of living, and therefore, it
has been considered to play “a constructive role in community life” (Bernauer, 2011, p. 12). Unfortunately, class conflict appears to have taken root and it can be tied to a cultural conflict as well. For as Sinclair’s (2017) research demonstrates, some Inuit, particularly Elders, hold concerns for people not practicing traditional values related to sharing when it comes to their income. Some now perceiving themselves—when working—to be of greater importance than those who do not possess employment (Sinclair, 2017).

Related to this notion of a rising middle-class of Inuit, mining continues to be perceived by some as key to ‘modernizing’ Inuit and the North generally (Carney, 2016). Although modernization can be understood as a movement away from what are considered irrational beliefs, values and activities in the North, modernization often appears to also be code for moving Inuit away from state financial assistance, and towards employment. Or as Harvey (1990) explains “a ruthless break with any or all preceding historical conditions (p. 12). Although often described by the state as being largely positive, modernization is not always understood as such. Dorais and Horowitz (2000) have described it as “the more or less brutal inclusion of Inuit into contemporary mainstream society” (p. 25). It may represent the “proletarianization of Inuit labour,” where historically Inuit were largely in control of their own labour, many have been reduced to employees and the constraints of corporate requirements (F. Tester, personal communication, March 28, 2018). This inclusion has not come without serious social issues. Research by Battle and Torjman (2013) and Gibson and Klinck (2005), as previously mentioned, have demonstrated how industrial employment such as within the mining sector—as a means of modernization—is connected to increased family violence,
suicide, gambling, and cultural disruption. Researchers have demonstrated these and other problems related to mining in Nunavut as well (Czyzewski & Tester, 2014; Dawson, 2012; NAHO, 2006; NAHO, 2008). Further, these social problems tend to intensify the “existing social frailty” of communities (NAHO, 2008, p.13). Within Inuit communities where Inuit children and youth experience challenges relating to communication with their elders, these problems can also exacerbate this ‘intergenerational gap’ (Kral, 2012). In this way, modernization can be understood to hold a negative impact on Inuit culture.

For mining employers, a certain inequality, however, is not necessarily a negative thing. The high levels of poverty within Inuit communities, ensures a steady supply and flexible labour force, ensuring applicants will always be available for potentially less or undesirable employment. O’Connor (1973) refers to this as a “reservoir of cheap labour” (p. 127). Further competition among workers can mean a ‘fractured' working class, which is also often beneficial to employers (Holt, 2015). This can translate into a power over the laboring class and encourage a downward pressure on workers (O’Connor, 1973).

Such power and pressure can mean some workers readily accept employment that requires concessions in order to maintain their employment (O’Connor, 1973). For example, mining employment in Nunavut typically requires workers leave their home, family, and communities for two weeks at a time to go work at the mine site as indicated in Chapter 1. This can include missing family birthdays, holidays and special events. Research concerning this fly-in, fly-out (FIFO) employment, points to how demanding and potentially unhealthy it can be for workers (O’Mullan, Debattista, & Browne, 2016;
This includes documented psychosocial impacts on workers and families (Torkington, Larkins, & Gupta, 2011). Due to such concerns for workers, the state in Queensland, Australia, has embarked on an independent review of FIFO employment in relation to resource extraction (Queensland Government, 2015). Their findings highlight problems, such as an increased pressure on existing state services (e.g. health services), as well as negative impacts on family relationships and mental health (Queensland Government, 2015). The review recommended increased social infrastructure to address these (among other) issues (Queensland Government, 2015).

These concerns are also documented through research that indicates working at a mine, can be not only unhealthy, but even dangerous (Reynolds et al., 2017). Such work typically requires long hours, physically laborious tasks, and can mean workers not having access to one’s preferred food (e.g. country food) or the ability to cook for themselves.

Although compensation for this form of mining employment is often understood as well paid, this can be dependent on the amount one works and the position one occupies. Compensation is typically dependent on the position one occupies, where the lowest and often least desirable jobs are typically paid the least (Mining Industry Human Resources Council, n.d.). Where Inuit often possess lower levels of education and training given the limitations to higher education within their communities, they tend to be overrepresented within labouring positions. As Bernauer (2011) explains in his research regarding Meadowbank Mine:

A number of youth who are (or were) employed at the mine expressed distaste with the conditions under which they work(ed). This was primarily related to the
racially stratified workforce at Meadowbank, where the majority of Inuit employees do manual labour and cooking or cleaning, while the majority of technical and management positions are occupied by non-Inuit people. (p. 12)

This suggests Inuit may not be reaping large salaries or benefits to their employment (Sudol, 2017). Instead, the average labourer salary in Nunavut suggested by Neuvoo based on three job descriptions is $43,550 gross (or approximately $22/hour), or $35,361.21 after approximate territorial and federal taxes are deducted (Labour Salaries in Nunavut, 2017), to as high as $66,000 (George, 2011). This lower amount is consistent with descriptions of positions and their corresponding salaries as laid out by the Mining Industry Human Resources Council (n.d.). It is also consistent with Statistics Canada (2007) data concerning income in communities such as Baker Lake and Arviat. In Baker Lake, the median income of families in 2006 was $41,344, and in Arviat it was $37,248 (Statistics Canada, 2007). Equivalent data for 2016 is not available. Yet as Battle and Torjman (2013) explain:

Jobs in mining generally need higher levels of education and skill than many local workers can provide. The mining industry demands that its workers meet certain literacy and numeracy standards. Inuit participation is often limited to the unskilled and semi-skilled jobs involved in the project. These jobs do not offer sufficient financial incentive for some of the unemployed to leave social assistance (more commonly known as ‘welfare’) once various benefits for recipients are factored in. Other jobs that are better paying might require a family to relocate, forcing many to give up their publicly subsidized housing. The employment opportunity comes at far too high a price. (p. 4)
These authors also note, “The Inuit population does not do as well in the workforce as the non-Inuit population” (Battle & Torjman, 2013, p. 4). A review of passenger flight lists between 2013 and 2016 that left Arviat for Meadowbank Mine appears to confirm this lower hierarchical positioning of Inuit at the mine. The majority of Inuit are classified as ‘Mine and Surface’ where much of the labour-based (less skilled) positions tend to be concentrated as this categorization includes drillers and blasters in quarrying and construction (Mining Industry Human Resources Council, 2014). Women on these flight lists are also typically categorized as ‘Housekeepers,’ ‘Camp,’ and ‘Kitchen,’ or commonly classified as ‘Support workers’ (Mining Industry Human Resources Council, 2014). A newspaper report in 2014, however, indicated that “20 women were employed as heavy equipment operators, including one who is an instructor” (Rogers, 2014, para.17). It is not clear if those 20 women were Inuit. Additionally, some mining exploration work in particular has involved the hiring of Inuit as contractors. As described in a report by MP Dennis Bevington for the Western Arctic, this has led to the Parliament Office receiving:

Reports of contractors who provide camp services but pay low wages and offer poor benefits packages...some of these jobs are neither providing stable healthy salaries for the high cost of northern living, nor opportunities for training and advancement. This situation may be satisfactory for young single workers, but those who have families to support can find themselves working at close to poverty level. (Bevington & Kearsey, 2007, p. 8–9)
These issues and others like them have been well documented in research (Gibson & Klinck, 2005). The willingness to accept these positions is likely because despite all possible negative associations with mining employment, for many Inuit it may still present a better alternative to being unemployed and reliant on state financial support. This appears to set up a false ‘choice’ between mining employment and, what can be for many, be poverty (Gibson & Klinck, 2005; Knutsson, 2003; Petkova, Lockie, Rolfe & Ivanova, 2009).

Indeed, unemployment may not be an option for those with large families and multiple children to feed. This appears to be particularly relevant to many Inuit in Nunavut given that families in the territory are made up of almost two times the number of children as those in southern Canada (an average of 1.9 children in family homes across Nunavut, versus 1.1 throughout the rest of the country) (Statistics Canada, 2013a; Statistics Canada, 2013b). Further, the cost of food and clothing in the territory is typically two to three times higher (or more) than in southern Canada (“Food in Nunavut,” 2015; Government of Nunavut, 2017d). Given these pressures, it is understandable how, despite difficult work conditions or requirements such as FIFO, securing any employment may be critical to a family’s existence. As Inuit increasingly rely less on the land to meet their needs (e.g. food, clothing etc.), they have been compelled to seek these resources through avenues that require they sell their labour. This can be related to the Harvey’s (1982) explanation of how the “activities traditionally associated with household work [have been] brought within the capitalist market economy—baking, brewing, preserving, cooking, food preparation, washing, cleaning, and even child-rearing and child socialization” (p. 554). This is increasingly the case in
relation to food in Nunavut as discussed in the previous chapter. The result is Inuit have been progressively drawn into the capitalist economy and must rely upon selling their labour in order to meet their needs.

On the other hand, poverty and its associated issues do not always benefit employers. Although some such as Harvey (1990) and Carroll (1986) point out that high rates of turnover can help ensure corporation profitability in this sector, this may not always be the case. In Nunavut, for example, the cost of training and rehiring in relation to mining can be exorbitant. In fact, the costs of turnover of workers in the territory has been something so serious that mining employers have made efforts to reduce them. For example, Agnico Eagle (AE) has indicated they are employing considerable efforts to maintain workers in their employment. AE’s General Manager Denis Gourde in Nunavut told reporters at a Mining Symposium in Iqaluit in 2012 that absenteeism and turnover were the largest problems they experienced because “we are always starting back at square one in training” (Bell, 2012). Importantly, mining like other monopoly industries typically requires an ongoing social investment (e.g. education) due to increased technology and as labour functions become more specialized (O’Connor, 1973). Given the interrelationship that exists between the GN and the mining industry, the costs of this investment are increasingly borne not by mining corporations, but instead by the state (O’Connor, 1973). This is evidenced in the last chapter by descriptions of programs associated with mining employment provided by Nunavut’s Arctic College.

Unfortunately, the relationship of women to labour often becomes lost within analyses regarding mining employment and Indigenous communities. In keeping with this, few researchers have touched on the impact of mining on women in Canada aside
from Gibson and Klinck (2005), Czyzewski and Tester (2014), Battle and Torjman (2013), Luxton (1980), and Deonandan, Deonandan, and Field (2016). Internationally, this topic has received greater attention, including research by Sharma (2010) and Rhodes (2003, 2005). This gap in Canada may be related to the fact that most mines tend to employ far fewer women than men, and many women typically remain in the home caring for children while their boyfriends, common-law partners, and husbands become FIFO workers (Moyser, 2017). In fact, women make up only 17% of those employed in the entire mining industry in Canada, with the majority of these women employed in roles such as administrative clerks and secretaries (representing 92% and 99% of those in these roles respectively) (Mining Industry Human Resources Council, 2016). Yet the role of women in mining goes beyond their personal employment. As researchers Luxton (1980) and Swift (1995) have pointed out, when women are ‘housewives,’ they typically provide support (unpaid) to their male partner’s social, emotional, and physical needs so that he can participate in the labour economy. Mining exemplifies this through FIFO employment, particularly when men have children. Their labour, therefore, represents a cost borne by women, but also one that benefits men and corporations. Sharma (2010) explains that this means:

The very structure of the mining jobs and the location of the towns and gendered industrial policies create an occupational context in which women are shaped into a traditional model of marriage whereby their choices, opportunities and

autonomy are curtailed and their unpaid labour is usurped for corporate benefit.

(p. 210)

This ‘housewification’ arguably can be associated with the positioning of Inuit women during the 1950s and 60s through the development of the Northern Rankin Inlet Nickel Mine. It also appears to be relevant to the current constraints of mining employment today.

The social positioning of women can also be linked to policies such as the Act to Provide for Family Allowances of 1944 (Bill 161, 1944). As Tester and Kulchyski (1994) have explained, this allowance was tied to the state’s encouragement of Inuit families to remain within communities (abandon nomadic living), send children to school, and feed young children Western foods (e.g. ‘Pablum,’ corn syrup, peanut butter, and marmalade)20. This encouragement contributed to the social and cultural shift towards Western culture for many Inuit and subsequently impacted hunting and trapping, and traditional activities for many families (Tester & Kulchyski, 1994). It again tied families to the labour market. A woman within this new reality could be understood through the “equation [of] ‘woman= housewife= consumer’” as it moved women further from traditional reliance on the land to a reliance on the local store(s) (Oakley, 1974, p. 3). As Anderson (2000) points out, the status of many Indigenous women changed during this time in Canada, as did women’s authority over attaining family goods, and the distribution of food. She has further explained, the “shift from subsistence to production-for-exchange economies marginalized Native [sic] women from economic participation

20 “Remember—Family allowances are for your children” posters intended for Inuit families stated. The amount provided to families could only be spent on certain items (i.e. sugar, corn syrup, eggs, vegetables, meat (when game was scarce), clothing materials, feeding bottles etc. (“Signpost in syllabics,” 1948).
and the authority that went with it” (Anderson, 2000, p. 62). She explains how women, often unable to meet their own needs within the market, became increasingly reliant on men.

Understanding this historical positioning of women, as well as the changing role and work of Inuit women in relation to mining employment and the state policies aimed to support it in the territory suggests an understanding of how patriarchy—alongside capitalism—has shaped Inuit communities. Drawing on feminist-Marxism is relevant here. As Smith (1987) reminds us: “where there is society, there is gender, and the gender division of labour is pervasive” (p. 4). Feminists have attempted to fill a gap in Marxist literature where it traditionally only included women in relation to the struggles of men (Smith, 1977; Vogel, 1983). As part of this, some such as Smith (1977), however, have also demonstrated just how important Marxism is to feminism and, therefore, mothering. This is because mothering continues to be the greatest form of unpaid labour that exists. Smith (1977) has described mothering as a “trap” for women, but at the same time “not a natural and inevitable product of women and men living together and having children,” although this is something that can and often does occur (p. 39). She offers an example of how the relationship between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat in classical Marxist literature can be juxtaposed to the relationship between women and men (as power brokers). Smith (1977) has further explained how from this position we can see that a “unity that is [typically] required from women and men as Marxists is one that is based on and takes for granted the oppression of women” (p. 36). Feminist Marxists, such as Hartman and Markusen (1980), clarify how classical Marxism has been problematic because its:
Analyses postulate the dominance of class relations over gender relations and support class-first political strategies. In doing so, they contribute to the defense of an institution that is a primary arena for the exploitation of women—the family—which in its turn hampers the construction of a mass working-class movement of men and women. The argument of class as primary furthermore misunderstands the purpose and requirements of feminist practice, often by viewing it as a diversion from real revolutionary struggles. (p. 88)

This continues to be a point of contention that sits at the interstices between feminism and Marxism. I explore this in greater detail in the next section on post-modernism.

Classical and even earlier feminist Marxists also rarely note the importance of race to concerns of labour as Moreton-Robinson (2000) has pointed out. Attempting to address such accusations appears to require an understanding into the divisions not only between different classes, and men and women, but between and among all women, particularly racialized women. Here incorporating an increased focus on race and gender—in keeping with what is often described as neo-Marxism, that draws in other intellectual traditions and theories such as critical theory, becomes particularly relevant. Thus, we must look at the different ways and conditions under which white women typically labour, as opposed to racialized or Indigenous women. It is these differences that some white academics are unaware of as they promote more inclusive opportunities for racialized women to speak/be heard. Moreton-Robinson (2000) has explained how discourse such as this that concerns the ‘creation of space’ “expresses a naivety about why white women have the power to be inclusive” (p. 48). Further, even when speaking
the same language, this “has not resulted in shared meanings, goals or politics” (Moreton-Robinson, 2000, p. 48). This has meant:

As beneficiaries of colonization, white feminists have been able to challenge and remake themselves as white women through the state and other institutions. White feminist alliances with the state maintain the centrality of the subject position - middle-class white women in policies and programs designed for all women. This enables racial and cultural differences to be managed without disturbing normative practices or the structural location of white power and privilege. (Moreton-Robinson, 2000, p. 182)

This is immediately apparent when examining gender and race in relation to labour in Nunavut.

Research has yet to focus on how gender and race in relation to women’s labour are organized in Nunavut. I therefore, turn to my own experience in the territory over the last ten years. I have routinely watched as Qallunaat women arrive in the territory to work; often when single and with little family responsibility (within the territory). Having had access to higher education at southern institutions, most Qallunaat are typically provided the higher/highest paid positions in the communities (earning over $110,000 on average in 2016–2017) (Government of Nunavut, 2004, 2017c; Legare 2008; Rogers 2012). In fact, Inuit that work for the GN have been reported to make, on average, approximately $20,000 less per year than Qallunaat (Van Dusen, 2016; Government of Nunavut, 2015, 2017c). Such high-paid GN positions often come with ‘staff” housing units as well, so as to attract those from southern Canada. This is because many Qallunaat will not go to work in Nunavut without being provided both a high salary and adequate
housing during their stay. When in the territory, Qallunaat workers can typically order their preferred food (e.g. fresh vegetables) and necessities from outside the community via their credit cards: something not commonly available to many Inuit who cannot afford to travel by plane to a bank in another community, or who have not been able to attain credit through previous employment. This is a much different introduction to the labour force in the territory from what many Inuit women may experience. Given the meritocratic emphasis on formal education within hiring by governments, including Nunavut’s, and since it is not possible to attain advanced credentials within most of Nunavut’s communities, Inuit can find it difficult to compete for many of the well-paid positions within the GN (Johnston & Tester, 2014). Further, the limited and highly competitive employment opportunities for those without a college university education, means that what employment exists tends to be confined to working at one of a few local organizations (i.e. one of the two grocery stores, the Hamlet office, a daycare—where one exists), or being employed as a translator or janitor at the Health Centre for example. This is evidenced by statistics associated with high unemployment in all of Nunavut’s communities (over 20% for Inuit) (Nunavut unemployment, 2016; Statistics Canada, 2017c). Consequently, many Inuit women end up relying on income assistance and federal government tax benefits to support themselves and their children (Impact Economics, 2012; Statistics Canada, 2013a).

Alternatively, women may choose to leave their community, home, and family and children for extended periods to access necessary education, but this can still mean returning to be hired into lower paying positions than their Qallunaat counterparts (Van Dussen, 2016). Additionally, many Inuit women also find themselves supporting a large
extended family. This occurs far more in Nunavut than anywhere else in Canada and is highlighted through what are known as ‘dependency ratios,’ or the number of dependents supported by working adults. In Nunavut, this ratio is 82.1% as compared to 59.2% across the country, which means Nunavummiut (people of Nunavut) support far more dependents than anywhere else in the country (Canada Without Poverty, 2015). Further, deep roots within the community can serve to complicate their personal and professional relationships (Gillespie, 2012; McKenzie, 2016). Additionally, for many women, the connection to one’s culture can make applying foreign, colonial and inappropriate policies as required by their employment, a constant challenge. A knowledge of the local language or community can mean some Inuit may be called upon to act as a translator or chauffeur, rather than for the professional knowledge or skills they possess (Johnston, 2011). In this case, requests made of Inuit women are typically for the benefit of Qallunaat. This is in keeping with Coulthard and Betasamosake Simpson’s (2016) description of the ‘not neutral’ differences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in their attachment to the labour market. Instead, they explain, such attachment can require Indigenous people to “abandon our parochial, indeed ‘neolithic,’ attachments to land, language, and culture in exchange for our integration into the simultaneously disciplining, yet enlightening fold of the modern proletariat” (Coulthard & Betasamosake, 2016, p. 252). I believe my personal description of a meeting at a health centre in the Arctic describes this point. Needless to say, Qallunaat women are not typically faced with the same requirements, obligations, and expectations when selling their labour as many Inuit women are in Nunavut.
3.1.4 Post-Modernism

Although the ‘postmodern turn’ may have occurred over 50 year ago, differences in how post-modernism is understood and what it means continue to dominate the literature on postmodernism (Caputo, Epstein, Stoesz & Thyer, 2015; Hugman, 2003). Post-modernism was first described by Lyotard (1979/1984) in reference to “a philosophy of society that attempts to diagnose its own time” (Lyotard & Brügger, 2001, p. 78). Later, it was described by Jameson (1992) as ‘the cultural logic of late capitalism.’ My understanding of postmodernism is the movement away from, and critique of, grand narratives and modern theories (such as Marxism), and movement towards a more individualized subjective understanding of the world. Postmodernists do not accept that there are truths, or universal standards or generalizable ideals. This means, as Noble (2004) has pointed out, reality is then expressed and structured through language and “can only ever be the product of one’s narrative imagination” (Noble, 2004, p. 291). In the process, postmodernists typically oppose hegemony and question knowledge, while also deconstructing values and beliefs that may have been long accepted. Given that many of the dominant values and beliefs within Western society have been shaped by the interests of elites, this approach can be useful to the creation of space for alternative perspectives. As an example of this, postmodernism has been critical to the development of queer theory and scholarship (Walters, 1996). Given this focus on multiple voices or perspectives, postmodernism has also been essential to the (ongoing) process of decolonizing social work and social work research. This is because decolonization, or the ‘undoing’ of colonization via an overturning the colonial order, requires alternative understandings, and acceptance of different ontologies, epistemologies and
methodologies (Hart, 2010). It requires a decentering of dominant knowledge.

Decolonization also has been described as the attempt “to resolve the problems caused by colonization, industrialization, and Western encroachment, cloaked in the concept of civilization” (Tamburro, 2013, p. 11). Hart (2002) claims that decolonization requires non-Indigenous people to “learn how to work in a new relationship with Aboriginal people, where Aboriginal people maintain the freedom to determine [their] own lives, including [developing their] own helping theories, approaches and practices” (p. 36). Part of this requires challenging Enlightenment philosophy and questioning institutionalized notions of ‘reason’ and ‘science.’ This is because modernist beliefs can be, as Nicholson (1990) describes, “associated with political baggage...[which] includes notions of the supremacy of the West, [and] of the legitimacy of science to tell us how to use and view our bodies” (p. 4). Some may be able to relate to this point in reference to childbirth and the promotion of Western science (i.e. hospital births, C-section deliveries, use of forceps), over that of midwifery; a practice that women have long-employed throughout the world. Importantly, however, the history and length of the feminist struggle in society can place it within both the modernist and postmodernist camps. Modernist feminism, which held ‘reason’ as a tool for addressing patriarchy, was overtaken by postmodernist feminism through the third (and now fourth) wave, to reveal gender as a social construct while simultaneously problematizing gender relations (Flax, 1990). In this, modernist thinking has since been largely dismantled for its “neutral and universalizing facades” (Flax, 1990, p. 42). ‘Women’ as a category has been since been deconstructed leaving many postmodern feminists to “reject the notion of [a] universal woman, [but to]
celebrate the differences of womanhood [and do this] without substituting universal categories” (Wood, 1997, p. 25).

Critiques of postmodernism regarding this position, however, are plentiful. Referred to as “a sleight of hand by male magicians,” Wood (1997) reminds feminists that through the adoption of postmodernism, only patriarchal interests will be served, and the source of oppression becomes masked. This is the result when individuals remain unconsciously aligned with dominant oppressive agents, namely white middle or upper-class males who serve to benefit from a lack of women’s cohesiveness. Such critique is valid—for while many feminists today can or do appreciate postmodernist values of accounting for all voices (plurality of experience and perspective etc.), postmodernism tends to separate women into smaller subgroups (e.g. those who are pro-choice, those who are trans-inclusive etc.). It often does this through a focus on individual complexities (the micro picture) and body-politics, rather than on what brings people together (the macro picture) regarding oppression, or by that which we are all affected, albeit in different ways, such as living within a capitalist culture and economy. Thus, in an attempt to give all knowledges equal weight, the unequivocal privileging and balance of power remains fundamentally with the dominant group (Wood, 1997). As individuals, it then becomes difficult, even possible, to tackle larger collective issues. It is in this way that postmodernism appears to serve the neoliberal agenda and supports concentrated power in the hands of elites, transnational corporations and oppressive systems. As Grant (1993) explains, this means “the trick [is] to conceptualize the multiplicity of the female experience while still maintaining some notion of woman without dissolving into mere individualism” (p. 91). Although arguably androcentric, the postmodern feminist
adoption of a ‘both—and’ stance attempts to address this critique by positioning women to be a united group concerning political issues or causes, but simultaneously celebrating women’s differences. The intent is to allow for advocacy concerning political causes while also “caution[ing] against polarizing practices” (Wood, 1997, p. 25).

Within postmodernism, however, the risk of social values becoming prey to nihilism or solipsism must be taken seriously. Hugman (2003) explains there are “implications, of course, for any discipline that seeks to intervene in society, because it raises questions about the very basis for such interventions” (p. 1026). How can any value judgements be made within social work if the values themselves are purely relative? How are social workers to work? And can the profession then generate any knowledge? It becomes clear that while postmodernism takes differences in people seriously, “it simultaneously appears to pull the ethical rug out from under the practical feet of such professions” (Hugman, 2003, p. 1026). Thus, concerns for postmodernism, such as those put forward by Caputo, Epstein, Stoesz, and Thyer (2015) regarding its potential “to reverse progress in social justice regarding marginalized groups, undermine the knowledge base of the profession, denigrate evidence-based practice, and jeopardize the profession” are also legitimate (p. 638). They ultimately demonstrate just how problematic postmodernism is for the value-based profession of social work. And yet, at the same time, there exists a need for the recognition of a multiplicity of voices, particularly those who have been long subjugated, or silenced altogether, given the dominance of, or acceptance of, enlightenment logic at the expense of a moral philosophy.
Further, “somewhere in between the interstices” of modernism and postmodernism sits anti-colonialism and post-colonial theory (Gandhi, 1998, p. 167). As Canadian society has been described as being predicated on white supremacy and heteropatriarchy, and that patriarchy in itself is a colonial construct, postmodernists can challenge these societal norms and their associated values and beliefs (Arvin, Tuck, & Morrill, 2013). Although resistance to colonialism has always existed, post-colonial theory has evolved within the academic sphere in the 1990s and sought to challenge universal understandings of whiteness (Ashcroft, 2001; Tamburro, 2013). Such resistance has led to an increasing awareness among society of white privilege (Pappas, 1995). However, where postmodernism, as Harvey (1990) aptly describes, “swims, even wallows, in the fragmentary and the chaotic currents of change as if that is all there is,” post-colonialism demonstrates systemic oppression (p. 44). In the process, however, postmodernists simultaneously risk denying existing colonial relations by refusing to ascribe value or denote difference between colonists and the colonized. While at the same time, postmodernism offers essential challenges to traditional Western standards or ways of understanding and opts for a pluralism and diversity that appears important to gaining a better and important understanding of a range of lived experiences. Importantly, although synergies and solidarity between women and men, and colonized Indigenous peoples and settlers/colonists can and do occur, this is not typically captured in the “language of solidarity” (Snelgrove, Kaur, Dhamoon, & Corntassel, 2014, p. 3). Instead, it is often “grounded in actual practices and place-based relationships, and approached as incommensurable, but not incompatible” (p. 3). When solidarity does occur, the fractures that exist due to these same issues are also often exposed. An example of this can be
found at the International Women’s March on Washington, DC. The majority of people who attended or participated were there in support of this women’s movement, but also as members of different subgroups (e.g. those for transgender rights, religious groups etc.).

Fortunately, one does not need to adopt solely a modernist or postmodernist perspective but can draw on elements of both. One can pull values of diversity and plurality from postmodernism together with the importance of challenging modernist thought, while not “throwing the baby out with the bath water” and abandoning the potential for collective action (Whitson, 1995, p. 121). Fourth wave feminism appears to be an explicit demonstration of this option. Engaging in truly feminist research, however, cannot begin solely from the postmodern position. Instead, it must begin from a recognition of the complexities and intersections of oppression and modernist universalizing notions—namely the oppression of women via capitalism, colonialism, and patriarchy. Thus, the weaving together of different theories are critical to developing a holistic, anti-colonialist, and feminist-Marxist position from which to explore the child welfare system in Nunavut and the changing (and changed) roles of Inuit women.

4. Research Rationale & Methodology

During my first few trips to Arviat to discuss the research interests of mothers and community members, I had the good fortune of meeting Roseanna Alareak. At that time, Roseanna was working with the Hamlet of Arviat. She was employed to run a support group for women who had husbands or boyfriends working at Meadowbank Mine. During our first few meetings we explored the idea of community-based research with
mothers. She was excited by the prospect of developing research that engaged some of
the same women she had worked with through the support group. Together we created an
initial research design that was to be adjusted and built upon through involvement with
the other mothers. Following this initial work, I met with a number of local organizations,
key informants, or those who held specialized knowledge and understanding of the issues
raised by the mothers, as well as with the support group, and some other mothers
interested in the study. These meetings led to a greater agreement on the research and its
design for which to go forward. A recruitment poster to get more women involved was
created (see Appendix A).

Prior to describing the methodology in more detail, it is important to note that all
of the women I met during my time in Arviat expressed a strong interest in research
concerning the child welfare system. For many, this was related to their personal
experiences with the child welfare system, or those experiences of their friends and
family. Once I had been in the community for some time talking to people about the
research, I began to be approached regularly. Every woman I spoke to about the research
was invited to participate in it. For example, a couple of women came to the door of my
residence to tell me they would like to share their thoughts and experiences on the child
welfare system in the territory. One day, while walking through town, a woman whom I
had never met before, drove past me on her ATV, turned around, and came back to speak
with me. She requested I include childcare within the study’s focus. Needless to say,
there was a large appetite for this research within the community. This confirmed much
of what I had witnessed and heard from parents over the previous ten years during my
time in the territory. Women expressed a strong desire to change child welfare within the
community in some way. Many women appeared to view this research as a vehicle for 
this change.

4.1 Community Based Research Relationships

To embark on this research required important relationships be formed. Relationships based on trust are critical to research such as this given the nature of the experiences—often negative—that many Indigenous mothers have had with the child welfare system. This is because for some mothers, their involvement could mean discussing how they experienced their child or children being apprehended from their care. As these experiences are typically traumatic, they can be some of the most emotionally difficult and intimate conversations that can occur within a research relationship (Kenny, Barrington, & Green, 2015). Women can experience a range of feelings as they reflect on their involvement with the child welfare system, particularly when a child has been apprehended. This personal information, however, can be important to understanding the system and how it impacts women and their children. Women need to feel safe to speak about their experiences and their feelings. They need to know their information will be kept confidential and received without any form of judgement. They may require support of a family or friend, or where available, professional services.

Being on the receiving end of this information can also be very difficult. Listening to heartache, trauma, sadness, and often anger, can often take a significant emotional toll on a researcher. Coles, Astbury, Dartnall, and Limjerwala (2014) have pointed to the negative impacts on researchers in relation to learning about their participants’ experiences of sexual assault; something often related to child welfare investigations.
Given the sensitivity of this research, therefore, required certain allowances to be made, and a flexibility to be built into the research design, as well as significant care and attention taken in relation to collecting the data. For example, researchers may need to take more time to process an individual’s interview or be prepared to adjust the questions she or he asks. Similarly, researchers may opt to not conduct interviews on their own and instead may prefer to do them as a team. Or what might normally be one-on-one interview with a woman, may need to become an interview with a woman and her closest friend; someone with her for additional support. In keeping with this heightened sensitivity to the research process, I strongly believe that women, particularly those who have encountered traumatic experiences, deserve to be interviewed in whatever language they prefer. This is consistent with a report produced by the Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada (2005). Being able to talk in Inuktitut with a researcher, if desired, was consequently something I worked hard to ensure was always available to everyone who participated in this study. For these reasons, it was important to me to ensure Inuit women were involved within the study, not just as participants but as researchers and as a source of support to the mothers. Roseanna, and later her sister Nadine, were instrumental to this effect. Both Roseanna and Nadine are strong, highly respected women in Arviat. Neither were known for participating in gossip, and both are often turned-to informally by other women in the community for support. Both simultaneously conducted the research, provided translation such that the mothers could participate in Inuktitut, and offered emotional support to the mothers. In turn, Roseanna and Nadine and I supported each other in the research process, through which we developed a strong friendship.
Over the course of many visits to Arviat, and through vast numbers of emails and telephone calls, and messages via social media, Roseanna and I came to know each other, share experiences, and develop a trusting relationship. When we met, we were both pregnant with children to be born within a few months of each other. This set the stage for the development of an important bond between us as women, as mothers, and as researchers. This relationship was critical to the development of the research design, as well as the ability to carry out data collection and analysis. It enabled us to communicate and openly discuss our options. The relationship between us was also likely important to the women who participated in the project. The women had to trust and want to work with both of us. They respected and trusted Roseanna, but they were also witness to our relationship. Because Roseanna trusted me, many women may have thought they could trust me as well. The trust here, however, had to go both ways. I also had to trust Roseanna and the other mothers. This was because I was not in control of this research as I would have been, were I using a traditional Western academic research methodology. Being pregnant, and then later having a newborn child, while also living outside the territory, meant I was restricted in both the time and energy I could offer during the course of the study. Consequently, I had to rely on Roseanna, and later Nadine as well, to a large extent. Fortunately, this is consistent with developing a true partnership and decolonizing methodology as I describe below. To ensure Roseanna and Nadine were adequately compensated for their work on this project, I secured funding to pay Roseanna a salary for almost one year, and then additional funds for work on an ad hoc basis over the following year for both her and Nadine.
4.1.1 Research with Indigenous Communities

The goal of moving towards and embarking upon research that employs decolonizing methodologies is one shared by many Indigenous researchers and their non-Indigenous allies alike. Current literature concerning research with Indigenous peoples explicitly addresses the need for academic inquiry to benefit communities, to be inclusive of the worldviews of the colonized ‘Other,’ and to fit within the larger goal of decolonization (Chilisa, 2012; Kawagley & Barnhardt, 1999; Madsen, 2008; Menzies, 2001; Smith, 1999). Recommendations for researchers who wish to work with Indigenous peoples and communities consistently point to community-based research approaches as essential. Community-based research, however, can look like many different things and I explore this more below. There is, however, a strong consensus in the literature that this form of research requires a trusting and committed relationship (Ball & Janyst, 2008; Baum, MacDougall, & Smith, 2006; Cornwall & Jewkes, 1995). These relationships can be complicated by a variety of factors, including distance, cost, and, as in the case of Nunavut, limited access to high-speed internet (Kim, 2016; Johnston, Stoller, & Tester, 2018). The importance of building and nurturing these research relationships with Elders, youth, and communities has been highlighted by both the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK), a national Inuit rights organization, and the Nunavut Research Institute (NRI), the body responsible for granting research licenses in the territory (ITK & NTI, 2007).

The relationship between myself and Roseanna and Nadine, along with the relationships that we all formed with and among the mothers in Arviat are of no small consequence. These relationships were essential to the completion of this study. Such
relationships are particularly important given the negative associations many Indigenous peoples may have with research and researchers (Smith, 1999). This is because research has largely privileged Western ontologies, epistemologies, methodologies, and methods over other philosophies, and alternative ways of knowing and learning (Cram, Chilisa, & Mertens, 2014; Smith, 1999). The result has been research that often misrepresented Indigenous peoples, families, and communities (Cochran et al., 2008; Smith, 1999). As products of their time, such research was able to occur given a social and cultural context that often supported racist and discriminatory beliefs associated with Indigenous peoples and communities (Smith, 1999). For many Indigenous peoples and communities, research has contributed to feelings of dismissal, denial or denigration of Indigenous ways of knowing (Ball & Janyst, 2008; Smith, 1999). Further, scholarly research often exuded the traits of a dominant society set on assimilating Indigenous peoples to Euro-Canadian culture (Cochran et al., 2008; Harding, 2006). As such, it was often conducted in ways that have been described as reductionist, linear, and hierarchical (Smith, 1999). In some cases, it was also exploitative. Cochran et al. (2008) has demonstrated this through the provision of historical examples of non-Indigenous researchers who were dishonest with Indigenous communities in different ways, including lying to research participants about the overall purpose of the research. Even when studies were conducted ethically, research approaches that were used typically encouraged, or at least maintained, a distance between the researcher and the research ‘subjects.’ This is commonly cited as important to preserve researcher control and ensure a distance between the researcher and the research topic (Moore, 2004). Such distance is often believed to help preserve notions of ‘objectivity’ (Moore, 2004). However, critiques of this ‘objective’ approach point to the
limited role for research participants in studies, which reduce learning opportunities and means by which community members may benefit from the research (Smith, 1999). Conventional Western academic approaches have consequently meant that research has been often understood by Indigenous peoples as one of the “dirtiest words” (Smith, 1999, p. 1).

Given this past relationship between researchers and Indigenous communities, the three primary federal funding agencies have put policy in place for how research with Indigenous peoples is to be conducted. The Tri-Council Policy Statement’s (TCPS) Chapter 9 outlines expectations for Research Involving the First Nations, Inuit and Metis Peoples of Canada (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, & Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, 2014). Additionally, the TCPS offers online tutorials for those preparing to work with Indigenous peoples and communities (Government of Canada, n.d.). Here, the Social Sciences and Humanities and Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) suggests researchers emphasize:

> A co-creation model [that] result[s] in reciprocity in the form of partnerships and collaborative practices, which can include: identification of research objectives and methods; conduct of the research; ethical research protocols; data analysis and presentation; and transmission of knowledge. It also recognizes that access and benefits are, thus, integrally connected. (SSHRC, 2015)

These guidelines signal the incorporation of Indigenous communities into the mainstream research process far beyond that of traditional ‘research subjects.’ They represent important constraints be placed on non-Indigenous researchers, including real attention
be given to co-developing research with Indigenous peoples and communities. Building on these values, social science research licenses required in Nunavut are only attainable after researchers demonstrate community involvement, consultation, and the benefits the community will gain from the research (Nunavut Research Institute [NRI], 2015). Unfortunately, health and water and land-based research do not have these same standards. This is likely why it continues to be possible to encounter researchers in the North that appear uninterested in Inuit involvement and partnerships. Fortunately, there appears to be a great number of researchers who are writing, working, promoting, and attempting to develop decolonized research projects from a range of disciplines (see Garakani, 2014; Healey et. al, 2011; Kral, Idlout, Minore, Bruce, Dyck, & Kirmayer, 2011; MacDonald et. al, 2015; Morris, 2016 etc.).

4.2 Participatory Action Research

Considered an ‘alternative’ approach to conventional Western research methodologies, Participatory Action Research (PAR) includes three essential components: 1) education, 2) research, and 3) action (Cornwall & Jewkes, 1995; Healy, 2001). This stands in contrast to conventional Western research approaches that typically center on research alone. The use of participatory methods or participatory action research is recommended within Article 9.12 of the TCPS (Canadian Institutes of Health Research et al., 2014). Here it states that “as part of the community engagement process, researchers and communities should consider applying a collaborative and participatory approach as appropriate to the nature of the research, and the level of ongoing engagement desired by the community” (p. 128). The TCPS also explains how in application, this should include:
Community-based research [that] takes place at community sites. Some forms of research are community-centred in that the research focuses not only on individuals but on the community itself, and may become a project conducted by, for, and with the community. Participatory research is a systematic inquiry that includes the active involvement of those who are the subject of the research. Participatory research is usually action-oriented, where those involved in the research process collaborate to define the research project, collect and analyze the data, produce a final product and act on the results. It is based on respect, relevance, reciprocity and mutual responsibility. (Canadian Institutes of Health Research et al., 2014, p. 128)

This is supported extensively by literature concerning research with Indigenous peoples, such as work by Ball and Janyst (2008), Chouinard and Cousins (2007), Cochran et al. (2008), Cornwall and Jewkes (1995) and Koster, Baccar, and Lemelin (2012). Increasingly, this approach to research with Indigenous peoples and communities is becoming the standard and an expectation for researchers in the social sciences.

Although Participatory Action Research (PAR) may not be appropriate for every study, nor is it an answer for the many issues associated with conventional research approaches and research generally in Canada (Kim, 2017; Johnston, Stoller, & Tester, 2018), it has been reported as highly appropriate for research with Indigenous peoples and communities (Cochran et al., 2008; Chouinard & Cousins, 2007; Koster, Baccar, & Lemelin, 2012). This is because the underlying principles of PAR aligns it with principles necessary for research with Indigenous peoples (Hart, 2010; Moore, 2004; Piquemal, 2000). These principles include: being democratic, potentially liberating, and often even
life-enhancing, while also incorporating critical reflection and reflexivity. Additionally, research should offer a practical betterment for the community. PAR is also consistent with social work values namely, social justice, advocacy, and anti-oppressive practice (Healy, 2001; Baines, 2011; Marsh, 2005). This suggests PAR may hold great utility and often be a very good fit between social workers and community-based participatory research generally, but also be a necessary component to social work research with Indigenous communities. A commitment to collaboration, social justice, social transformation, the sharing of power and benefits, as well as the honouring of experience and knowledge possessed by communities also makes participatory research highly relevant to working with Inuit in Nunavut (Evans, Hole, Berg, Hutchinson, & Sookraj, 2009). This is because these values align with Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ). Further, PAR is consistent with post-colonial theory and it has the capacity to create vastly different relationships and research outcomes in comparison to conventional academic approaches (Bartlett et al., 2007; Evans, Hole, Berg, Hutchinson, & Sookraj, 2009; Kenney, 2004).

Participatory action research as a methodology also promotes the building of genuine relationships. While PAR can be understood as both a philosophy and a method for conducting research, PAR has also been described by Baum, MacDougall, and Smith (2006) as an approach that:

Seeks to understand and improve the world by changing it. At its heart it is collective, self-reflective inquiry that researchers and participants undertake, so they can understand and improve upon the practices in which they participate and the situations in which they find themselves. The reflective process is directly
linked to action, influenced by understanding of history, culture, and local context and embedded in social relationships. The process of PAR should be empowering and lead to people having increased control over their lives. (p. 854)

PAR’s iterative process of reflection encourages new and emerging insights, and this is central to both ongoing community involvement and incorporating changing needs of a community (Hal et al., 2015). It encourages the objectives of Indigenous peoples and communities to help guide the research through participating in the research design, and thus shares values of current social work education.

Taking direction from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) (2015b) on the legacy of residential schools in Canada is also important to research with Indigenous peoples. Part of this includes refusing to “perpetuate the paternalistic concept that only Aboriginal peoples are in need of healing” (TRC, 2015e, p. 9). The TRC advises that the decolonization of research requires a recognition that “perpetrators are wounded and marked by history in ways that are different from the victims, but both groups require healing” (Stan McKay, qtd. in TRC, 2015e, p. 9–10). This, alongside attempts to minimize power differences within the research relationship encourage a blurring of the distinction between the researcher and ‘the researched.’ This requires researchers address the location of Indigenous peoples and communities as ‘Other’ (Baum, MacDougall, & Smith, 2006). Such work encourages what Regan (2010) describes as ‘unsettling the settler.’ In these ways, PAR encourages the inequities of power and decision-making, that commonly exist within research relationships, be openly confronted, challenged, and replaced with collaboration and consensus (Hal et al., 2015).
4.2.1 Power, Authority and Research Relationships

Despite the positive steps that many researchers are taking towards employing decolonizing methodologies, it is important to recognize how research is rarely reciprocal. Researchers produce academic texts (articles, chapters, and books) and present at conferences. Given this, the larger academic community, rather than Indigenous peoples and communities, are more likely to be the main beneficiaries of academic research. Indigenous peoples, even when they are fully involved in research, do not necessarily derive equal benefits from it. Instead:

As one of the most consulted and researched people in the country, we are the least listened to…[Researchers], on the other hand, have either tidied up their files, made a decision on our behalf, made a scientific breakthrough, attained doctoral status, published their opinions, become experts in the field, provided a consultant’s report, moved on to another theory, gained a new prestigious portfolio, attracted lucrative publicity, gained political kudos, offered legislation, made an impressive speech, attacked our credibility, denied our Aboriginality, advised us as to what we should be doing, or created another problem for us on which we will soon be consulted. (Bailey qtd. In Greenhill & Dix, 2008, p. 51–52)

Smith (1999) explains how the colonial history between researchers and Indigenous communities constitutes the foundation of this inequitable relationship. From this relationship, the academy has been critiqued for largely functioning “as a space for creation, acquisition, assertion and reassertion of whiteness and the simultaneous rejection of Non-whiteness” (Dei, 1999, p. 18). Redressing the relationship between the
academy and Indigenous communities requires a commitment from individual researchers, but also a larger systemic shift in the way research is both understood and valued. For example, a valuing of research that produces different or alternative ‘data’ that offers benefits to Indigenous peoples and communities could support this change. This is part of a larger discussion concerning structural barriers to truly working with Indigenous communities in the production of knowledge (Johnston, Stoller, & Tester, 2018). Until such systemic changes occur, a focus on relationships is that much more critical. Fortunately, this focus is also inherent to the field of social work (Ball & Janyst, 2008). However, what tends to be overlooked in this value-based discussion is often the missed opportunity to gain important insights and critical ‘data’ that may not be offered without significant trust in place between the researcher and co-researchers. Thus, I believe PAR should be undertaken, not only with a focus on education, research, and action, but with an emphasis placed on relationships so as to forge not only better relations between researchers, social workers, and Indigenous peoples and communities, but to attain greater insights and understandings as well.

Challenges of PAR in relation to professional constraints, however, can hinder its use. For example, restrictive timelines associated with funding, and a general unpredictability of PAR pose obstacles to projects and impact the ability for researchers to meet academic outcomes (Baum, MacDougall, & Smith, 2006; Couinard & Cousins, 2007). These may also impact the nature of the relationships associated with the work. Some, such as Stoecker and Bonacich (1992), have gone so far as to describe PAR as “dangerous” to an academic career (p. 8). They explain how the time required for working on and maintaining the necessary in-depth relationships in PAR, as compared to
more traditional academic pursuits such as the publication of academic articles, can be a
deterrent for academics (Stoecker & Bonacich, 1992). Moore (2004) indicates that these
challenges can discourage researchers from attempting PAR. The reluctance of funding
bodies to support researchers who do not produce typical academic outcomes can further
dissuade researchers from utilizing PAR. For many academics the warning to ‘publish or
perish,’ is enough to avoid participatory work (Castleden, Sylvestre, Martin, & McNally,
2015; Reichert, Daniels-Race, & Dowell, 2002). With an awareness of these challenges, I
remained determined to ensure this research became and remained a meaningful
experience for the women in Arviat. Through ‘memoing’ and constant communication
with Roseanna and Nadine, I was able to continuously examine my thought processes and
interactions with all the mothers involved in this study. Were all issues of power and
authority resolved within this study? No. I remain the researcher, the person who was
both able to access and provide funding to this study, and the person who is the author of
this thesis. However, these and other areas where there were unequal levels of power
within the research relationship were discussed together and critically examined.

4.3 Research Design

4.3.1 Methodological Approach

Although primarily a PAR study, I also drew on the values, principles and
philosophical stance associated with Critical Ethnography (CE) (Hardcastle, Usher, &
Holmes, 2006). This was largely to understand the relationship of culture to social
structures but also to “penetrate the borders and break through the confines in defense of
the voices of those whose stories are otherwise restrained and out of reach” (Madison,
2005, p. 5). This was important given the topic area of child welfare, which has been
criticized for silencing families through labeling parents as ‘bad’ or ‘unfit’ etc. (Kline, 1993). It is the focus of CE to challenge the status quo and dominant powers in society that draws my interest. CE also appealed to me as I feel:

A moral obligation to make a contribution toward changing [certain] conditions toward greater freedom and equity...[and go] beneath surface appearances, disrupt the status quo, and unsettle both neutrality and taken-for-granted assumptions by bringing to light underlying and obscure operations of power and control.

(Madison, 2005, p. 5)

Consistent with PAR, though designed to achieve an explicit political purpose, CE examines “large political, social, and economic issues that focus on oppression, conflict, struggle, power, and praxis” (Schwandt, 1997, p. 22). Used to analyze cultural dominance, relationships to power and aspects and meanings of a group’s culture, CE is particularly well-suited to this research study (Harrowing et al., 2010). It is also highly appropriate given my past involvement within child welfare in Nunavut, as CE recognizes the role of the researcher within the work. Having been employed as a social worker within Nunavut’s child welfare system for many years, I bring an understanding and an experience concerning the topic that cannot be separated from this research. Although I continue to occupy an ‘outsider’s’ position within Inuit communities, this experience provides me ‘insider’s’ knowledge to child welfare in the territory.

Drawing on Carspeken’s (1996) approach to CE has been useful here. Consistent with PAR, it aims to reveal oppression and inequality through an analysis of systemic power and relationships. Carspeken (1996) argues for the democratization of the research process and encourages researchers to strive towards an equalization of power where a
negotiation of both the interpretation and dissemination of research is shared. This is supported by Harrowing et al., (2010). I decided to draw on CE, however, as opposed to conducting a traditional CE study for two reasons. Firstly, I did this because the use of PAR was so integral to the work and I wanted to ensure the methodology was guided by the mothers. Secondly, I continue to hold reservations about CE as a stand-alone methodology given the emphasis CE places on participant observation. Although I understand the importance of researchers observing the activities of people in their natural setting, this method, even when associated with a critical perspective, maintains the traditional positioning of researchers as overseers of action and behavior. For example, in reviewing theses of other doctoral students who have also engaged in critical ethnography, I was alarmed to read thoughtful researchers that “likened [one’s] work as ethnographer to that of a spy” (Schroeter, 2017, p. 59). Herein lies a problem. It appears there may be a connection between this position and holding little regard for the people and families who are observed. I often return to the work of the late anthropologist and ethnographer Jean Briggs (1970; 1979) who studied Inuit families within the Arctic (note, she did not work with them). Briggs (1970) opted to reside with Inuit families, while expressing minimal concern, at least initially, for whether the families wished to have her there at all, or how her constant observation of them made them feel. It may have the potential to leave those being observed to feel uncomfortable, and or anxious. Given the critiques of the social work profession concerning child welfare within Indigenous communities and the concerns for the surveillance or policing of Indigenous families as described in the previous chapters, participant observation is particularly inappropriate for this study. Additionally, it appears to maintain a distance between researchers and
those with whom they work. As a Qallunaaq, sitting and observing Inuit women would do little to decolonize our relationships and the research process in general. This suggests a need for greater examination between participant observation in relation to colonialism. Further, I have worked and lived in the territory for such an extended period of time, the utility of participant observation within this study would likely be limited. I believe that by drawing on and incorporating experiences and memories I possess from my work with mothers, I am able to bring additional insights to this work. By relying upon other methods as well, such as semi-structured open-ended interviews, Roseanna, Nadine, and I were able to gather a vast amount of data. This is in keeping with Carspecken’s (1996) ethnographic approach to collecting data. Thus, it is possible to engage in different methods of data collection through PAR while drawing on CE in a way that seeks to capture the best, most culturally-relevant means to conduct research.

Combining the critical methodologies of PAR and CE in this way is appropriate given the topic of this study. Both PAR and CE are geared towards social action, the holistic human experience, and both place importance on “an evolving rather than opposed agenda” (Barab, 2004, p. 265; Cook, 2005; Harrowing et al., 2010). This is consistent with the study’s research design, which was initially developed with Roseanna, and later with a group of mothers, in order to be flexible and adapt to the needs and goals of the mothers themselves (Barab, 2004; Hardcastle, Usher & Holmes, 2006). Over the course of the study, the design was adjusted. The study evolved as information was obtained as well. For example, although we initially agreed on creating a survey to administer widely within the community, this became less critical as mothers preferred having in-depth and meaningful interviews. We ultimately decided against the survey.
4.3.2 Ethics and Research Licensing

The critical methodological approach this study took is consistent with the *Ethical Principles for the Conduct of Research in the North* (ACUNS, 2003), *Research Involving the First Nations, Inuit, and Metis Peoples of Canada* (Chapter 9) of the Tri-Council Policy Statement on Research Involving Humans (Canadian Institutes of Health Research et al., 2014), and *Negotiating Research Relationships with Inuit Communities: A Guide for Researchers* (ITK & NRI, 2007). These guides to research in the North hold a similar philosophy; one that is “premised on respectful relationships...collaboration and engagement between researchers and participants” (Canadian Institutes of Health Research et al., 2014, p. 105). Relationships, consequently, were the cornerstone of this study. This was outlined in my applications to the University of British Columbia’s Behavioral Research Ethics Board (BREB). In January 2014, an initial application to explore the research topic of child welfare with community members was approved by UBC’s BREB. After meetings with Roseanna and a group of mothers in Arviat to develop a research design, an expanded ethics application requesting approval to conduct the study was created. The study obtained both UBC Ethics approval and a research license from the *Nunavut Research Institute* (NRI). To obtain and maintain this research license, a non-technical description of the research was provided to the NRI. Each year additional renewals on the ethics application and the research license were sought.

4.3.3 Participants & Recruitment

Inuit mothers and Elders in Arviat, Nunavut, were recruited to participate in this study. Mothers were recruited based on the following criteria: if they or their immediate family had involvement with the child welfare system and/or if they or someone in their
immediate family had been employed by the mine. No additional criteria were required for their participation. Although there can be a number of limitations associated with PAR, I was concerned that this study could face difficulty reaching enough mothers who would want to participate in it (Gibbon, 2002). Due to the socio-economic challenges many families who encounter child welfare experience, I had anticipated that some mothers’ day-to-day concerns could take precedence over participating in this research or make their involvement in this study altogether not possible. I was also concerned that participants may be reluctant to participate given the topic of child welfare, or if they had not participated in research before, that they might find the idea intimidating. In an attempt to address these potential issues, a small amount of funding was attained to both offer an incentive to participate and thank mothers for their time. This funding was used to purchase gift cards to local grocery stores for each meeting and interview conducted. Each gift card was worth $25, and mothers were provided these gift cards when they agreed to be interviewed. For the groups analyses, I obtained funding to purchase a $15 iTunes gift card and an iPad mini that was given away through a draw of all those who participated.

Mothers were recruited through the use of recruitment posters as mentioned, and radio advertisements. Local radio announcements concerning the study were also made. These used plain language and were provided in English and Inuktitut. Mothers were advised on the poster and through recruitment radio announcements to contact Roseanna, Nadine, or to approach me directly. Typically, mothers got in touch with Nadine and Roseanna. However, as I mentioned previously, when I was in the community I was approached in person by a number of mothers who were interested in participating.
Mothers got in touch with us in person, by telephone, and by social media (Facebook Messenger) indicating they wished to participate. Additional mothers were recruited through snowball sampling. Mothers at the mining support group were also invited to participate.

Recruitment was ongoing, and during a period of just over one year (July 2014 to June 2015), a total of 24 mothers, including three Elders, who themselves were mothers, were interviewed. Over two years, (from July 2014 to June 2016), 12 key informants from a range of different organizations and government departments were also interviewed. These individuals were selected for their involvement and/or specific knowledge concerning the challenges facing mothers in the community and territory (Marshall, 1996)\(^\text{21}\). In total, 36 interviews were conducted. Once mothers were identified, the research was explained in person so as to demystify and clarify the process as well as their participation. Each interviewee was provided their gift card in advance of their interview and advised that they could stop the interview at any point and still keep it. It should be noted that none of the mothers stopped the interview upon receipt of the gift card.

4.3.4 Data Collection

Initially, a meeting with mothers through the support group was held. Together we discussed the research, its objectives, and explored a range of ideas for the study’s purpose and how the study was to unfold. This included discussing what the mothers wanted to gain from this research and how they hoped it would serve their community.

\(^{21}\) Due to the size of the territory, no other information concerning the key informants has been provided here to ensure their anonymity.
Together we established the research design. Through additional meetings and work with Roseanna and Nadine, consent forms (in English and Inuktitut) (see Appendix B, C, & D) and a semi-structured interview guide were developed (see Appendix E). This guide was piloted with a couple mothers. These pilots were also used as opportunities to support Roseanna and Nadine in developing their interviewing skills. Following these pilot interviews slight changes were made to the guide. As an example, it became clear that less emphasis should be placed on discussing Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ) or traditional knowledge with the mothers as this was something not very familiar to many of them—often due to their younger age, and/or a disconnection from Elders who hold more of this knowledge. The guide asked mothers what makes their lives both harder and easier, and how they managed difficulties they experienced. Mothers were asked about their involvement with child welfare workers in their community, and about their relationship to the mine. They were also asked to describe how child welfare has responded to their needs and any problems they may have experienced in the process. Mothers were asked to offer suggestions as to what would make things better in their community for families and how they believed families could be better supported. Finally, they were asked to discuss their thoughts on Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ) and maligait (rules) and the importance of traditional knowledge and Inuit culture to their childrearing. In cases where mothers indicated they held little to no knowledge of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ), they were asked about their interest in learning about it. They were also encouraged to discuss anything they believed was relevant to these topics.

Given the significant roles Roseanna and Nadine played in this study, and in-keeping with goals of capacity-building within Indigenous communities, both women
were trained to conduct this research. For example, as this study involved highly sensitive information, confidentiality of each participant was extremely important. This was discussed with Roseanna and Nadine in mini-tutorial sessions on research ethics and interviewing. We reviewed topics such as protecting confidentiality, obtaining consent, and using different interviewing techniques. Both women conducted their initial interviews with me being present so I could answer questions and provide support (e.g. suggest probing questions etc.). Both women demonstrated excellent skills and aptitude for this form of work, leaving me confident in their ability to conduct interviews on their own. However, on occasion they chose to conduct interviews together. Importantly, the mothers trained me as well. They taught me about the community, the complexity of the relationships within the community, Inuit culture, and they regularly provided information that led me to better understand the context for the study among many other things.

Roseanna and Nadine conducted the majority of interviews with the mothers and with two of the Elders. A translator was employed to participate in the interview with the third Elder. These interviews with the Elders were very important as the Elders are known and respected for their degree of knowledge regarding Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ). Also, as mothers, grandmothers and great-grandmothers, they offered a wealth of information related to childrearing and family relationships. These interviews also provided historical information related to mining in the territory and the impacts on families that they had witnessed over their lifetimes. The Elders also offered their opinions on the challenges many families face today in Arviat and what they believe
needs to occur to support mothers. Archival and web-based information was also sought out to further explore some of what they discussed.

Each interview lasted between 45 minutes and 1.5 hours in length. All of the interviews with the mothers, except for one, were conducted in Inuktitut or a mixture of Inuktitut and English. The women chose what language they wished to be interviewed in and occasionally switched between Inuktitut and English during the interview. All of the interviews with key informants, however, were conducted in English. All interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. All Inuktitut interviews were translated into English. Everyone interviewed was offered their transcript for review (member-checking). Only one of the mothers who were interviewed requested the transcript from her interview. This was provided to her electronically. All of the key informants requested transcripts of their interviews and these were sent to them by email. None indicated they wished any changes to be made to their transcript or to the information they provided during their interviews. In one case a key informant followed up with additional comments in an email.

A thorough literature review was conducted on the topics of child welfare and socioeconomic impacts of mining. Archival research was conducted throughout this study, along with a review of web-based material. This literature and research has greatly informed chapters 1 to 3. Additionally, a selection of flight-logs kept by the Hamlet of Arviat over a three-year period (2013 to 2016) of those community residents who travelled to Meadowbank Mine were also examined. A request to access information pertaining to child welfare through the Department of Family Services (and previously the Department of Health and Social Services) in Nunavut was made to the Access to
Information and Protection of Privacy (ATIPP) Office as well. Together, this constituted a wide range of data that was collected over a period of three years.

**4.3.5 Data Analysis**

There is no consensus for how analysis of data within qualitative research such as this is to unfold (Creswell, 1998). There are, however, some approaches that have been described to offer a “methodologically rigorous and nuanced” orientation to data analysis (Apple, 1996). Carspecken (1996) is understood to offer one such approach. Given that Carspecken’s (1996) methodology involves beginning with observational data, I opted not to follow his method specifically, but to draw on his work alongside other understandings of data analysis such as that by Wolcott’s (1994). This included looking for what Wolcott (1994) terms ‘patterned regularities.’ I did, however, opt to let Carspecken's (1996) five stages of data analysis also support my analysis. This included: 1) to construct a comprehensive understanding of the topic area, 2) to develop an analysis of relationships, and 3) to identify the “assumptions that structure meaningful actions,” 4) engage in reconstructive analysis, and 5) to then connect “findings from the local cultural site to other similar institutions and knowledge” (Hardcastle, Usher, & Holmes, 2006, p. 159). As Mayes Pane & Rocco (2009) explain, reconstructive analysis involves:

> Interpreting tacit cultural and subjective material...into explicit discourse...to gain a holistic picture of routines or irregular events (i.e., continuity in settings and/or change or shifts in settings) in everyday life...by inferring possible meanings of what was observed—and would probably be agreed upon by all participants—into words (p. 15).
Reconstructive analysis can also “be used to articulate the cultural milieu through which actors take on world relations and demarcate their identities” (Given, 2008, p. 742). It offers an opportunity for learning from within the data (the linking of data to important insights). This meant relying on my familiarity with the context but also holding discussions with Roseanna and Nadine to determine if my understanding of the meaning fields and context were consistent with how they understood them as well. This demonstrates just how regularly Roseanna and Nadine trained me to understand the information we received. This approach provides for the ‘personalization’ of the interpretation of the data, such that I made explicit how I understood the information and/or how it impacted me (Wolcott, 1994). This included examining a range of possible meanings associated with an expression (Given, 2008). For example, we discussed how the risk of being perceived as ‘stingy’ was something of concern to many mothers, both in terms of money, but also related to their willingness to let others access their small children. No one wants to be understood as ‘stingy.’ As I have long heard similar comments from mothers, I understood these sentiments within this research to suggest those who are stingy are considered ‘un-Inuit,’ and that to be stingy is to possess negative, even Qallunaat-like qualities. We explored alternative ways of understanding this expression. It became clearer that we were understanding this expression correctly as we assessed other comments. For example, some of the mothers’ commented on being frustrated with those who are ‘freeloaders’—suggesting there may be a limit for some in terms of how much they wish to or can share. Since ‘freeloaders’ is a term I had only recently heard in the North, I questioned whether this was increasingly used in light of the stretching (and thinning) of individual and community resources. The discussions
amongst the three of us provided a greater awareness and insight into the meanings behind words such as these, as well as the actions of those mothers that were interviewed (e.g. becoming upset with someone who asked for food or money too often).

In keeping with the iterative process of PAR, data was collected and analyzed concurrently. This approach was useful because it allowed for the simultaneous collection and analysis of data—an approach that was particularly important due to the costs, challenges, and limitations associated with travel to and from Nunavut. It also meant that as data was examined, added to, and expanded upon through interviews, we increasingly came closer to a greater understanding of the range of experiences of the mothers in Arviat (Palys & Atchison, 2008). It required I apply my understanding of the local context and literature to the data. ‘Thick descriptions’ (detailed accounts of information that paid attention to context) were compiled, and categories and key issues were determined. Using open coding, data was categorized so that themes and patterns became identifiable (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Both low and high-level coding pertaining to the level of abstraction was helpful to both the organization of the data, as well as the analysis (Carspecken, 1996). Examples of low level codes include ‘taking care of children is hard’ and a high-level code ‘challenges mothers face.’ Once codes were established, I was able to determine themes. Examples of themes included: food and basic needs, fear of social services, desire for change, and disrupted families, and disrupted lives. To assess the information within each theme, a form of ‘system integration’ or exploring the data for patterned relations across space and time, as well as a linking of data to existing theory was employed (Hardcastle, Usher, & Holmes, 2006). To do all this, I used NVivo 11 qualitative software (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Hardcastle,
Usher, & Holmes, 2006; Wolcott, 1994, 2016). Data was then thematically grouped again (into themes and subthemes), and then brought back to explore with both Roseanna and Nadine, and following this, the mothers as a group. With the mothers, the themes and subthemes were discussed in depth, and put in sequence of what they believed were of greatest importance to them given their experiences. To ensure confidentiality among the mothers concerning their own interviews, no identifying information of anyone who participated in the study was provided to the mothers. For example, when referring to the theme of ‘relationship difficulties’—the topics of infidelity and jealousy were examined. Mothers ranked this theme as one of the most important issues discussed in relation to the wellbeing of their families. Examples of more specific information from the interviews were offered to the mothers for greater discussion, such as ‘mothers commented on feeling alone and frustrated when their husbands were away at work.’ The mothers then spoke directly about these themes, sub-themes, and specific examples. Two groups of mothers participated in the analyses. Roseanna and Nadine organized this group work and invited all the mothers to participate. The groups were composed of mothers who were most comfortable discussing their thoughts concerning their experiences with other women. In total, nine women participated in the group analyses. Following this work, additional analysis was conducted with Roseanna and Nadine.

A final community meeting was held at the local drop-in centre where anyone interested in the research could come and discuss the research findings and offer their perspective. This community meeting was advertised over the radio in English and Inuktitut in advance, and snacks and coffee were served. Approximately 25 people attended the drop-in center to discuss the findings. The community meeting provided an
additional opportunity to discuss the themes and subthemes with a range of community residents. These discussions suggested the mothers’ experiences were consistent with what was understood within the community on the topic as well. Ongoing communication with Inuit organizations, the Arctic College in the community, the Arviat Wellness Centre, and key informants provided additional opportunity to explore and analyze this study’s findings. Data collected was further examined in relation to the literature and text-based information collected, as well as reviews of the flight logs leaving Arviat and going to Meadowbank Mine, and the final key informant interviews that were held. These final key informant interviews were then coded and incorporated within the overall data set.

4.3.6 Confidentiality and Data Management

Interviews were translated by both Roseanna and Nadine, and later by Tusaajiit Translations Services in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories. Additional transcription services for those interviews that were conducted in English were provided by Scribes Transcription Services in Vancouver, British Columbia. All services were provided once a confidentiality agreement was in place. All electronic transcripts have been kept on a password protected and encrypted computer. Given concerns within the literature regarding the use of data by non-Indigenous researchers and the history of community’s losing access to their own information, all interviewees were asked if they would like a copy of their interview transcript to be kept in the community. The local Arviat Wellness Centre has agreed to house these transcripts. An arrangement with the Wellness Centre is in place for this information to be stored for posterity. A file of these interviews has been created and transferred to the Wellness Centre.
5. Findings

From the interviews conducted, alongside additional data obtained, the following four themes were identified: 1) not being able to meet a family’s basic needs, 2) disrupted families and disrupted lives, 3) the impact of child welfare, and 4) a desire for change. Sub-themes for each are indicated below. It should be noted that mothers expressed great interest in this study. They demonstrated a strong desire to share their experiences, which may suggest they had been looking forward to such an opportunity for some time. Findings from this study shed light on both the range of experiences of mothers in Arviat, but also the consistencies among their experiences.

5.1 Theme: Not Being Able to Meet a Family’s Basic Needs

5.1.1. Food

Food was one of the most commonly discussed topics within interviews with the mothers in Arviat. Most often the conversation centered on the point that there was just not enough. Regardless of whether one possessed what was described as a ‘good job’ at the mine, the vast amount of data collected throughout the course of this study demonstrated that life in Arviat for mothers and their families is, at best, difficult. Most notably, much of this difficulty surrounded access to food, and the ability for mothers to meet their children’s most basic needs. “Because with food, we have happy life, right? We can smile. Yeah. Food is our first priority when you have big family.” (Group Analysis 1). As this quote describes, accessing food for their children was the priority for many of the mothers in this study. Unfortunately, many also reported regularly running out of food and experiencing times when there was not enough food for their family. This
is highly consistent with research in the territory concerning food security (Beaumier & Ford, 2010; Chan et al., 2006; Nunavut Food Security Coalition, 2014). Mothers described the experience of running out of food as highly stressful as they, first and foremost, want to provide for their children. Research in Igloolik, Nunavut, by Beaumier and Ford (2010) addresses this same point. Their research indicated that when women believe they are running out of food, they provide what they have to their children first, and then to their husbands, before eating themselves. This sacrifice that many mothers make when they feed their children and families was understood by the women as necessary to ensure their children were healthy, and for men to be able to hunt (Beaumier & Ford, 2010). Mothers in Arviat agreed with these same sentiments. As one explained, “Most of the time when we had money, we are happy only one day, but after that, [it was a] bad time. Lack of food. And—now he’s not working anymore—more lack of food.” (Group Analysis 1). Many families cannot afford to purchase food at the local stores, or to hunt for food. Food in the grocery stores, as previously discussed, is largely prohibitive in cost, but for many, so is hunting given the cost of gasoline and bullets etc. (Chan et al., 2006; Nunavut Food Security Coalition, 2014). Importantly, all of the mothers interviewed had experienced, or were currently experiencing, some level of food insecurity, and this financial strain existed regardless of theirs, or their husband’s or boyfriend’s (or other family member’s) employment related to mining.

The financial stress associated with being able to meet a family’s most basic needs were often further complicated for those mothers who worked at a mine. This is because the mothers were typically unable to send or transfer money to buy food when they or their husbands or boyfriends were at the mine site. For those mothers who worked
at the mine, this meant when they were at work they may know their children were hungry or in need of food, but largely unable to do anything about it. This resulted in feelings of sadness and powerlessness. For those mothers who have spouses who work away at the mine, the situation was often equally as challenging. Much of the problems associated with this have to do with the possession of a bank card. Often, only one person in a family has a bank card or an active bank account. This is a common issue in Nunavut given that there are so few banks in the territory. Because there is no bank in Arviat, families may share bank cards or rely on an account they have at a local grocery store to purchase food. Those who are employed and possess bank accounts—when leaving the community and their children behind—can face the dilemma of whether to leave their bank card in the care of another person, such as their spouse or older child etc. As one mother stated,

"Like, I left the bank card and seems like I’m still nothing, like I’m useless. Well, when you leave the bank card home, and when you come home [and now there is] no money there, like, sometimes it’s so tiring. You want to spend something, but the money’s gone.” (Group Analysis 1)

This highlights how feelings of wanting to care for one’s children by leaving a bank card at home, can be set against not being able to control how much money is spent when the mother is not there. Alternatively, for other mothers who care for their children at home while their boyfriend or husband works out of town at a mine, similar issues can occur. A key informant who had experience with the complexities of this situation explained:

“Some (families) struggle financially too because there [are] spouses who won’t leave their bank cards with the spouse—with the wife—[but instead] takes it to work with them
so the wife would be left struggling with food” (Key Informant 11). Taken together, these situations suggest a lack of power and control mothers can experience regarding money, regardless of whether they earn the money or rely on their spouses, as well as issues that can arise related to trust between couples regarding finances.

When mothers do run out of food for their families, many of the women described having attempted to access food by turning to the local Arviat food bank. This food bank is run out of the Arviat Health Centre. One mother explained, her life would be made easier “if the food bank here would be open, like, every week, not once a month” (Participant 18). Many of these same mothers, however, described not feeling comfortable or able to access the food bank when they were in desperate need of food for their families. When one mother ran out of food, she explained how her income assistance worker directed her to the food bank, but when she got there, they were not able to help her. She explained, “The [income assistance workers] told me to go get food from the Food Bank, but when I go get food from Food Bank and the worker would tell me that all foods are gone. And I don't go back” (Participant 7). The inability to receive support from the local food bank within the community left mothers frustrated. Many talked about being turned away for other reasons. For those who could access the food bank, many were concerned when they were given expired food—food they did not feel was safe to provide to their children. As one mother explained “Yes. I’m one of the persons who picked up food before too, and they were expired. Like, tomato soup, all cans were expired” (Group Analysis 1).

Other mothers found they were altogether unable to access anything from the food bank due to an assumption held by those operating it—an assumption that they were
wealthy and, therefore, not in need of support. The mothers explained that families who have someone working at the mine are perceived to be making equitable salaries to those working as nurses and teachers in the community. Consequently, mothers described how if they or their boyfriend or husband works for the local mine, then they are not allowed to collect from the food bank. Having experienced this, one mother explained:

Here in Nunavut food is expensive, and the income assistance workers won't help all the time. Yes, there is food bank here, but...here my kids are home and I was working away. When they tried to go get food from the food bank, they were told that ‘your mom is working and you can't get food from here.’ (Participant 8)

It should be noted here that this mothers’ description is of her children who were turned away from the food bank. As a representative for the food bank confirmed, the food bank workers typically refuse to provide food to those families where one person was believed to be employed by the mine. This representative explained the food bank staff believed that the salaries that were made at the mine were “good” or equivalent to what the nurses and teachers in the community made (S. Ranahan, personal communication, July 6, 2016). This is a consistent perspective to that described in research by Perdue and Pavela (2012). The food bank representative stated that the families involved in mining should not need support by way of the food bank (Personal communication, Ranahan, 2016).

Note, this is different than stating that the families do not need support from the food bank. The policy here is discriminatory; one that is based on assumptions, or a possible refusal to believe that families may in fact be out of food, or at minimum, questions their need. It also suggests a moral judgement may be made on the part of the food bank concerning how families budget or manage their money. It indicates families must be
subjectively perceived to be ‘deserving’ of food in order to access it at the Arviat food bank. It should be further noted that often these same families have been denied emergency support from the local income assistance office as well. By assuming families have adequate resources to afford food, those working at the food bank apply a Western logic and dominant culture assumptions associated with money to a social system within Inuit communities that has historically, and continues today, to work quite differently. As Harvey (1990) once explained:

Money is a ‘great leveler and cynic,’ a powerful underminer of fixed social relations, and a great ‘democratizer.’ As a social power that can be held by individual persons it forms the basis for a wide-ranging individual liberty, a liberty that can be deployed to develop ourselves as free-thinking individuals without reference to others. Money unifies precisely through its capacity to accommodate individualism, otherness, and extraordinary social fragmentation…even thought this also means a proliferating fragmentation of tasks and responsibilities, and a necessary transformation of social relations.
(p.103)

It is this equalization of income by sharing, consistent with the values and expectations within Inuit culture, that makes the conclusions of those at the food bank, traditionally colonial.

Yet mothers held mixed views on whether they or their spouse in fact made a ‘good’ salary via mining employment. Although the money from this employment was not enough to support their families, it was often still considered a ‘good’ salary. It may be the case that the promotion of mining within the community as a ‘good job’ played
into how mothers perceived this form of employment. As one mother explained, despite her husband working long-term at a mine, his income was inadequate given her family’s size and needs:

My husband started four years ago working at the mine, and we—my kids, we ran out of food too, so I started to look for a job. And for a month now, I’m a [specific job]. [It] helps a lot, like, not letting him work alone, making money...Even though the pay cheque for mining’s weekly, but with a lot of kids, it doesn’t, like...It doesn’t last long. (Group Analysis 1)

As noted in Chapter 3, the salaries for many Inuit employed through mining may not be as high as some people think them to be. As this mother explains, it was not enough for the family to afford food. Although the closest mine where Arviarmiut (people of Arviat) are employed, Agnico-Eagle Mine, would not provide any information pertaining to salaries, the corporation has been described as paying Nunavummiut workers an average annual salary of between $35,361 and $66,000 (George, 2011; Labour Salaries in Nunavut, 2017). Although this is higher than the net pay received by one mother in this study who described her salary as $750 to $1,000 per week (or $2,800 and $3,200 per month), it appears consistent with the gross pay received by some of the spouses of other mothers who were interviewed. The gross pay reported was typically between $1,100 to $1,400 per week ($4,400 to $5,600 per month or $52,800 to $67,200 annually). As noted in Chapter 3, it is possible that many Inuit are earning almost half this amount as the median income in Arviat is $37,248 (Statistics Canada, 2007), which is also consistent with salaries provided by the Mining Industry Human Resources Council (n.d.). Although these salaries may sound substantial to some and indeed, they are higher than the median
income of Inuit (15 years of age and older) in the territory overall in 2015 (at $23,930 per year), they must be understood in context (Statistics Canada, 2017c). Namely in relation to the food costs, as previously described (Peritz, 2007). Food costs have been found to surpass this median income, roughly costing more than $600 per week for a family of four (Peritz, 2017). This can mean it can cost almost $30,000 per year for a family of four just to eat. This also means it is likely that more than one-third and up to, or even over, half of many Inuit workers’ pay cheques are required to feed their family. For large families with many children, as is common in Nunavut, or where there is be an expectation to support extended family members, as is the case in many Inuit homes, it is not uncommon for an entire pay cheque to go towards the cost of food. This was described previously regarding the high dependency ratio in Nunavut (82.1% as compared to 59.2% across the country) (Canada Without Poverty, 2015). Given the assumptions held by the food bank, it is also important to note that a salary of $60,000 per year, remains significantly below salaries of teachers in the territory, which typically run over $100,000 per year (Collective Agreement, 2017a), and nurses who can makes as much as $200,000 or more annually when ‘on call’ pay and bonuses are included (Collective Agreement, 2017b; M. O’Neil-Adams, personal communication, April 12, 2016).

The perspective that those involved in mining earn high salaries appears to be an idea promoted by the Government of Nunavut. Encouragement for Inuit by the GN to participate in mining as a path to financial security, and then further fanned by mining companies that sell a similar notion, both appear to center on the notion that mining can mean financial prosperity for Inuit families. Related to this is the fact that a mining
company in Nunavut named itself “Prosperity Goldfields” (Prosperity Goldfields, n.d.), and the GN’s Nunavut Economic Forum (2013) titled “Turning Growth into Prosperity” where it was explicitly stated in its report, “Mining remains Nunavut’s greatest hope for capital investment, job creation, and business opportunities” (p. 17)\(^2\). The mothers’ experiences in Arviat, however, do not demonstrate there is prosperity associated with this form of employment. Instead, their experiences are consistent with questions asked of professors, Shelagh Grant and Wade Davis, and of politician, Tony Penikett, in a panel interview by the Globe and Mail regarding mining in the North (Globe and Mail, 2014). Namely, “Is it prosperity or exploitation?” when it comes to Nunavut’s resource boom in mining (Globe and Mail, 2014). Each expert on this panel concluded mining in Nunavut has not resulted in healthy and prosperous communities. In addition, the mothers in this study were unaware of, and surprised to learn about, the average salaries made by nurses and teachers in their same communities.

The disconnection I witnessed between the notion of ‘good jobs’ in mining, and the economic realities that existed for some Inuit families who hold these jobs, is again consistent with the panel’s conclusions as well. The first interview of this study for example, was conducted with an Elder who described moving to Rankin Inlet for her husband to work at the Nickel Mine. She described living in a three-room shack, as well as a range of challenges that she experienced during her husband’s employment there. Unfortunately, her experiences and struggles largely paralleled some of the subsequent interviews I conducted with mothers who live in Arviat and who currently have husbands

\(^2\) In 2012, Leona Aglukuk, then Minister of Health, stated, “The Government of Canada recognizes that mineral exploration and development is important to the future prosperity of Canada and specifically for Nunavut”. She also detailed how an investment of over $27M to support educating Inuit for specific training needed for work in the mining sector would be provided.
working at a mine. One mother, in a home devoid of almost any furniture, and with walls that appeared to barely hold up the roof and the boarded-over windows, described how her husband worked at a mine, but despite this they consistently struggled to feed their children. As we sat on the only furniture in her three-room house—an old mattress on the ground, she used much the same language to describe her husband’s employment as the first Elder we had interviewed. Prosperity by way of mining employment for this family had most definitely not materialized.

As described previously, the perception of wealth associated with those who work in mining has been increasingly dispelled on the international stage. More recently, critiques of mining in Canada related to this issue have also occurred. For example, the Conference Board of Canada’s Anja Jeffery was reported to have explained:

If you talk to big mining companies like Agnico-Eagle in Nunavut, they have to hire 40 per cent Inuit workers. It’s in their impact benefit agreement. Can they do it? No...the company flies in people (Qallunaat) on a two-week rotational basis. Does that create any economic prosperity in the region? No. Does that help the region? Does it lift them (Inuit) out of poverty? No. (McKie, 2013, para. 23)

This is consistent with the mothers’ experiences. For example, one mother explained, “My husband started years ago working at the mine, and we—my kids, we ran out of food too, so I started to look for a job” (Group Analysis 1). Another mother explained why this is the case, “even though the husband or wife is working at the mine or somewhere, their [food] wouldn’t be enough. The next pay, some of them it wouldn’t be enough because in this household, the other family would go get—like, freeload, go get something. Sugar; anything to eat” (Group Analysis 2). By “freeload,” this mother is
referring to the obligation or responsibility to support extended family members and friends. ‘Freeloaders’ or those who come by in search of food can decrease the supplies a family might have for itself. However, sharing food with others is a critical component of Inuit cultural values and Inuit strongly believe one should “never be stingy with food” as previously explained (Karetak, Tester, & Tagalik, 2017, p. 51). Given this, even those who have very little themselves, still commonly help out others. Gombay’s (2010) research has concluded the same, namely that “in the case of Inuit, requests for food ought not be denied” (p. 248). Consequently, although mining may not be a panacea for food insecurity and the poverty that underpins it, mothers agreed that the financial stress they tend to experience in Arviat as they attempt to feed their children can be notably worse for those that do not have this same employment.

Mothers in this study who were without enough money to purchase food commented on the range of ways they employed to feed their children. These means included accessing local supports and calling on other family and friends. For example, the community daycare centre typically provides a hot lunch for mothers and their children during the week. Although this can help many mothers, it was also limited to those enrolled within the daycare. Also, each mother was only allowed to only bring one child with her for this meal. Given the size of the daycare, this is understandable, but it also created serious logistic challenges within the home for mothers who have more than one child, such that they must find care (and food) for their other children elsewhere. Interviews with mothers and key informants indicated some mothers face additional issues as well. For example, many do not attend this lunch because their boyfriends or spouses refuse to care for their other children at home. Taken together with the level of
food insecurity in homes, this suggests mothers may face tension between feeding one child—and themselves—and caring for their other children. It also highlights the pressure placed on women to provide the majority of care-based labour within the home, an issue raised often within feminist literature as previously mentioned. The significant labour associated with just feeding one’s children and the difficult decisions mothers can be required to make within this context must be noted. It further suggests a wider need for increased access to childcare and community supports. It also points to the discrimination mothers may experience through the local foodbank that is not necessarily being addressed through other local support services, such as the daycare.

Key informants and mothers alike strongly believed that everyone in the community both could and should have access to a minimum of one meal a day. Such an idea, however, is not without complications, most notably, concerns related to power and authority, and those raised by Elders for the provision of things for free, which can be perceived to reduce cultural reciprocity within communities (Gombay, 2010). As one key informant explained, in discussions with Elders:

They (Elders) didn't like the food bank and they didn't like the nurses offering the food bank and the food bank is not culturally appropriate for them because you share food but when you share something with somebody they must reciprocate. And so, if you're just giving them a handout, it's destroying their self-sufficiency and making them reliant, dependent on the people that are giving them the handout. (Key Informant 12)

This same informant described further concerns the community holds for the food bank, as well as the potential for changes to make it a more culturally relevant program:
And when that's the nurses, that gives the nurses power over you so if you don't agree with the nurses, you get cut out of the food bank...[and] there is a lot of concern with that. And all the money that has been raised in the community to go to the food bank, and then there appears to be very little food given out as a consequence. The Elders were saying, 'that's our role - you know we would help redistribute wealth but if we had a place where we would do that, we would not be handing out food, we would be advising you, helping you look at why you were not self-sufficient, why you require assistance. We would share food with you, but we would also be sharing that food with advice. And we would be expecting you to reciprocate in some way, take the local budgeting course, take the cooking course—like we'll be telling you what to do to get your life on track. But when it comes with none of that advice, none of that connection - with this is how we can help you get your life on track, then it's just a handout and it increases your inability, your incompetence. (Key Informant 12)

This confirms the mothers’ concerns regarding the foodbank, but also echoes the challenges associated with “food, place, economy and society, [as they] are all bound together” (Gombay, 2010, p. 15). It also suggests that solutions concerning food need to be tied to Inuit culture and values. Because a lack of food can bring families to the attention of social workers, as detailed below, solutions to food insecurity have direct relevancy to child welfare as well.

5.1.2 Employment, Income, & Childcare

Although there are many places in Canada where families can support themselves on one income, the mothers involved in this research made it clear that one income is not
sufficient for raising children in Arviat. Although this is increasingly the norm in many urban areas in southern Canada, it can be particularly problematic in Nunavut (Statistics Canada, 2016b). This is because the jobs needed to do this are not available within the communities. Hence a paradox exists; two incomes are needed but accessing even one can be difficult. For example, at the time of writing this, there exists one job available to residents within the entire community of Arviat. As one key informant explained, “Even when there’s two parents in the home, and one parent works, that income is still not enough” (Participant 8). Further, upon finding employment, Inuit are faced with a range of additional issues, such as childcare. The lack of childcare in Arviat is common throughout the territory (Van Dusen, 2015). Unlike southern urban locations where families can search out local daycare, or at worst, commute long distances to access childcare services, in Arviat there is only one daycare, which has an extensive waitlist. There is no daycare available for those who work at a mine outside the community. For most mothers, this means it is not possible to consider a job in the mining sector unless one has grown children or extended family support. This issue has been described by the Nunavut Economic Forum (2013):

The two-week rotation employed by mining companies throughout the world is hard on families and is not suitable for everyone. The stresses on family can create many problems. Without some form of child support (or daycare), FIFO work all but eliminates the chance for one’s spouse to work, which can cause financial problems, resentment, and boredom. (p. 73)

Thus, for single parents, particularly women, mining employment is rarely an option. This points to a lack of equal opportunity in this field. Given the large size of many
families in Arviat, paying for childcare can also cost more than what one can make through employment. One mother who approached me in Arviat when she learned about this study was concerned about support for young mothers particularly. She described her strong desire to go back to school, but because she was under 19 years old, she was unable to access any sort of daycare subsidy. Even if she could get into the Arviat daycare, she could not afford it. This is consistent with research that demonstrates mothers struggle to enter or re-enter the labour force given the cost of childcare (Argyrous, Craig, & Rahman, 2016; Mason, 2003). This cost typically increases when women have multiple children as well (Argyrous, Craig, & Rahman, 2016; Mason, 2003).

Additional barriers to mother’s employment include the need for a certain level of training and education. As described previously, the level of education that is often required for employment has long meant that Qallunaat tend to fill many of the higher-level positions in the community of Arviat. This issue of employment was discussed by the women in the two group analyses. One mother stated:

All the good jobs, like high paid, like government, are mostly—most of the Qallunaat are working there.... I think this is how I see, you know? I think most Qallunaat is—that the white people are more bigger than the Inuit, their education, their experience, even though this is Inuit community. Like, [the] teacher or a nurse. (Group Analysis 2)

There was agreement for this sentiment by the other mothers. It suggests a racial hierarchy within communities; one in which Qallunaat remain at the top, given their associated ‘merits’ within Western culture, and Inuit are positioned below. This points to
a continuation of the colonial order within the mining sector. It also suggests the mothers are frustrated with this system and societal organization, given that Qallunaat reside in their home—an Inuit community. This is consistent with the work of Memmi (1965) and Fanon (1961). As Fanon (1961) stated:

The compartmentalized world, this world divided in two is inhabited by different species. The singularity of the colonial context lies in the fact that economic reality, inequality, and enormous disparities in lifestyles never manage to mask the human reality. Looking at the immediacies of the colonial context, it is clear that what divides this world is first and foremost what species, what race one belongs to. In the colonies…you are rich because you are white, and you are white because you are rich. (p. 5)

Consistent with this, another mother commented:

I used to get so upset, I see Inuit barely have jobs Nunavut. But at the mine, watching Inuit is doing a lot of job, doing their job as good as they could, here the southerners (Qallunaat) are just working easy. Seems like Inuit are like slave, I’ve been through this before. White men aren’t working hard, like not being cold, here Inuit are doing their job very hard, even in cold winter. (Participant 8)

Thus, not only are Inuit not often able to access the higher-level positions within their communities, there appears to be a similar situation at the mine site as well. The lower positions, in this mother’s perspective, require Inuit to work very hard; often performing hard physically laborious tasks to a far greater extent than their Qallunaat coworkers. This confirms research offered previously regarding the low-level labour-based positions held by Inuit at local mines.
Importantly, for those interested in working at a mine, training to work there can often occur outside of the community—at the mine site. For some, this can be the first time they have left their community. One mother described how exciting it was to leave the community by plane and another mother agreed, adding, “It was exciting because my kids were happy for me” (Group Analysis 2). Regarding jobs, regardless of where they are, mothers agree that they would like to see more training opportunities. One stated, “Yes. I would want more Arctic College. Artic College [opportunities for] training” (Group Analysis 2). In Arviat, the only place to access additional education and training is through the local branch of the Arctic College. Unfortunately, given the scheduling and organization of the College, only certain programs are offered in each community. At the time of writing this, in Arviat the mothers can choose from the following: Office Administration (2nd year of the program only), Teacher Education (4th year of the program only), and Fur Production (Arctic College, 2016). As this demonstrates, not only do these programs, and the bulk of programs generally, require mothers leave the community for education and training (i.e. to attend the 1st year of the Office Administration program in Rankin Inlet), the offerings are extremely limited. For programs such as Social Services Worker (2 years), mothers would have to live in Cambridge Bay, or for the Early Childhood Education program (2 years), they would have to live in Iqaluit. Management Studies are offered in Rankin Inlet (2 years), and Teacher Education is offered in multiple different communities (4 years) (Arctic College, 2016). Although the GN’s, and consequently, the Arctic College’s decentralized model is intended to ensure there are programs offered throughout the territory so as to benefit many communities, one can also see the complications that arise for mothers to attend
any of them (Hicks & White, 2005). Issues associated with a mother’s support system for childcare, the need for accommodation, and the financial ability to participate in these programs among other things, can make the participation in any program difficult.

Getting into these programs can also be a struggle. As one key informant explained, even those who graduate from high school tend to have difficulty with tasks that would be associated with accessing higher education. This informant stated:

And for the young people nowadays that they graduated from Grade 12 but when they come in they cannot even fill out forms…No, it’s very sad. Because I’ve seen so many that graduated, [or] that have Grade 10, 11, even Grade 8 and 9, they can’t read the forms. (Key Informant 4)

The limitations to someone when they struggle with reading are obvious. However, as mothers explained, this does not mean someone cannot be trained into certain positions. Another key informant agreed with this sentiment, “They’ve got to get jobs. Education is nice, and it’s good and that sort of thing. But a lot— with education here, it doesn’t really do any good. (Key Informant 3). Advancing a mother’s credentials and merit, in this informant’s perspective, did not necessarily raise a person’s qualifications *enough* to access employment within the community. This informant commented that money was the real need for women in the community, and with it came a level of power and protection that was needed to keep women safe. The informant stated, “it’s not so much the education per se, but it’s that power.” The informant explained:

If they have that boyfriend, they’re the ones who have the big pay cheque.

They’re the ones who can call the shots...if you have the money—. Now, there will still be ones who get abused by their boyfriends and get all their money taken
away and that sort of stuff. But overall... And there is that tendency that if—you know, if you’ve got money and you see that your sister or your best friends have a problem, you’re going to help them out...You’re much less likely to get beat up because you know, you’re providing things, and if I decide, well, you should be my girlfriend and... And I start making a pain of myself and you’ve been providing support for your brothers and a couple of his friends, stuff like that, well, somebody might just come around and tell me that really, I should focus my attentions on somebody more suitable, or it could be very awkward for me. So, all of a sudden, you haven’t bought protection, but you know, people just see you in a different light and they just go, ‘Oh, you know, you don’t treat her like that’

(Key Informant 3)

Although violence can exist across the socio-economic spectrum, and women with wealth are not immune from experiencing it, research partially supports this informant’s perspective. There may be an association between a reduced risk of violence in a woman’s relationship with her autonomy regarding financial decision making (Rahman, Nakamura, Seino, & Kizuki, 2013). This could be related to a women’s’ ability to exercise a greater choice in terms of her spouse or partner (Rahman, Nakamura, Seino, & Kizuki, 2013). An association between unemployment and violence has also been found by Benson and Fox (2004) and Renzetti (2009). More commonly, however, international researchers point to gender inequity in general as related to intimate partner violence, and a reduction in this violence associated with education level, age at marriage, the use of alcohol, growing up within homes where there was violence, and food insecurity among other things (Abramsky et al., 2011; Buzawa & Buzawa, 2013; Dalal, 2011; Rahman,
Nakamura, Seino, & Kizuki, 2013; Ribeiro-Silva et al., 2015). Such research does suggest, however, that both education and socio-economic status is relevant to the wellbeing of women. Unfortunately, given the low rates of high school graduation in Arviat, there is often significant competition for the less-skilled jobs within the community. These also tend to long be associated with socially-constructed gender roles (McElroy, 1975). For example, Inuit men tend to continue to compete for jobs such as garbage truck, sewage, or water truck drivers, where Inuit women often hold positions such as receptionists or secretaries as they did in the 1970s (McElroy, 1975). Today, both men and women work at the local grocery stores, but these tend to be minimum-wage paying positions.

The challenges Inuit mothers can experience when attempting to attain a basic education in Arviat may go beyond the social issues present within their families and the community. As one informant explained:

We have an education system and a health care system that’s purely a medical system and an education system that are southern institutions that are plunked down in Nunavut and are tweaked a little and massaged a little but basically, they are not run in a way that...same thing with our college. (Key Informant 5)

This informant is speaking about the lack of connection between the systems within the community of Arviat and Inuit peoples and culture. This informant added that “a real grass roots community-based adult education program that works closely with other agencies in the community would be really helpful (Key Informant 5). This suggests the existing education for Inuit may not be suited to the community needs in Arviat. This was supported by other key informants. It begs the question, for who is the education system
designed if not for Inuit? Berger, Ross Epp, and Møller (2006) and Berger (2009) have looked at this same issue. Berger (2009) has commented on how Eurocentrism has acted as a “roadblock to educational change in Nunavut” and that the involvement and “power of Inuit working together may be threatening for Qallunaat in Nunavut who are used to having power and privilege” (p. 57). Berger, Ross Epp, and Møller (2006) have concluded how the “continued existence” or Nunavut schools “raises serious questions about whether [they] are in fact designed to foster the success of Inuit students” (p. 197). Another informant commented on the relationship between this study and the need for community-based skill development. This informant stated:

I think that part of the solution around—is it, you know, kind of the asset-based community development...and the ownership of these challenges and understanding them and then developing the solutions. In the end, there are people at the community level...I think the more that we can build skills and ownership for all parts of this process and not overly—I mean, it’s one of the things I like about a participatory approach, is that it shares the power in terms of the knowledge of not only what’s happening, but how it gets framed as what we draw from it is an understanding and then what we choose to do based on what we learn. So I think that building those skills at the local level is part of the solution.

(Key Informant 6)

While another key informant commented on the need to:

Invest in girls’ education. Keep girls in the schools longer. Give them more opportunities to be more independent so that they’re not alienated and...pregnant at 15 and feel that—well, it goes back to the dynamics of relationships, that feel
that they can—they’re only worthy when they’re with a man, a young man or sometimes not so young man, who is aggressive, assertive, etc. (Key Informant 7)

All of these perspectives point to the need for increased support for education and/or training within Arviat for mothers. Education, training and employment were largely understood as a protective factor by key informants, and something that could be of real benefit to the mothers if it could lead to local employment and job prospects within the community. This suggests that greater attention should be placed on addressing the existing barriers to the education and training of Inuit mothers within the community. This sits in contrast to the promotion of FIFO employment in the mining sector.

Some mothers weigh the benefits of seeking certain employment with the additional challenges that such employment can bring. Childcare is one of these challenges. Safety was another, particularly when it comes to the ability to care for one’s children. As one mother during the second group analysis explained:

Participant 17: I’m scared of being big haul truck driver. If I happened to drive
I’m going to drive really good for a while. But then if I look down and I’m going to forget about the steering thing. I want to live. Forget about the money.
Interviewer: So [it’s] too dangerous?
Participant 17: Yes...Because I want to live for my kids and I’m—especially when I’m trying to work for my family, my kids. (Group Analysis 2)

When the challenges are too great, this can leave some in a position where they must ‘choose’ social assistance, rather than employment. For many mothers who cannot find local employment, financial support through income or social assistance or ‘welfare’ is
not so much a choice, but more commonly their only option. This situation has been explained as follows:

There are several factors that can create a welfare trap that go beyond its technical definition, but weigh heavily on a person’s choice between work and [income] assistance...If and when a job opportunity appears, he or she will assess the merits of that job by evaluating the marginal gains it will provide; that is, the difference between what would be received from the new job after subtracting any applicable taxes and what they currently receive through welfare. The person would factor in the costs associated with any physical and mental effort required to perform the new job. He or she will account for the hours spent on the job and in transit, and any additional expenses (real or in kind) incurred because of the job, such as the cost of daycare, cost of commuting, or the opportunity cost of spending less time with family or less time to participate in traditional economic endeavours...Depending on the cost-benefit evaluation of the work versus welfare and any additional aversion to risk, the required wage may have to be substantially higher than the ‘pay’ currently received from income assistance to justify a decision to leave welfare. (Nunavut Economic Forum, 2013, p. 44)

Oftentimes, unfortunately, the pay associated with employment in the territory is not enough. Many local positions many tend to pay minimum wage. This, the mothers explained, is too little to support a family and pay for childcare.

Welfare, however, is a dismal alternative. For many of the mothers interviewed, welfare cheques tend to offer relief for a few days, leaving them with up to three weeks within which they must seek other ways to support their children. One mother stated, “I
find it far for each month [waiting for] my welfare” in that the amount of money she received would run out before her next cheque arrived (Participant 14). Mothers also routinely referred to the experience of accessing income assistance as “embarrassing.” This embarrassment appears to both be tied to accessing it (i.e. being in receipt of income assistance), but also because being on income assistance tends to put them in a situation where they need to ask for help from family and friends. Such a position is particularly complicated in Arviat given the cultural view of receiving what is perceived as a ‘hand out’ as previously described. One informant further stated:

[Historically], we would share food with you but…[if] it's just a handout and it increases your inability, your incompetence. You know childrearing, Inunnguiniq, is about making a capable human being that causes nobody to worry...Income support they [Elders] think is what has destroyed Inuit culture. (Key Informant 12).

Accessing income assistance may be that much harder for mothers when they know Elders, or have Elders in their life, who could perceive their use of it in this same way. Unfortunately, welfare provides so little money that many mothers described having to beg and borrow from other people to get by each month as well. Often this can be from those same Elders who may perceive income assistance to be what is destroying their culture. One Elder described the implications of her children accessing income assistance. This meant she was often in a position where she tried to help them make up any additional money that was needed:

My daughter (and her family with children) aren’t employed either so I have to provide for them...My old age pension cheque isn’t much either. I have quite a bit
of debt that I’ve charged too. We are very poor at times. Sometimes I charge on my account so we can manage to keep going. (Elder 2)

This financial stress can leave families to experience a range of emotions. For example, the same key informant explained how some Elders have begun to think:

Maybe it's our fault because we're hanging onto the old ways? So then there's a lot of guilt about well why is my family not happy. When we lived on the land we were always happy. Why do I feel poor? When we lived on the land, we didn't know what that was. So there's...everything got turned upside down and with that comes huge guilt. 'Ok, maybe I've made huge decisions and my family's gone to hell in a handbasket but what can I do about that now? And the Elders are struggling with this. (Key Informant 12)

Without the additional help financial support from extended family members, however, mothers can be in a truly difficult situation. As one mother explained following receipt of her income assistance cheque:

They gave me $100 in cash; I’m like: a hundred bucks will not be enough. I had to pay my phone bill, my power bill too, but I got [someone] to pay that. Here it’s supposed to come out of my support cheque but I got [help] to pay that so I’m lucky this month. He paid it. If he doesn’t pay it in November, then I’m going to have to figure out how to pay for that one, probably out of my child tax. He said he wasn’t paying for it again. I’m like: How am I going to get through next month on support, if he’s not going to pay for the power, how am I going to pay? So, that’s my issue for this month. How am I going to pay for my next power bill? (Participant 2)
This describes just some of the complications and stress associated with the reliance on others, alongside the trade-offs that mothers have to make to keep their homes heated and their children fed.

Consequently, mothers described a range of ways they attempted to meet their needs. Some mothers explained they had to physically separate from their spouses (live in different residences) in order to access income assistance if their husbands were not providing them any money or if what their husbands earned at the mine was just not enough to meet their family’s needs. This was because the social assistance workers assumed they would receive money from their boyfriend or husband as long as they were living together. This was confirmed by a key informant who stated, “They say that they’re separated. So, he can get his money from what he earned, they separate so that she can continue getting income assistance with the children” (Key Informant 4). This verifies the mothers’ description of mining employment as being inadequate to support the family. Given the time and energy associated with moving, the logistics associated with child care, the lack of housing available within the community, and the difficulty one must go through to hide his or her relationship in a small town, all suggest extreme desperation. It also suggests that some women are in a particularly precarious situation if their boyfriend or husband will not or cannot support them.

Living apart from their spouses can create additional challenges for mothers. Most obviously, in terms of an increased requirement for her to parent alone. Having such little money that one feels forced to contemplate this arrangement can also be understandably difficult on one’s emotional and mental health, as well as the children’s, and this can take a toll on the parents’ relationships. Further, when financial strain to this level is
experienced, it tends to limit one’s day-to-day life functions to that of largely just searching for food, diapers, baby formula, and clothing for their children. That said, where living separately can create some real challenges, it may also provide a degree of relief, in that a mother can then receive an income assistance payment for herself and her children—something, however small, that she can control. That this situation may be ‘better’ than living with her partner or husband or boyfriends highlights just how difficult the financial situation a couple must be in, in order to make such a decision.

Much of the stress mothers in Arviat experience tends to be associated with money; much needed to purchase food and basic goods to adequately care for their children—regardless of whether they or their spouse worked at a mine. As one mother explained, “it's hard, you can't afford what they want, and it's really hard with food...yah, I think that's the hardest part, but they understand, [they are] old enough to understand. That's the hard part.” (Participant 4). Some key informants, however, perceived the mother’s financial stress much differently. Two key informants in a joint discussion described what they believed to be the cause of many mothers’ financial problems:

Key Informant 1: “When they receive their welfare cheque, because they don’t get cash, what they do is buy lots of tobacco, a pouch, pads, cigarette pads—

Key Informant 2: Or gambling

Key Informant 1: Buy lots, sell it, like, cheap, like 20 bucks per pouch, $15.00 for a pad, they start using the money on drugs.

A third key informant offered a different, but related description of how families spend their welfare cheque: “Some that will not listen to budgeting or how to spend their money on food will leave here and go to Quickstop (convenience store) day after day until the
third day it’s all gone. The fast food, it’s expensive” (Key Informant 11). These perspectives suggest mothers are using their income assistance cheques to purchase drugs and expensive convenience foods. This perspective suggests it is the mothers’ fault there is not enough food for her children and it has been described as ‘mother-blaming’ by Kline (1993). She explained how such thinking within child welfare is linked to perceptions of child neglect. Namely:

The individualistic focus of the dominant ideology of motherhood, and the related expectation that individual mothers will take full responsibility for their children, means…the individual mother's mothering practices are subjected to critical scrutiny. The implication is that mothers are to blame for child neglect. In the child welfare context, judges and child protection workers focus almost exclusively on the caregiving capabilities and deficiencies of individual mothers, and in particular, on so-called ‘questionable behaviours.’ Even where there is no tangible evidence of neglect, children will still be considered at risk if their mothers are exhibiting behaviours thought to be risk factors for neglect. (Kline, 1993, p. 319–320)

The perspective, which can be linked to a conservative ideology, is rather common within the dominant culture. It tends to absolve the state, the nature of capitalism, and mining corporations, from any responsibility for the mothers’ dire economic situation. In doing so, it dehistoricizes the mothers social location, while it simultaneously individualizes the experience of poverty. It does this by suggesting it is the mother’s personal choices that leave her poor and unable to care for her children adequately. Within this evaluation of a mother’s situation, the removal of her children from her care can be seen as an
appropriate option. Importantly, the above mentioned key informants were not Qallunaat who were imposing dominant culture (Qallunaat) values and beliefs upon Inuit, but instead they were Inuit women. Likely as a consequence of colonialism, this suggests it is possible that for some Inuit, such values and beliefs exist alongside, or perhaps have even in some instances replaced, certain values associated with Inuit culture and principles of IQ. For example, this may be the case regarding Piliriqatigiingniq (working for the common good), where there is an emphasis placed on “social accountability and unity [and] all individuals have a responsibility to those around them” (Nunavut Department of Education, 2007, p. 28). Although a couple of key informants commented on the need for some mothers to learn better budgeting skills, none of the other key informants offered similar sentiments or indicated that they agreed these perspectives.

Importantly, these perspectives concerning the mother’s use of income assistance stood in sharp contrast to the explanations and descriptions provided by the mothers. For example, one mother explained: “When there is no more food for my kids, when I don’t get help from the father. Even when they get their income assistance, he won’t buy food or anything for my kids, when we have no more food to eat, it’s hard. It is hard.” (Participant 2). Another mother offered this comment: “I find it hard to try and buy pampers and milk for my daughter sometimes” (Participant 13). Yet another mother provided a similar sentiment “not working is the hardest part of my life. Food for my kids is hard, also the formula milk for my kids is the hardest without working. Pampers and milk formula [are] hard to get without work” (Participant 14). Given the high cost of milk and diapers in Nunavut, these purchases can be understandably difficult for some families. As this same mother explained: “We only went on welfare twice in the
year of 2013. I find it so hard waiting for one month, and not [receiving] enough for the whole month.” (Participant 14). This suggests that this mother was able to budget to meet her family’s needs for much of that year as she only had to rely on social assistance on two separate occasions. But during this time, she found the amount she was provided too little to support her family for the whole month. Repeatedly, mothers described a similar situation: “I don't want to see my kids not eating, like got nothing to eat, waiting for welfare to come” (Participant 6), and “it’s too hard to buy groceries and not working” (Participant 18). One of these mothers further explained, “the cheque is just enough to get food with. I’m wondering how I’ll be making parkas when there’s not enough money for food. How am I going to get material?” (Participant 2). It should be noted that four of the five mothers referenced in this paragraph had been employed themselves or their spouses had employment at the nearest mine. Each had cycled through periods of employment and unemployment at the mine and been in positions where they had to access income assistance. This highlights how precarious mining employment can be for their families, and how it does not appear to be a permanent or adequate solution to moving the mothers and their families off income assistance. This suggests the focus by the Government of Nunavut on mining as ‘the answer’ to the poor economic conditions in Nunavut communities is misguided. It further raises an important point and one often overlooked in reference to the discourse concerning welfare in Nunavut; namely, the additional costs associated with life in Nunavut. Warm clothing is a necessity for families but unlike in southern Canada, these needs cannot typically be met through purchases at a local thrift store because none exist in Arviat.
In light of this, one package of diapers—enough for only a few days—can cost more than one tenth of the entire amount a mother may receive through income assistance. This means a mother of one child could spend her entire welfare cheque for the month on diapers alone. Here one can understand why so many mothers struggle to purchase these items and food. Baby formula and diapers with exorbitant price tags in Nunavut are prevalent on the internet, such as this one (see figure 4 and figure 5):

*Figure 4 Cost of Diapers in Nunavut*

![Image of Pampers diapers](image-url)

*Retrieved from Feeding my Family Facebook group. Posted on November 28, 2014*

*Figure 5 Cost of Baby Formula in Nunavut*
Unfortunately, not changing diapers often enough can lead to rashes and infections—something that again can bring families to the attention of social workers for concerns associated with parental neglect. It can hold negative health implications for children, but also for mothers. Research shows mothers tend to “connect clean diapers with showing their child how much they love them... [and] mothers who can’t afford enough diapers report more anxiety and feeling like a ‘bad mother’” (Raver, Letourneau, Scott, & D’Agostino, 2010, p. 4). This suggests that for Inuit mothers, not having money so as to access to enough clean diapers may be much “more than an inconvenience” (Raver, Letourneau, Scott, & D’Agostino, 2010, p. 4). Importantly, the experiences of the mothers involved in this study all suggest the same thing, even if this is not understood.

quite the same way by two of the key informants; namely that neither government financial assistance, nor employment from mining, offers enough money to families to meet their children’s most basic needs, such as food and diapers. This impedes the ability of mothers to care for their children. Interviews with the mothers produced data consistent with the aforementioned research, literature, and newspaper reports concerning the high cost of food and items in Nunavut, food insecurity, and high levels of poverty in the territory.

Given the need to purchase basic things for their children such as food and diapers, many mothers described the common practice of selling items in their home to make up their monthly shortfall. This included selling anything they could make (e.g. baked bread, carvings), selling their skills (e.g. advertising their willingness to cut hair, clean others’ homes, provide childcare etc.), selling their clothing (e.g. parkas and mitts etc.), and selling their furniture (e.g. washing machines, couches, coffee tables etc.). Within many of the mothers’ homes I visited, a lack of furniture was immediately apparent. In fact, as described in the beginning of this chapter, a number of interviews took place in homes on the floor because there was no other furniture in the home on which to sit. In many of the homes I visited there was a couch and only a couple of mattresses on the ground remaining. Everything else of any value had been sold. This unfortunately, demonstrates the unsustainability of selling one’s possessions as a solution. Selling a family’s belongings also can create problems for mothers to manage in their day-to-day lives. For example, not having enough mattresses for their children to sleep on can result in family members sleeping in ‘shifts.’ Or it can mean having to do the family’s laundry at someone else’s house if they had to sell their washing machine.
Although this research did not explore the psychological impacts on mothers when they are faced with having to continuously sell their possessions to feed their children, the toll this can take on a mother, and the feelings she may be left with as her home becomes increasingly bare, is something that may be worth examining in future research. Despite what can only be understood as a desperate situation, many mothers displayed incredible resolve to care for their children as best they could within such circumstances. As one mother explained:

As a mother, I’m always trying to stay organized; since I became a mother, I have constantly made sure there is food for us. We can only have energy when we’ve eaten. That is my main concern; providing food for our family, for my children. It is only if we can eat properly that we can live well. (Participant 8)

Unfortunately, this same mother later admitted, “No, not all the time. Sometimes there’s not enough [food]” (Participant 8).

Historically, one of the larger financial stresses for families in relationship to working was an increase in housing expenses (rent) following new employment status. Those in public housing could typically see their $60 monthly rental payment rise upwards to between $1,200 and $2,000 per month when they attained a job (Impact Economics, 2012). Mothers described the challenge of trying to make these payments when they or their spouses worked at the mine. Often this placed them in situations where their housing accounts were in arrears and they developed significant debts to the Nunavut Housing Corporation (NHC). This situation continues to exist for some families despite a recent shift in rental policy via the NHC. Currently, tenants in government housing pay rents in relation to the income of the primary tenant (D. Moore, personal
communication, July 13, 2014; ‘More Nunavummiut will pay,’ 2013). This appears to have made a difference for some families. In particular, those families who live with an aging parent in receipt of Old Age Security (OAS) and Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) who is also the primary tenant in the home (registered as the primary tenant with the NHC). These families now qualify for low rental rates based on that primary tenant’s income. For those families that live on their own and receive a salary from the mine, however, the rental rate remains high (D. Moore, personal communication, July 13, 2014). Whether this impacts the likelihood for families to keep aging parents in their homes as the primary tenant, and then consequently strengthens or challenges relationships within the home further, could be explored in future research. Thus, despite these changes to housing policy, it can still mean that for some families who work at the mine, there may be little money left over for food once their rent is paid. This is often the case for families that obtain employment at the mine, particularly if the worker is registered as the primary tenant and if s/he has prior debts. Debts often need to be paid before they can pay their rent, which can result in a family’s account going into arrears. As some mothers involved this study pointed out, families can be thousands of dollars in debt to the NHC due to repairs that can come from things such as fixing a broken window etc. As one mother explained, “I want to be able to catch up with our rent. But it’s, right now too much money. Or at least it’s [almost] five thousand” (Group Analysis 2). This mother further explained that although the NHC will allow her to pay this amount in instalments, this was a debt to which her increased rent of over one thousand per month, would also be added.
Other debts, such as those to the grocery retailers in the communities, can complicate a family’s financial situation even further. For example, of those who receive cheques from the mine, some opt to deposit these cheques into their grocery store accounts. These accounts, alike pseudo bank accounts with an overdraft, can be useful to large families experiencing financial struggles. They can also help in situations where the account holder may be out of the community. Unfortunately, there can be situations when someone may not be able to deposit their cheque into their account due to debts owed to the store (e.g. when a family’s account is in arrears). In this situation, a deposited pay cheque may be placed against a person’s debt leaving them with little or no accessible income for groceries and other expenses. This was discussed with one key informant as follows:

Interviewer: And if they, so if they owe the Northern Store $500 [in their account] but their— and they get their cheque deposited into the Northern Store and it’s only $400, are they able to charge?

Key Informant 4: No.

Interviewer: Okay. So, that’s why if people get paid they technically don’t have any money either—if they already owe money?

Key Informant 4: Yeah.

A representative at one of the local stores commented that she had seen a receipt for one woman who had an account in arrears of almost $5,000 (Personal communication, N. Budden, November 27, 2014). Given this, it is possible that some families on social assistance could, if in similar situations, be unable to access any of the money they
receive from mining employment for a number of months on end or until they pay their debt.

Given the challenges families experience with purchasing their most basic needs, mining companies, such as Agnico Eagle Inc. have attempted to help their workers by offering weekly pay cheques. This is done so as to help workers address some of the financial stresses described above and to better budget their money. Although it is possible to have income assistance cheques provided to families weekly or biweekly as well, one key informant explained this was very rare. This Informant stated that “4%, 5%, not very many” went this route because it was just too little money each week to pay their expenses (Key Informant 4). For those working at the mine, being paid weekly, however, did not fix this problem. There still was not enough money to meet a family’s needs. As one mother explained, “Even though the pay cheque for mining’s weekly, but with a lot of kids, it doesn’t, like...It doesn’t last long. And with the bills to pay. I mean, housing too. It goes really high. When you’re both working—goes really, really high” (Group Analysis 1). In confirming this sentiment but pointing to the budgeting skills of families, one key informant, explained:

They get paid every week, not bi-weekly, when they’re working for the mine. So their two weeks stay, 12 hour shifts and they pay you every Thursday. So with that kind of pay, you should be able to have food most of the time, but still a lot of people still [don’t]…because they’re not handling their money [very well]. (Key Informant, 11)

It is important to note here that this informant recognized that pay cheques from the mine may mean families can afford food ‘most’ of the time, but not necessarily all the time.
This same informant explained that the mines often offer budgeting skills classes to support their workers and “They even invited the spouses for that last year” (Key Informant, 11). The implication of this approach by the mine, however, is an individualizing of the problems associated with being poor—namely not having enough money to meet one’s needs despite their employment. Such classes may benefit families in terms of financial management skills, but they may also benefit the mine as it can be viewed as offering helpful supports. However, if mining workers do budget their money in such a way that they can ‘get by,’ this could suggest to the wider public that the pay received by workers is adequate. This may result in less pressure on the mine and other corporations to increase wages, as well as less unity among workers. This could then also serve to support the perspective that mining provides ‘good’ jobs. Mothers agreed that they needed additional support to develop greater financial skills and indicated that they would like more access to budgeting skills workshops within their community. However, if these are provided only through the mine, then they remain only available to those current employees. Many of the mothers, some of whom were not employed by the mine, also commented on the utility of such skills. Many indicated a desire to increase their budgeting skills so they may better support their children and avoid being involved with child welfare when they run out of food. One has to question whether such education should be available to all Nunavummiut and not just as an employee benefit at particular mines in the territory. Importantly, given the struggles many can experience with budgeting and money management in difficult financial circumstances, mothers commented that being able to receive money weekly would be a substantial help.
Unfortunately, regardless of this option, neither the amount made through the mine, nor through income assistance, adequately covered families’ needs.

5.2 Theme: Disrupted Families, Disrupted Lives

5.2.1 Social and Cultural Changes

During the first group analysis the mothers discussed the financial struggles that many mothers experience in Arviat. As a result of these challenges, mothers commented on the need to encourage smaller family sizes for new parents. As a group, the mothers suggested that women should have fewer children. I found this surprising because larger families are common within Inuit culture (Condon, 1987). “The birth of each child continues to be an event that is eagerly anticipated and cause for celebration” in Nunavut communities (Pauktuut Inuit Women of Canada, 2005, p. 16). Although having seven or eight children is not the norm in Arviat, it is also not uncommon either. One mother commented on the number of children being born in Arviat. She stated, “Lots of kids. Like, when I used to be pregnant, [in a specific year], we were, like, almost hundred ladies pregnant. Like, [a] hundred babies [born in Arviat] a year is lots” (Group Analysis 1). Inuit tend to revere children and the birth of babies, regardless of the age of the mother or the financial circumstances of families. As one key informant stated, “it’s socially acceptable to have children—everybody loves children, that’s always been a value. Children are treasured and appreciated so, actually young women gain status when they become mothers, but they don’t have the skills to be a mother” (Key Informant 5). This same informant then explained how things have changed over the past few decades:

Well, obviously, more and more young people are having babies at a younger age.

That used to be the exception not the rule. Now it’s the rule, not the exception. So
that sets up the challenges and this has been going on now for too—because a mom’s having a baby at 13 or 14 and then her children are having babies at 13 or 14. So we have three or four generations who have no...have been raised by children who have no parenting skills and that has obvious implications for attendance at schools, for....and then compound that by the housing crisis where you have three or four generations living under the same roof and a breakdown of traditional Inuit values. (Key Informant 5)

This increase in young parents is visible in the rapidly increasing size of communities in Arviat, and the population of the territory overall. As mentioned previously, in 2011–2012 over half (57%) of the territory’s residents were under the age of 25 years old (Arriagada, 2016). The community has increased at such a rate that the population recently passed projections made by the government in 2010 for the year 2035 (George, 2000; Government of Nunavut, n.d.d; Worden, 2015). This population increase needs to be considered in light of other social and cultural changes associated with the movement of Inuit into communities throughout the last fifty years. As another key informant explained, these changes, and the history of the community, impact what support is available:

When this community was created, it was created with a bunch of very distinct, very different like tribal groups being brought in and thrown together and so, initially there was a lot of well, I guess it was, they might describe it as respect for those peoples’ traditions and ways of doing things. And so, you wouldn't tread on that, and groups tended to stick to themselves and stay together. But when you have housing, you get assigned a house here or a house there, you're no longer
together. You're now messed up in the community. So you don't have neighborhoods where people would have looked after each other's kids and you add this well, we're not all from the same group, we want to be respectful of the way they do things so we're not going to intervene as much as we would with our own kids, but having said that—now there's so much intermarriage, those distinctions aren't so great. We should be able to intervene with whatever child we see but because we've lost that responsibility to do so, we're not doing it and that's why so many of our young kids are at risk. And that's why so many of our young couples are at risk, because young couples would have always been part of the extended family. (Key Informant 12)

The challenges to both providing support and receiving support are evident here. By providing such limited formal support in the community, the Government of Nunavut is in effect, relying on existing support networks to ensure the protection of children. As this key informant points out, however, the relationships that previously ensured this protection of children within traditional camp life have become more complex. The ability to manage issues and problems are now set within constraints associated with the bringing together of different Inuit populations into one community in the 1950s (specifically, the Ahiarmiut, the Paalirmiut, the Tahiuharmiut, Nuvurugmiut, Kivihiktormiut, Qainirmiut, Hauniqtuurmiut, and Harvaqtuurmiut) (Arviat Archeology and Oral History Project, 2012; Laugrand, Oosten, & Serkoak, 2006; Van Den Scott, 2014; Tester & Kulchyski, 1994). Traditional values held by some Inuit for avoiding interference into other family’s circumstances, as described by Briggs (2000), may play into this as well. However, as this key informant had also pointed out, this may not be the
case given the high degree of intermarriage among Inuit within the community. This perception of intermarriage is more consistent with the description of relationships within the community as described by the mothers in this study. It is also consistent with the sentiment of another key informant who stated, “Everybody raises each other’s children. All my nieces and nephews I would treat the same as my children. I will scold them the same as my children” (Key Informant 9). Including these rather opposing perspectives from the different key informants is intended to demonstrate both the potential strengths, but also the possible limitations, to the informal networks of relationships within communities as protection mechanisms for all children.

In keeping with traditional roles occupied by many females, young Inuit women prepare for motherhood throughout their childhood. They do this by helping to care for younger siblings, cousins and friends from a very early age (Condon, 1987; Mancini-Billson & Mancini, 2007). The skills young girls learn from this work, however, as one key informant pointed out, are “babysitting skills, [which] are not the same as mothering skills” (Key Informant 5). The implication, she explained, can be young girls may perceive themselves to be ready to have children at an early age. Research indicates that increased supervision and communication with youth on this topic is useful to delaying pregnancy, but when parents are away at mine sites their ability to provide this can be limited (Lohan et al., 2017; Wight & Fullerton, 2013). This may also speak to some of the mothers’ fears for their children when they are working at a mine. It is worth considering that such fears can add significant psychological stress on mothers when away from their children, making work at a mine not worth the potential costs that can occur at home while they away. Further, the potential for mothers to fear being perceived
as neglectful while away to work may also hold emotional and psychological impacts. As described in subsequent sections, this may play into the mothers overwhelming desire to be with their children. By attempting to meet all their children’s needs, as well as the expectations associated with them meeting all their children’s needs—to be there with them physically, to communicate with them, to supervise them and to meet their emotional needs, while simultaneously providing for them financially, highlights the notions of intensive mothering previously mentioned (Hayes, 1996). When their children have children themselves, this may now be understood as increasing their burden given the support their children may require as young parents. The suggestion by the mothers that there are now “too many” babies being born in Arviat may demonstrate this increased labour associated with the mothers now raising not only their children, but also their grandchildren (Group Analysis 1). It appears to point directly to what can be thought of as family resources being stretched too thin. Thus, this population boom may have contributed to a disruption in family relationships; relationships that were already experiencing disruption by way of mine-based employment and FIFO work schedules. It also means the increasing population presents challenges to protective factors and support that families can offer each other. Another key informant agreed. This informant stated:

What I see today is like a huge expansion of the community and a real stretching of family resources and because family resources are so stretched—it tends to be, you know, the kids. Like I think generally young kids are very well cared for, if they have a stable mom, dad relationship, but it’s when kids hit eight to ten that they start falling through the cracks. There isn't time for them. (Key Informant 12)
Disruption here has much to do with the number of children within a family, and the ability and time to care for them as they get older, but also the support available within the larger family and community as well. This is consistent with feminist literature on the topic of teenage pregnancy. For example, Bok (1987) points to teenage pregnancy being moralized, individualized, and the responsibility for it placed on young women alone, despite a lack of support, education, and alternative options for young women. She asserts this is directly related to the continued lack of decision-making power held by women within society. Where extended family members and grandparents would traditionally provide a great deal of care for the children of young mothers, this support can be limited as the number of children within many families continues to grow. Further, there is no prenatal nor post-natal support offered to young parents in the territory outside of their required medical appointments. Thus, the expectation for this support by the Government of Nunavut again appears to be placed on the family (and particularly, on girls and women) and informal support networks within the community. In other words, it is off-loaded onto women further increasing both their responsibility and domestic labour expectations. The lack of formal support provided to parents to care for and support their children, alongside perspectives that individualize the poverty via ‘mother blaming’ as previously discussed, suggests “motherhood still retains a contradictory place in society where it is valued in theory but not supported in practice” (Ellis-Sloan, 2014, p. 135). Where Elders may have traditionally been involved in this care, the age and health of the grandparents plays a factor in the care and support they can offer. Elders may be physically limited in the amount or type of care they can provide. Some mothers in this study commented on becoming increasingly aware of the challenges associated with large
family sizes. As one mother explained, “I mean, we grew up with it. I mean, a big family, most of the time, [this meant] more problems with finance, but being single or maybe having only one or two children—this is easier to handle” (Group Analysis 1). This reflection, alongside the group analysis and key informant interviews, suggest some families in Arviat may now lean towards encouraging their children to consider having smaller families. Many of the mothers agreed that young women need to seriously consider whether they can financially afford multiple children, both now and into the future. This may be a consequence of the lack of formalized support for Inuit women to care for their children. As one mother explained, young mothers:

Should look at themselves first, like, in future they might need lots of help with—are you going to make a lot of babies, they should look at the future first. Like, if they—I mean, they need lots of help with food, they need lots of help with finance. They should look after that. (Group Analysis 1)

This appears to represent pragmatic considerations concerning the expanding populations of Nunavut’s communities. It also appears to demonstrate how notions associated with individualism have been incorporated into what is a collectivist culture. It highlights the mothers’ awareness for the changing social, cultural and economic circumstances that can impact families, as well insights for how to better manage such changes in the future.

In addition to the challenges associated with caring for large families, mothers and Elders in this study often commented on how they require more material things today to care for their children than they did in the past. This is consistent with work by Wachowich (1999), specifically an interview with Rhoda Kaujak Katsak, where she explains:
Even when we were really hungry in my childhood, I never felt poor…I never really thought about money…When I was about eleven or twelve years old, my parents moved in the community. I remember around that time feeling kind of poor at times…because I didn’t have the clothing that was the latest trend…I didn’t have this record or tape. My father couldn’t afford those kinds of things. I wasn’t poor, but I was made to feel poor. (Wachowich, 1999, p. 192)

What is described here are some of the pressures associated with living within a capitalist economy and the cultural expectations and norms that commonly accompany it. Marx (1844) describes this experience as one of becoming estranged from nature and oneself, which can lead to a person becoming estranged from relationships with other peoples. He stated that as people begin to view others “in accordance with the standard and the relationship in which he finds himself as worker” (Marx, 1844, p. 115). Prior to life in settlements in Nunavut, Inuit are understood to have largely lived according to Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit and maintained group harmony through sharing and working together. Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada (2005) have described the practice of sharing as the:

Utmost importance to Inuit. Within the complex network of kinship bonds present in traditional camps, there were strict rules governing the sharing of many things, including food, natural resources, one’s labour, and on occasion, spouses.

Hospitality was considered an essential trait and could rarely be refused without the host losing face (p. 33)

Money, however, appears to complicate this cultural practice for “as money became a more common feature in Inuit communities, people were not sure how that money, or the
things that it purchased, was to be shared” (Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, 2005, p. 33). This has contributed to strained relationships and difficulties within communities:

Gradual changes in sharing practices have led to some degree of confusion. Take, for example, the case of an Inuk who has a relatively well-paying job. He is not required to necessarily share the money he earns, nor the goods purchased with these earnings. However, according to traditional values, people should share their goods with others. Thus, it would appear that the person who seems to be better off in terms of their access to money and the material goods it affords, arrived at that state because they did not share enough of their goods. Despite the fact that people may admire their hard work and relative success, they may be the target of social criticism due to the perception that they were not generous enough. Inuit can thus become torn between the values of the broader society and those of Inuit traditional values. (Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, 2005, p. 33)

The result is a clash of cultures and vast social change in the process. Where less than 60 years ago, the land provided the majority of what was needed to sustain a family and raise children, today this is largely provided through community-based stores. Although life for many Inuit prior to settlement in communities did involve hunting and trading and has been described as a ‘mixed economy,’ today life is typically founded on employment, with hunting as something that often only occurs when one has the time and resources to do it (Brody, 1975). This change towards a consumer economy and the notion of having ‘things’ and associated feelings of satisfaction and meaning suggests a material culture has replaced, or is replacing, a culture where meaning and satisfaction was based in relations with people, with the land, and with animals and activities that tied all the
elements of the Inuit world together. Although many resist this change, that there has been a continuous pressure over the past 60 years necessarily means families do often need more things than they did previously, and consequently, more money to purchase these things. Such an increased need often means, unfortunately, increased poverty. As one Elder explained, “We are living in harder times. At times, we are in complete poverty...so many of us are much poorer than we were at one time” (Elder 3). Another Elder agreed, “These days, there is too much hunger and there is too much poverty and these are the realities in our society” (Elder 2). The third Elder interviewed offered a similar sentiment. This Elder stated:

[Previously], we had lots of wildlife, we had lots of catch for food; There were no Qallunaat around at the time. Now, there is an urgent need for income, so [working at the mine] is all they can do. The wildlife will disappear...Nowadays, the young people prefer the Qallunaat food too. Long ago like they used to hunt, that will not happen anymore. Just like here in this house, after the fashion of the Qallunaat, we spend all our time indoors now and the old ways of our hunting culture will never come back. (Elder 1)

As this Elder mentioned, the changed social and cultural context Inuit families now live within is tied to this same financial need, but also to the capitalist economy. Mining corporations can only benefit from this new context as it means more and more Inuit, who have few real alternative options for employment, will—out of necessity—gravitate towards mining in order to meet their financial needs. As Harvey (2014) explains, this is part of the “long-standing trend within the history of capital for household labour to be
supplanted by market-based transactions (everything from haircuts to takeaway or frozen meals)” (p. 192).

Being able to parent within this context was also discussed by the Elders in this study. One Elder explained:

We are seeing more and more resistance and rebellion, and when the parents try to intervene and do what they feel they should, the children no longer want to listen. They usually just leave the presence of the parents and go to their room and close their door. They don’t want to hear what the parents have to say. We continue to see more of more of this type of behaviour in our youth. (Elder 2)

The third Elder interviewed perceived the relationship between young people and their parents in a similar way. In the past, she explained:

The norm was to work hard, daily [and] to do what was asked of us by our parents. We had to listen to our parents in those days. Nowadays our young people seem to have no serious consideration (as we had to) so they have vastly different manners from the old days. They don’t think about what needs to get done anymore... There is simply too much socializing going on in our communities! I believe that is the main cause for the lack of motivation we are seeing. (Elder 3)

While these sentiments may speak to developmental adjustments commonly associated with understandings regarding teenagers in Western culture, it may also speak to a breakdown in parent-child relationships, and a dismissal of parental authority. Williams (1991) explained this situation as one where there has been a “disruption of health[y] family interactions” that are directly related to the impact of residential schooling on the
lives of Indigenous peoples. As mentioned in the subsequent section, the authority held by teachers and other Qallunaat within communities contributed to a rupture within the authority structures within families and communities as well (Anderson & Bonesteel, 2013; Berger, 2009a, 2009b; Berger, Ross Epp, & Møller, 2006). Others such as McKenzie, Varcoe, Browne, and Day (2016) agree that such “dynamics continue as part of Indigenous communities ‘lived histories’” (p. 7). Additionally, the traditional values associated with work and meeting the collective needs of the family, as held by the Elders in this study also appear to be set apart from the values held by the younger generation(s). Young people were described as ‘southernized’ and interested in iPods, video games and ‘junk food,’ rather than learning cultural or traditional skills alongside their grandparents. This reinforces concerns for the ‘intergenerational division’ or intergenerational gap that has been long understood to exist between young people and their Elders. This is repeatedly reflected in the literature, particularly concerning issues of language transmission (Dorais, 1995), suicide (Kral, 2003, 2012), and trauma (Crawford, 2014). The effect this gap has had, and continues to have, on both young people and Elders alike is understood to be negatively contributing to feelings of loneliness and disconnection (Kral, 2003). It appears that requirements of FIFO mining employment that further separate families can compound these same feelings. Moreover, the cultural distance between youth and their Elders may be exacerbated when youth find it difficult to understand the relevance of Elder’s advice and cultural practices and teachings in light of a future they envision in mining. One Elder explained, “Sometimes there are just the two of us...My grandchildren hardly ever come over. It’s just usually this person and myself.” This highlights the lack of connection and visiting of Elders by one’s grandchildren; a
disruption in the quality and quantity of time spent by Elders with younger people. It is consistent with research by Kral (2003) who found wellbeing of Inuit families is directly related to one’s connections to family, talking and traditional cultural values and practices, and sadness in the absence of these things. Wellness, for Inuit he explains, is associated with kinship ties and family bonds (Kral, 2003).

5.2.2 Disrupted Relationships with Children

In the same vein, mothers pointed to disruptions in their relationships with their children. They spoke about how they experienced a shift within the culture of their own homes and how this impacted their feelings and perceived ability to raise their children. One mother explained:

Compared to the time that I was raised, it seems to me the circumstances have become harder for us. We seem to have so much more to struggle with. When I was being raised, there weren’t so many other things (distractions) around us; now you’ll see children while the adults are trying to have a conversation, you find the children much more curious and investigating. When I was a child, when it was time for ‘Elders’ Talk’ we would all leave the building and play out(side). Nowadays, like this, [demonstrates] kids are just listening. We can’t even talk in privacy like the Elders used to. (Participant 8)

This was echoed by another mother who commented:

I see things very differently now, kids are too much now compared to the old days. Like [they] take things that don’t belong to them, [they] don't listen to their parents. I always tell my kids not to be one of them” (Participant 5)
Circumstances within which to raise children were described as particularly difficult when it involved parenting alone, because of a mother’s husband or boyfriend being employed at a mine, or when they themselves traveled away from their children for work at the mine. One mother stressed the challenges associated with being away from her children, “I get worried when I don't hear my kids for couple of days while I'm away working, but my husband always tell[s] me not to worry about my kids so I try not to worry while I’m away” (Participant 6). This highlights a changed cultural context: one that involves the separation of parents from children, where women may be the breadwinner in a family, and or where parenting alone becomes the norm within a family. Both speak to increased pressures on mothers. Others pointed to social changes related to parenting in general. For example, one Elder stated,

The parents now, who are having children, are still acting like they are still children themselves. Our parents in our time, would have to be wise and mature and act accordingly as the one raising their children. Now there is no advising or disciplining of any sort on the part of the parents. They seem to just act as their children do in spite of parenthood. (Elder 1)

What this Elder describes may be related to the stretching of family and community resources previously discussed. Where parents before may have had a certain level of support and guidance, today such direction may not be as available or as commonly provided. One of the mothers summed up the problem with parenting today as, “the parents should control the children, not the children controlling the parents” (Participant 18). Given this, for those who are young and in need of discipline themselves, the idea of disciplining their own children may be an unknown or foreign concept. Both of these
comments suggest difficulty parenting and a need for greater guidance or support. A key informant offered a similar sentiment and explanation:

The imposition of the education system [was when] parents lost their role as being the primary educators of their children. And I’ve asked people and people have commented, you know like when kids are so totally out of control at the community hall. I’ve said to people, ‘why don’t you go tell your kid to sit down and be quiet’ and they say, ‘that’s the teacher’s job.’ That’s not the teacher’s job—you’re the mother... no no no...so there’s this attitudinal change, cultural change that people lost their...[power or ability to discipline their children], that compounded by the residential school system, which physically took children out of the community for long periods of time. (Key Informant 5)

The loss of parenting power and control over their children has also been connected to the colonial authority associated with the education system in Nunavut. This has been discussed by Anderson and Bonesteel (2013), Berger (2009a, 2009b) and Berger, Ross Epp, and Møller (2006) among others. As part of the Legacy of Hope (2010) project, Elder Piita Irniq of Nunavut spoke about the relationship between colonialism and education through his experiences at residential school. Irniq described the authority teachers had in his life growing up in a residential school as:

This is the person that had authority. She had a cross, a crucifix of Jesus Christ in one hand. She represented God. She represented the Roman Catholic Church. So she had a lot of authority. What can you do? (Legacy of Hope, 2010, p. 110)

As this quote explains, the fear or ilira Inuit held for Qallunaat, specifically the teachers that had assumed the role of parents in the residential school system, is likely related to
the association some Inuit may hold towards teachers today (Kuptana, 1993). Irniq further explained how this experience impacted his ability to parent his own children:

In terms of relating to my adult life I missed out a great deal about parenting skills. I am not as good as my parents were...So we lost a great deal in terms of the most important aspect of our life and that is parenting skills. My parents had a difficult time. They lost their children. They lost their child that they were bringing up to believe that he was going to grow like a true Inuk with abilities to hunt, abilities to speak, ability to know the land, the environment that I walk on. They were going to bring me up exactly the same way as we have always been brought up, like the traditional way of life from 10,000 years ago in Nunavut, or within Inuit homelands. But they missed out on that. They no longer knew anything about me after I had been to a Residential School. (Legacy of Hope, 2010, p. 105)

This challenge that parents can experience can then be exacerbated over multiple generations and further still in cases of teenage pregnancy. It can mean fewer parenting skills are passed down with each subsequent generation (Legacy of Hope, 2010). Given this break in the transmission of skills and knowledge due to residential schooling, a perspective that incorporates goals of decolonization can be taken when understanding discipline and raising children. Thus, one can understand how many Inuit parents are attempting to parent in relation to, or within, systems (e.g. the education system, child welfare system etc.) that traditionally disparaged them and their culture. Regaining one’s own strength and confidence in light of these experiences, so as to raise strong healthy children, becomes a tremendous task.
Similar to the education system, an Elder explained how a reversal of authority within the parent-child relationship can occur, “The parent becomes the obeyer [sic] of the child because of the ingrained fear of social services authority to take away the child” (Elder 1). Concern for having one’s child or children apprehended by social services is evident here. One key informant summed up this fear and related it to a fear mothers can have for even disciplining their children. The informant stated, “So when they (social workers) are talking about 'when I discipline my children, they are going to be taken away from me' it's almost like there's a great social worker in the sky that knows everything that is going on” (Key Informant 12). Another key informant echoed this sentiment and stated, “Maybe [the mothers] don’t want to be—don’t want to be watched or—because they know—everybody knows how social services are...because social services just take kids without letting us know” (Key Informant 1 & 2). It is apparent here that social workers appear to represent, not a supportive helping and compassionate role that is intended to help mothers in the tough work of caring for children within the community. Instead, child welfare is understood to enact a policing function, one intended on providing monitoring and supervision of mothers and their actions (or inactions) towards their children. Consequently, social services in Arviat was perceived by the mothers, and by some key informants, as a constant threat to their families. This appears to demonstrate the damage associated with colonialism. Specifically, the overarching power attributed to and exercised by Qallunaat within colonial systems, such as child welfare, and how this power was exercised historically (and currently) by Qallunaat and a system that was, and continues to be, foreign to Inuit. This sentiment was supported by many of the other mothers as well. One mother explained “I see social
workers who look for people who can’t defend themselves, people who are so quiet that can’t defend themselves. That’s what I see” (Participant 8). Based on a perceived (or real) lack of authority and power, and coupled with a fear for the involvement of child welfare workers in their families, mothers commented on adapting their parenting. This adaptation was done in such a way that would keep a mother’s family off the radar of the community social workers, and unfortunately, appears to also involve a fear to discipline one’s children as well. These actions by mothers in Arviat are highly consistent with research by Dumbrill (2006). His study demonstrated how parents often engage in a range of different behaviours and actions in relationship to their perceptions of power held by social workers. It further suggests that mothers, in an attempt to keep their children safe and their families protected, had to avoid contact with social workers. Although it is beyond the scope of this study, the adaptation of Inuit mothers to this fear may have implications for how young people subsequently perceive their parents.

For many mothers, concern was expressed not only for the relationships with their children, but in their ability to remain with their children. The impact of being away from one’s child(ren), and or fear of being away from their child/ren was commonly reported. Mothers routinely expressed how the need to be with their children was the most important thing in their lives. One mother explained this as, “When I go through hard times, I see my son—he's a blessing, I just find I’m ok as long as I’m with my son” (Participant 1). Another mother further explained this bond between mother and child, “I love them so much they belong to my heart” (Participant 11). Another mother who explained, “as long as I’m with my kids and watch them, I worry less” (Participant 20), and yet another again stated, “Life is easier when my baby is around” (Participant 3). All
of these statements point to an intense bond that can exist between mothers and their children. This is consistent with international research that points to the many, often physiological, impacts on the health of children and their mothers when they are together (Bornstein, Suwalsky, & Breakston, 2012; Mallers, Charles, Neupert, & Almeida, 2010). It is also consistent with descriptions of the depth of love (and demonstration of affection) between Inuit and their children (Briggs, 1971; Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, 2005). Despite the many challenges mothers faced, an overwhelming sentiment in this study was the importance the mothers placed on ‘togetherness’ or being physically with their children. One mother, however, described her relationship with her children who have been living apart from her for some time due to her involvement with social services:

What bothers me the most is when my own children purposely ignore me or refuse to talk to me. That’s the main one. They also call me by my name now and it’s not ‘Mom’ anymore. That really bothered me because they are my own children. They don’t want to give me a kiss, they no longer want to see me, they don’t even want to talk to me. Whenever I saw them, they’d call me [by my name] ...I told the children that I am their mother, they are my own beloved, and I love them. I told them not to do that with me; we cried together and hugged each other. (Participant 16)

The pain this mother was experiencing is obvious here. The mothers overwhelmingly agreed, that as long as they were with their children, everything was okay. This is consistent with the research of Kral (2003) related to Inuit family wellness. The pain of
being separated from one’s children through social services intervention or child apprehension made for difficult and emotional discussions with the mothers.

Mothers also reiterated how hard it can be to be apart from one’s child for work at a mine. As one mother commented:

It’s hard to leave the young ones behind, but when you have to be the supporter as the mother, it is very difficult leaving [multiple] young ones behind. That was the hardest part in my lifetime; while working for [the mine]. (Participant 8)

Another mother stated, “sometimes it’s hard working up in mine, very hard leaving the young ones mostly, knowing they have nothing to do and the parents gone. Like, it’s hard. Very hard” (Group Analysis 1). Mothers commented on the need for additional support for their children. Worrying about their children and their children’s needs was a key concern. This may be something that is disproportionately experienced by mothers when they go away to work at a mine given that women are often the primary caregivers of children. It is worth considering that the psychological pain of being apart from their children while at the mine site may make mining employment for some women untenable or not worth the money they make through this form of employment. The pressures they may face associated with not being home to parent children in keeping with cultural norms or for fear of child welfare workers, in addition to fears for their children’s wellbeing, may be too heavy of a burden for some. Mothers also commented on the lack of programming for the young people in the community. A consistent sentiment offered by mothers, particularly for those who worked at the mine, was related to the lack of community-based programing; things children could do that mothers knew were safe and supervised. The same mother stated, “I would like to add [that the government should]
get more programs for these kids who are left behind. [A] little activity, story night, hunting night, teach them how to hunt, games night, movie night” (Participant 8). This mother feared her children had few positive and healthy social opportunities while she was away working at a mine. Worrying about one’s children while being away from them and not able to supervise or ensure their children’s time was spent safely was repeatedly discussed. This is consistent with the findings of Czyzewski and Tester (2014) regarding the need mothers expressed for safe supervision of their children while they were away working at a mine. Although there exists an old one-room community hall in Arviat, this offers only minimal activity (i.e. dances on weekend nights, limited sports-use, activities and games at Christmas etc.). One could point to the fact that Arviat is a community of only 2,650 people, and therefore, programs, infrastructure, and services may not be warranted given this size of community (Statistics Canada, 2016a). If size were the only criterion here, however, one only has to look at rural communities in southern Canada to realize this is not necessarily a matter of community size, but of inequity. For example, in British Columbia (BC), Fort St. James (pop. 2,278), Pemberton (pop. 2,369), Burns Lake (pop. 2,390) and Lilloet (pop. 2,068) all have relatively similar populations, and all possess far more opportunity for community recreation and programming for young people. Chetwynd, a small rural community of only 2,255 in the north-eastern area of the province, boasts a recreation complex that offers: “an arena, curling, hall rentals, food services, court, climbing wall, programs, leisure pool, hot tub, sauna, waterslide, [and] gym” (District of Chetwynd, n.d.). Obviously, creating equivalent infrastructure in Arviat would be far more costly, however, these comparatively-sized communities have been
highlighted here to demonstrate the degree of disparity that exists between small communities in southern Canada and those in Nunavut.

5.2.3 Relationships with a Spouse

Given the significant social, cultural, and economic changes being experienced by mothers in Nunavut, it is not surprising that their intimate relationships can face challenges. In particular, many of the mothers described living under chronic financial stress and this took a toll on their relationships. For example, one mother explained how her husband made her feel badly for not contributing financially to their family unit: “It’s not right if he says to me, ‘You’re not helping’...Like, you’re not working” (Group Analysis 1). This mother was frustrated that her husband perceived her to be ‘not helping’ financially. These feelings were described as particularly difficult in the context of couples being apart when one was employed at the mine. She was frustrated that a contribution of money to the family was considered to be more important than the unpaid labour she provided through child care and domestic household work. It demonstrates a privileging of employment and the need to make money over childcare and domestic duties (unpaid labour). As previously mentioned, this is a common point of discussion within feminist literature. It suggests not only that mothers often work a ‘second shift’ associated with childcare and household labour after a day of being employed, but that they as women are expected to provide this unpaid labour. This mother’s comment is also important because it again confirms the need for two incomes to support a family in Nunavut, something that can often be associated with families in urban locations. Further, it again highlights the inability for mining employment to meet the needs of Arviarmiut families—given the lack of support for both parents to work outside of the home. It also
points to the constraints of living within a capitalist economy (and the need to earn money). Such constraints exist in Nunavut as they do in urban locations throughout Canada. As families have more children and their needs grow, families increasingly access food and material goods from local stores. However, this increased consumerism over the last 60 years has changed many Inuit in Nunavut in distinct ways. It has meant families must engage in more activities where they can sell their labour to afford these things (increased employment). In the process, a change within families and Inuit culture more generally has occurred. Parents may no longer place the same emphasis on their children learning traditional skills such as hunting or trapping or sewing, but on skills that advance them and their earning potential within society. Mothers can play a large role in this given their disproportionate involvement in the provision of care for children. As Marx (1844/1964) stated, however, the “political economy knows the worker only as a working animal—as a beast reduced to the strictest bodily needs” (p. 73). The psychological implications of this for Inuit mothers, which were not explored beyond the quotes here, are worthy of deeper study. The reduction of Inuit to workers (and consumers) is related to the alienation or removal of a person from the product of their own labour. The implication is that many Inuit mothers can be positioned as a “reserve army” for corporations in terms of hiring for mine-based employment, but also in a role where they are required to raise children to be workers that support the political economy (Hartman & Markell, 1980, p. 89). Increased requirements on their time and energy such as when employed at a local mine, may also leave mothers with less time and energy to enjoy the actual work of mothering and the relationships that can be associated with this role. Where Inuit women may have traditionally derived real value from the work of
childrearing, and the many deep relationships they may hold within their families and communities, or from being connected to the land and one’s culture, this may—for some—have become largely replaced by values associated with consumption. This is because money, as Marx (1844/1964) explains, works against “the bonds of society” (169).

Where previously Inuit women may have largely all of their needs met from the land, today priorities may center on the attainment of money so as to meet one’s needs for food, clothing etc. Gombay (2010) has written about how life has changed for Inuit families given their movement towards the market-based system of capitalism. She has explained that the ‘new’ economy in Nunavut continues to rival the “vernacular” economy (p. 11). The vernacular economy she describes as “the ideas, processes, social relations, values, and institutions that Inuit link to the production of hunting, fishing and gathering” (Gombay, 2010, p. 11). It is one “predicated on sharing and relies on a whole set of institutions and moral principles that are particular to Inuit” (Gombay, 2010, p. 13).

It may be the case that the situation described by the mother who was made to feel badly for not ‘helping’ her family financially, then also demonstrates the social, cultural, and economic changes occurring. For previously unpaid work provided by women that has been highly valued within Inuit culture (e.g. cleaning animal skins and making clothing etc.), may have become less important to the work of making money. Although from an opposite lens, the response of other mothers demonstrates this point. As one mother described holding employment and wishing her partner would also seek employment. “He always says, ‘I should look for a job,’ but he never does it” (Group Analysis 1).

Despite men being those more commonly employed through mining in the territory, many of the women referred to the reliance of men on women to provide for the family’s
financial needs. In this situation, many women were not only the sole breadwinner, they were also the person who commonly provided much of the childcare and household domestic labour. This was a present theme within many interviews. It is also a finding consistent with the research of McElroy (1975) on female Inuit role identification.

The role and involvement of fathers in the care of children was also regularly discussed by many of the mothers. For a few mothers, the fathers of their children were viewed as a significant support; and occasionally, the only form of support a mother might have within the community. For example, one mother stated, “My support person is my husband; my husband and my sister who has no children of her own stay with us a lot” (Participant 8). For some of the other mothers, however, fathers appeared to offer little childrearing support. One mother, in reference to her daughter’s father and his side of the family stated, “But her dad side, nah, useless—I mean her dad” (Participant 3). Many mothers described caring for their children on their own despite being in a relationship with the child’s father. For example, one mother stated, “When he used to go to work for two weeks in and two weeks out, but for the two weeks, sometimes I see myself as a single mother” (Participant 14). This can be made even more difficult if the husband or boyfriend does not wish, or is not able, to call the mother while he is away working at the mine. One mother explained how her spouse used to work at a mine for a number of months at a time. She described him as absent from her life for “three months at the most. [Actually,] I’d say two months the most, because in the third month, he’d always go out on the land with his friends” (Participant 2). This same mother described giving birth and raising a child for almost an entire year before her husband returned from his job at a mine. These sentiments appear to point to some fathers as uninvolved or
under-involved to some extent in the day-to-day care of their children. As a key informant explained, “usually the problem is that the father does not help out,” regarding the financial support of the children (Key Informant 4). Mothers agreed that a lack of financial support was particularly difficult. For those mothers that were separated from their boyfriend or husband, many described receiving no support, financial or otherwise, from their children’s fathers. As one mother commented, “being left out and break up with the father is my hardest part being a single mother. When the father just leaves me and my son, and not want to help, it is hard for me to support sometimes” (Participant 1). Other mothers stated, “it wouldn’t be difficult if my baby's dad was helpful and [would] be there for her all the time...” (Participant 3). This suggests that mothers must seek financial help where money can be a proxy for food and diapers, but also physical help in terms of another person to be present and care for the children. Although the financial concerns mothers describe here may sound similar, if not equivalent to challenges mothers face throughout the rest of Canada; the unique social, cultural, and economic context of Nunavut places Inuit women in particularly precarious situations. The cost associated with raising children in Nunavut far exceeds the cost of doing so in other locations in the country, as demonstrated previously concerning food and the small amount provided to Inuit through income assistance. Further, there are no non-profit services and supports outside of the Arviat Wellness Centre to support these women as there often can be in communities in southern Canada. Given the large family sizes, and the increasing population of Arviat, the implication appears to be that of women largely tasked with carrying the increasing weight of raising the growing number of children in the community; typically, without help from the state, from employment, or as these
mothers indicated, from fathers. This highlights the immense pressure that can placed on Inuit women.

Although living with one’s husband, boyfriend, or common law partner can hold its challenges, as in any relationship, living apart for Inuit women in Arviat can be particularly difficult. As one mother explained, “The time is very slow sometimes when your home alone and husband away to work” (Participant 5). For this mother, the FIFO schedule her partner adhered to while working at the mine was particularly difficult. Directly related to this, mothers reported disrupted relationships between children and fathers as well. One mother explained:

Whenever he came back, my [children] were like: Who’s that? They were on their own so much they weren’t used to their Dad (being around). They don’t really remember him. They have no memories of him ‘cause he was gone too long. And when he did come back, the environment would change. (Participant 2)

Although it was not examined in this study, it is possible that this emotional disconnection between the children and their father may have impacted the willingness and interest of both the father and children to spend time together. This same mother described how the typical work schedule of those at the mine affected children. She now watches as her grandchildren experience it:

So with this two weeks in, two weeks out (pfft) I know it’s a long time for the kids, like, for my grandchildren, the first two weeks are okay but it’s by the second week, like they get difficult, they miss their family member and they can’t get soothed and they get cranky. That’s when it gets hard...because with every cry or wail, it’s Daddy! Ataata! That’s hard because my [children] were like that too
with their Dad and now it’s the same thing with my grandchildren... In the first week, it’s okay—the first four days they’re fine but after a week or so when they start missing their father, that’s when they get the crankiest. (Participant 2)

Although this comment clearly points to the relationship between the children and their father, it also suggests how much more difficult parenting can be on the mother who must support her children during this time. Another mother described when her husband would return home from working at the mine, he tended to have priorities for how to spend his time that were not family-centred. Related to a previous comment about her husband going out on this land after returning from work, this same mother stated, “It was so good when he came back; [but then] knowing he’s in town, he’s probably out there drunk or—he drank a lot you know—which was hard because I’m so not a drinker” (Participant 2).

This mother described being fearful of her spouse at these times. She described turning escapes from the family home due to violence into a game with her children so as to not worry them. Such depictions highlight the challenges associated with the relationships that can develop between parents when one works away at the mine. This is consistent with research that shows increased violence and other negative social impacts on families involved in mining (Czyewski & Tester, 2014; Rodon & Levesque, 2015). Violence such as this can also trigger child welfare investigations and subsequently, require mothers make a decision between leaving their partner/spouse to protect their children from experiencing or witnessing violence, or losing their children to social workers. As noted previously, leaving one’s partner or spouse can hold significant problems given the shortage of housing, as well as financial and or family pressures.
Although the specific impacts of mining employment on children were not the focus of this study, the challenges within the parental relationships point to the utility of future research from the perspective of children and youth. This could offer a greater understanding of how mining truly impacts families. Despite mining occurring in Nunavut for over 60 years, the impacts of it on Inuit children have not been explored in depth. This may be because so few Inuit in the territory have been directly involved in mining during this time. While examining impacts of the now defunct Nanisivik mine near Arctic Bay, Richards (2009) identified short-term impacts of the mine that included: employment income, an increased standard of living, and access to jet service. He found the only long-term positive impact was related to the donation of money from the mine to the local school to construct a gymnasium (Richards, 2009). Psychological or emotional impacts stem from FIFO employment schedules, for example, may be important to supporting children and youth. This may be particularly relevant to social workers in the territory were their existing positions to expand to provide increased support to Inuit families.

International studies conducted in Australia and Mongolia concerning the impacts of mining on families point to many of the same issues and experiences that the mothers in Arviat described in terms of the impact on their relationships (Kaczmarek & Sibbel, 2008; Meredith, Rush, & Robinson, 2014; United Nations Children’s Fund [UNICEF], 2017). Similar to these studies, families in Arviat appear to have come to accept the difficulties for families that this form of employment brings. As one mother explained, “when my husband went to work for the first time, my kids started missing him, but when he continued to leave to for work, my kids got used to being without their dad”
(Participant 5). She further stated, “when he goes to work all the time now it's ok” (Participant 5). One Elder described coming to accept this form of employment as well, “It's the only place for making money. With so many children, when the children are hungry, it's very pitiful. Maybe if the father goes to work, the children wouldn't be so hungry like that” (Elder 1). Taken together, these comments suggest that families are not necessarily happy about this form of employment, but instead that they have accepted their relationships and their lives to these changed conditions. Unfortunately, as a key informant summed up, this means both “the burden and opportunity fall to women, and the role of men/boys [becomes] a growing concern” (Key Informant 10). In other words, women may be able to spend more time with their children when their partners are away and be able to feed their children with less financial stress (opportunities), but they are also often left with the majority of the responsibility for raising their children (burden). As mothers in this study demonstrated, they continue to provide for their children’s physical, social and cultural needs, and often their financial needs as well. The role men often occupy within Inuit communities, however, has garnered attention and increasing concern for much of this same reason (Embrace Life Council, n.d.; McElroy, 1975; Morgan, 2008; Rogers, 2015).

In light of these challenges, mothers also commented on problems within their relationships, such as jealousy and infidelity. These are things that can be often made worse by work-related separations through mining employment in the territory, given the difficulty of connecting by telephone. Seeking support within the community in order to improve one’s relationship, however, can be challenging even when it does exist. Although some programs for families in Arviat appear to have been provided in the past,
there can be difficulty getting men to participate. As one mother explained “even for
healing programs, men are—men are very hard, right? I even had to force my husband to
go to this [specific] program when there was one a couple of years ago. Yeah. Very—
[hard]” (Group Analysis 1). Perhaps more problematic than challenges associated with
going men to attend programs to improve their relationships, however, is the insecure
funding for such programs. This can mean that should someone be interested and or
finally willing to attend a program, they may find the program is no longer offered due to
a lack of funding. This is common for non-profit organizations in Nunavut, where a
survey administered to non-profits in the territory in 2005 found 65% experienced
“serious funding inadequacies for operations or program delivery” (Impact Economics, n.
d., p. 24). Were funding available, mothers indicated that consistent programs that
involved land-based camps would be particularly helpful and not only offer them
opportunity to focus on healing, but on the attainment or maintenance of land-based
skills. This is consistent with the findings of Fraser, Parent, & Dupéré (2018) and
Richmond (2009). In my experience, most programs for couples or families are run
within communities (indoors), rarely taking the relationships Inuit hold to the land into
demonstrates this is most needed. As Cunsolo, Shiwak, and Wood (2017) explain, this is
“not only [about] focusing on preserving, promoting, and supporting cultural knowledge
and skills for wellbeing, but also creating stronger, more robust, more sustainable

23 Notably, programs such as Ilisaqsivik in Clyde River, understand the importance of land-based healing
and wellness. See http://ilisaqsivik.ca/programs-and-services/land-based-programming
individuals and communities who and that are more resilient to any type of change” (p. 300).

Where previously it was not possible, today mothers and their spouses can communicate while one of them works away at the mine and the other is in Arviat. Unfortunately, this does require having access to a telephone or the internet. When one does not have a telephone in their home (or telephone service), arrangements must be made for using friends and family’s phones, which can be difficult. Rumors, financial challenges that impact the ability to communicate (i.e. phone cards, internet etc.), and jealousy can impact the regular communication between couples, adding extra stress to being apart. These things can have an impact on one’s mental health. Mothers explained, it is particularly difficult when rumors circulate within the community. Jealousy can have an impact on a mother’s relationship, not only with her boyfriend or husband, but also within the community. One key informant had experienced this herself and described her spouse repeatedly saying, “Who did you talk to? How come you’re all dressed up nice?” as a means to suggest she had been having another relationship with another man in the community (Key Informant 2). Living apart when one parent works at the mine was described as making the situation more difficult. In a discussion with two key informants, one stated, “The spouses find it really hard when the husband is gone like for two weeks. Dealing with the children…and also concerned about infidelity” (Key Informant 11). One informant referred to jealousy as one of the largest problems faced by mothers. Another offered this example of what can be experienced by women in Arviat:

Key Informant 1: I know one lady who is like that. She’s working right at 10:00am, break time, has to go home, no other place.
Interviewer: No break, just has to go home?

Key Informant 1: Yeah. 15 minutes later, back to work. Lunchtime—

Interviewer: Home?

Key Informant 1: —straight home. 3:00pm, straight home... “What took you so long? You’re two minutes late.”

Other key informants confirmed this same issue of jealousy and intimate partner control. One informant linked the intensity of jealous or possessive relationships to issues with suicide. This informant stated, “It's (relationships) so demanding that it's doomed for failure because it’s so demanding. It seems to be grounded in 'I don't trust you from the beginning’” (Key Informant 12). One mother explained how infidelity can occur when a husband or boyfriend works away at the mine:

Married guys, married people who just get separated and the man who works at the mine would get a girlfriend from [an]other town and just be with her. And the wife would just wait for the—for the man to come home. (Participant 18)

This mother described such situations as common. The potential for relationships to be stressed given these circumstances is evident here.

Unfortunately, as some mothers explained, there may be grounds for not being able to trust their partners. For example, one explained how her husband had left her for another woman while away at work at a mine, who he then began to support financially. She, at home with their children, explained how this put her in a difficult financial position that required she encourage him to return to their family, and remain in a relationship with her. This was particularly tenuous given her anger and frustration with him, but also her reliance on him to financially support her and their children. She
described how her power to make decisions had been reduced. She further described how
if she was financially able to care for her children on her own, a more equitable
foundation underpinning their relationship may have been possible. Another mother
stated, “when the husband starts cheating [that is difficult]...But if the husband or the
boyfriend starts to pay that other girl (the new girlfriend), not the children or the
wife...[that is even more difficult]” (Participant 18). In this situation, the trust within the
relationship can be damaged, but there can also be increased financial strain as well. This
demonstrates just how money (and employment), sex (and infidelity), and power (and
control), are connected. These issues within relationships have been explained to be a
consequence of patriarchal social engineering, or as Smith (1989) describes it, the
“relations and apparatures of ruling” that often force women into positions where they
must depend on men for their and their children’s survival (p. 41). Taken together,
financial stress and infidelity, and the provision of support generally, often become forms
of control, particularly when couples are apart.

Although some mothers described a desire for additional support, such as
relationship counselling, two mothers commented on the desire to resolve challenges
within their relationships on their own. One mother explained “I cried to him, I told him I
don't want social services involved, no counselling for me, nothing, just you and me, I've
gone through this. Now I know what to do and I think I know what to do” (Participant
17). Given the overarching fear of social services as described by mothers in this study,
this desire to avoid the professional help of social workers is understandable. However,
through conversations with this mother, I learned that she has overcome real adversity.
Her comments may suggest that she has developed an increased confidence in herself to
address her relationship challenges. This may not be a commonly held perspective. It further suggests she possesses an awareness of her internal capacity and power given her success at overcoming other difficulties. A different mother, who wished there was more formalized support within the community described wanting somewhere “we can go to talk to someone, and [get help from] an Inuk, not a Qallunaat” (Participant 1). This desire was reiterated by other mothers. It is consistent with calls by the Pauktuittit Inuit Women’s Association (2005) for Inuit to be able to connect with someone who is from their same culture and for more Inuit to be employed in formal supportive roles within their communities.

5.2.4 Mining Employment

The community of Arviat remains somewhat divided regarding the issue of mining within the territory. The mothers within this study, however, did not appear to take firm positions on it; or they did not seem to perceive the mine as negative or positive per se. Given the range of experiences to mining by the mothers and Elders that were interviewed, there also does not appear to be generational perspective associated it. Young mothers did not hold substantially different perspectives from Elders on the topic. Some of the mothers and Elders in this study represent a relationship to mining that has been built over 60 years, as they lived in Rankin Inlet, where their husbands worked at the Nickel Mine, and today they or their children or grandchildren work at Meadowbank Mine. On the other hand, some mothers interviewed had only experienced employment related to mining in the last couple of years (or even months). Yet there appears to be a consistency to the experiences that led mothers and Elders to describe mining in rather common ways regarding their children, families, and the community. Regarding this
experience, one Elder summed up both the challenges facing Inuit families, and how this form of employment is “okay” given the existing economic conditions within the community. The Elder stated, “We used to be fine, before the mines opened...[now] I just want them (men) to go ahead (and take the opportunities)—that is the only option we have left” (Elder 1). Such sentiments were supported by a key informant who explained how some Elders can experience feelings of guilt associated with the existing economic difficulties of their families. Their comments point to the significant social and cultural change that have happened within the community, and that consequently, some appear to have come to accept mining employment, given this reality. This same Elder also commented she is “finally ok with it now” (referring to mining), but only because this is “all they (families) can do” (Elder 1). This statement does not celebrate mining and northern development. Instead, it highlights how financially desperate some families can feel that they must accept mining employment. Her words also indicate mining is not necessarily a preferred choice of employment, but can instead be a family’s only option. This is consistent with observations made in the literature in relation to food security and quality of life for northern communities in relation to mining (Battle & Torjman, 2013; Gibson & Klinck, 2005). Many mothers offered similar sentiments. Some indicated they were happy for those family members or friends that were employed at the mine. Or, as one mother stated, “I’m happy about her (another mother) ‘cause she is working trying to support her kids, and her husband is not working” and “even her kids are now encouraging their mother to work at the mine” (Participant 1).

Although the work at the mine was described by the mothers to be hard and require long hours, they described their employment overall in often positive terms. Only
one mother stated, “I find it tiring with the long shift, and I didn't go back to work” (Participant 20). Another mother who was working at the mine commented, “I don't want to see my kids not eating, like got nothing to eat, waiting for welfare to come, this is why I work at [the mine]...I love my job and [I] am happy that I'm now supporting my kids.” (Participant 6). Importantly, the majority of those mothers who had worked at the mine themselves reported enjoying the work itself. More often, however, mothers commented on this employment in terms of its ability to offer them the means to provide for their children. One mother explained how her children also perceived mining employment in a positive light. She explained that although her children did not know their father well due to him being away for extended periods of time at a mine, they would tell her “‘I’m gonna work like my Dad’ at the mine” (Participant 2). This runs counter to research conducted decades ago by McElroy (1975) that described Inuit youth largely indicated they wished to hold traditional roles within their communities, such hunters, when they grew up. This is consistent with my experience in Nunavut as well. Although this perspective by the children may be related to their admiration for their father, it may also suggest a cultural shift by some Inuit children and youth regarding what they perceive to be positive roles or forms of employment for men.

Of the mothers interviewed who had worked at the mine, the vast majority worked as housekeeping staff or cooks. This is again consistent with research presented previously in Chapter 2. Only one mother described working in a different area or role at the mine that involved operating heavy machinery. The largely positive perception of mining employment as described by mothers regarding the work at a mine is different from the experiences of women in Baker Lake who reported sexual harassment and
assault, racism, sexism, and unhealthy work environments related to their mining employment (Czyzewski & Tester, 2014). It should be noted that following the publication of research by Czyzewski and Tester, (2014), Agnico Eagle Inc. was reported to plan a review of employee programs (Rogers, 2014 April). However, for the mothers in Arviat, the work and the worksite environment itself was of less concern to the mothers. Instead, they reported the hardest part of this form of employment was not being with their children while working away from their community at the mine site. The positive comments provided by the mothers regarding their work at the mine also need to be considered in context. Most of those who spoke positively of their employment had only worked at the mine for a short period of time when they were interviewed. One had attended her first two-week training shift and had no previous experience working at a mine. Those that had experienced longer-term employment or no longer worked at the mine typically held a slightly different and less positive perspective toward their employment. These mothers tended to speak of the difficulties of being away from their families as the key area of concern, but still commonly regarded the work as ‘okay.’

The employment of mothers at the mine, however, is not without controversy. One Elder, commented on how she believed mothers should not be employed at the mine. She perceived mining employment for a mother as a negative thing. This Elder stated:

The woman must stay home... an infant can't be left behind, not even if the child is a toddler. The children should not be left behind. It's fine for the husband to go to work. She shouldn't leave her children behind. For if she does, the woman who has small children, somehow the mind of the child will be affected when s/he is
raised by constantly changing caretakers. It's not healthy for the child's mind. It's fine for the husband because he's a man. (Elder 1)

This concern for the mother and children to remain together may stem from concern for maintaining parent-child bonds, but it may also represent an internalization of traditional conservative and/or patriarchal values. Alternatively, it may reflect the traditional roles played by men and women within Inuit culture. Or it may also represent a personal experience and perspective associated with father/male involvement or under-involvement in the home. As Pauktuutit: Inuit Women of Canada (2005) have explained:

While many women maintain their traditional duties, an increasing number are choosing a different route. Inuit women have become active in the formation and operation of economic and political organizations ranging from local to international levels. Her traditional primary authority within the home has helped give Inuit women the confidence and tenacity necessary to take such an active and productive role in these organizations (p. 28)

This offers a different perspective to that of this Elder and suggests a cultural shift may be occurring regarding what is considered ‘women’s work’ and role in the home and community. It also suggests that for some mothers, they may face conflicting social, cultural and economic pressure within their own home to both work at the mine, and at the same time to not work at the mine.

5.3 Theme: The Impact of Child Welfare

5.3.1 Child Apprehension (or Threat of)

Mothers expressed concern for child welfare services in their community. This concern was largely related to a fear they may be the family that is ‘next’ approached by
social workers. Their fear was that they may lose their children to foster care within their community, or worse, outside their community or territory. This is consistent with the concern expressed by Inuit throughout the territory (Phaneuf, Duding, & Arreak, 2011). These concerns were discussed at length. It appears many mothers do not necessarily understand what conditions, situations, or problems that can lead to children being apprehended, placed in foster care, or sent out of the community. Instead, mothers described a range of situations that had led them, or their family and friends, to encounter social workers; situations that confirmed for them that there is a random or capriciousness associated with child welfare decision making. These situations confirmed for many mothers that social workers were often dangerous and unpredictable. Directly related to this, many of these mothers described being confused as to why their children (or others’ children) were apprehended, and they questioned how it is possible that social workers have the authority to keep their children from them. The mothers’ descriptions highlight how such confusion can occur. As one mother explained:

They (social workers) didn't say a word, they just took my kids, and I didn't understand why they got my kids without any words to me. Even ‘till now I still don't understand why they keep my kids... I've been waiting for them since [a few years ago]. (Participant 7)

Another mother stated, “They never explained” (Participant 16) in reference to returning from a medical trip outside the community to find her children had been apprehended. A third mother described a similar situation, “They [social workers] came over once when my children were sleeping, and they took them away...I still don’t know what it was for”
(Participant 21). The descriptions the mothers provided of how children were apprehended were highly consistent.

Although the mothers indicated that they continue to lack answers to their questions, despite some of these scenarios happening some time ago, two key informants who currently had or had held positions with the Department of Social Services expressed surprise for these concerns. One key informant stated, “I don’t know if it’s a language barrier or a cultural barrier or if it’s denial on their part” (Key Informant 7).

Although all of these explanations may be possible, the mothers’ experiences also suggest there is a problem concerning the transmission of information between either the mothers and the social workers. Later, this same informant admitted, “I could see where in some places they—it would not be carefully spelled out” referring to how it is that families do not always understand why their child(ren) had been apprehended (Key Informant 7). Another key informant, however, offered the following explanation for the mothers’ confusion regarding apprehension:

Well, I would be very surprised if there was a child welfare worker in the territory that had the time to provide meaningful support to a family. I mean, the system is not set up to do that (Key Informant 6)

This suggests, rather than a difficulty between individual workers and mothers, there are structural barriers in place that prevent such dialogue from occurring. After speaking with other key informants, many who had worked in the social work field in the territory previously, and others who were currently working in the field, this appears to be likely. There is limited available time and resources social workers can dedicate to families. Given this, adequate communication with parents during or after apprehension may not
always occur. Importantly, the same key informant who was surprised by the mothers’ experiences also spoke to the structural issues that may contribute to such findings. Although social workers authorized under the *Child and Family Service Act* in Nunavut are legally entitled to apprehend children without first communicating with caregivers, social workers are required to notify the caregivers that this occurred “without delay” (Consolidation of the Child and Family Service Act, 1997, s. 33–34). They must also provide information regarding the apprehension, and legislation supporting this decision, as well as the ‘next steps’ or information for how to proceed (Consolidation of the Child and Family Service Act, 1997, s. 33–34). In my experience, this information was communicated orally, as well as through the provision of a document that further explained everything concerning the apprehension in both English and Inuktitut. Unfortunately, as this informant also pointed out, child welfare in Nunavut as: “a perfect storm of the worst socioeconomic conditions with the worst history of oppression, attracting the least experienced social workers because nobody wants to work in Nunavut” (Key Informant 7). This suggests a further contributing factor could be related to the training of social workers. When placed alongside my previous research in Nunavut, it is not unrealistic to view training as playing a role in this lack of communication between workers and families (Johnston, 2009). I regularly watched social workers with little experience end up working in communities alone. For many of these workers, their supervision was provided by telephone once or twice a week (or as they requested it). However, the confusion may also be related to the current adversarial approach of the existing child welfare system, which can impact the development of relationships between workers and families—relationships that can be necessary for
effective communication to occur. The existing adversarial approach provides great authority to social workers, while simultaneously stripping it from families through the emphasis placed on apprehension over family support (McHale, Robertson, & Clarke, 2009; Milward, 2016; Sullivan & Charles, 2010). This is consistent with the mother’s experiences described in this study.

Although not all the mothers interviewed within this study had been involved with child welfare, nor had all the mothers experienced child apprehension, all the mothers had strong opinions on the topic. Some mothers expressed concern about where children were placed (foster care placements) after they were apprehended from their homes, or for the apprehension and involvement of child welfare workers in their lives, or the lives of their friends and/or relatives. Some mothers questioned the care and attention children received in government care and expressed frustration for situations where children had been apprehended, only to be placed in circumstances they perceived as worse for the children. It is important to note that often these circumstances were considered worse than the family from which the child(ren) were apprehended, in large part, because the children were not placed with extended family members. Perhaps of greatest importance, however, was concern the mothers expressed for children and mothers alike. Mothers described how often child apprehensions occurred at a time when mothers required care or increased support. Mothers pointed to examples such as following the death of a loved one, or at the termination of an intimate relationship. It was repeatedly stated by the mothers that families do not become stronger when children are removed, but instead become weaker. One mother stated, “they [social workers] should help. Like, they should talk to the family, how to be strong. Like, keep the family strong instead of taking them
(the children) away from their moms while she’s [going through difficulty]” (Group Analysis 1). Mothers at the group analysis unanimously agreed with this statement. Another mother stated, “I think our family would get stronger if I can just get my children back,” and explained:

It would be huge to get my children back. If they tell me that they’ll be coming home soon, that would give me a lot of joy. But also, if and when I do get them back, I no longer want to be investigated by social services anymore. I’m not doing anything. (Participant 16)

This sentiment demonstrates this mother’s frustration with the child welfare system, as she is ‘not doing anything’ that she feels should warrant social services involvement in her family. This same mother described how it was also difficult to carry on and motivate herself following a child apprehension. She explained:

When this happened the first time, I lost my appetite completely. I was only drinking tea or coffee and medicines were all I ate. The nurses found out after I kept getting new prescriptions...They wanted to know why I was taking so much even when I didn’t have headaches. The nurses found out that my children had been taken away and I told them that I can’t get them back. (Participant 16)

Another mother summed it up as, “I guess they don’t care about mothers” (Group Analysis 1). Unfortunately, the different stresses described by mothers in this study, many of which were largely associated with their employment at the mine, or their husband’s or boyfriend’s employment, appeared to only be exacerbated by child welfare services in their community. They stated how difficult life events put mothers at risk for being contacted by social workers. As one mother explained, “Ever since my husband
left us, the social service (child welfare) started after me” (Participant 7). This signals how the possibility of infidelity or the termination of an intimate relationship while a mother’s boyfriend or partner is away working at a mine can create great fear in the minds of some mothers and great insecurity or risk to her family. Another mother described a similar situation:

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Everybody goes through ups and downs right? When me and my husband were separated...this one lady who is social worker came to my mom's and start asking me if I have food in the fridge... And we always got these traditional foods in the freezer...When I opened the freezer, I got all kinds of food (traditional food) and told them that I started feeding my kids since [birth]. The real healthy food, no sugar adds [sic], no chemical added, that's what I told her, she never came back to my door. (Participant 8)
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Both of these mothers commented on how child welfare involvement was unsupportive when they were at their lowest or most difficult points in their relationships. They felt targeted by child welfare social workers in the community. Neither received any support services, but instead experienced an increased level of stress for fear of losing their children. Unfortunately, these perspectives were not isolated. Almost all of the mothers interviewed as part of this study perceived the role of child welfare in their community in a negative light as opposed to an important support to turn to in times of difficulty.

### 5.3.2 Damage to Children and Families

Child apprehension was perceived by the mothers as entirely negative. It was understood that the act of taking children from their families could psychologically damage children. The inability to undo the damage done by apprehension was also
repeatedly discussed in terms of the impact on children. As one mother explained, children were irreparably harmed and ‘hardened’ through the process of apprehension and by being kept from their families (via foster care). This speaks to Joe Karetak’s explanation of children growing into hardened eggs previously mentioned (Cornwall & Jewkes, 1995). This mother explained:

But because they’re (child welfare social workers) giving out—I can say they’re just giving out ugly memories and revenge. Like, when they grow up, they (the children) will want payback. Like, I’ve been talking to these kids too who are now grown up—they’re twenty-two, twenty-three...Like, they (social workers)—just pinched them and give them anger. That’s what I think about social services, just giving out angers. Like, kids will grow up—we all grew up. I even want to become a grandma one day, like very old. What I see, they’re just giving out revenge. Like, they’re giving them angers, pinching their (children’s) hearts. Like, one day kids will grow up and we want them to have a good future, right? That’s what I want my kids to have. (Group Analysis 1)

Another mother, further explained the impact of child apprehension as:

And the child is eventually going to get angry. How come I’m here? How come I can’t go home? Why me? How come I’m not with my other sisters? These are thoughts that go through their minds. They start comparing. So the child will be a very angry one. Not now, but maybe years later. Years later, when the child gets mad, the child will get angry at either his mother or his father when it wasn’t their choice, it was the choice of the social worker. It’s not the parent’s fault; it’s the social workers doing. The child will then be angry at the parents. It’s not right;
it’s creating a situation of destroying them, as fragile as they already are in their new place. What could have been resolved at the time has no more correct resolution for the situation. That’s how it ends. (Participant 2)

This mother both describes the problem of apprehension in terms of its negative impact on children, but she also ascribes blame for such outcomes to social workers, and not to parents or caregivers. Given that social workers cannot legally apprehend children from their parents or caregivers ‘at whim,’ it is possible this has occurred. It is also likely, however, that the behavior of parents also play a real role here. Elder Rhoda Akpaliapik Karetak has spoken to this point. She has stated:

You cannot force anyone to seek healing when they are not willing. If someone is forced and then feels no better, it will backfire on the person who has forced them. It is not worth it for that person to take the blame for something they didn’t do. When a person does not have faith in healing or does not agree that they can possibly be healed, they will certainly not be healed even though there is healing available. The person must commit to saying “yes” to healing. If I try to force a person to take the journey of healing when they don’t believe in it, I will be responsible for their pain becoming worse. By trying too hard to find the path towards a painless, healed life, we could cause chaos in the lives of others. To have a good attitude toward everyone and to live in harmony with everyone around you are constant objectives in the Inuit way of living. Today they are so easy to overlook. It is very true today that we no longer strive as hard as our ancestors to live in harmony with our fellow Inuit. Even though some are still practicing traditional ways, the communities that had the greatest and fastest loss
of knowledgeable leaders have struggled for help, and today, they have the greatest loss of their Inuit ways. When children are still young and receptive, it is the best time to give them advice and instructions that they will not forget. These will make them into able human beings who will be able to recognize the need to heal, when and if they should ever need healing. (Karetak, Tester, & Tagalik, 2017, p. 196)

In essence, the need for healing can create a resistance to healing, or even a reluctance to admit when one needs help. Elder Rhoda Akpaliapik Karetak continued:

We must resolve the past collectively. We must learn to share the blame equally. When we do, our solutions will be more effective and we can then establish a community leadership structure based on Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit ways of knowing that reflect the kind of leadership our communities need. (Karetak, Tester, & Tagalik, 2017, p. 207)

Rhoda is referencing blame for the struggles associated with the colonial history here (e.g. residential school), which research has shown is often tied to a range of challenges and health-related impacts that parents and caregivers can experience (Wilk, Maltby, & Cooke, 2017). For example, alcohol and drug abuse has been long associated with having experienced trauma, such as that which many Inuit endured in residential school (Wilk, Maltby, & Cooke, 2017). What Rhoda details here, however, is applicable to the child welfare system. In effect, she offers an explanation for how an adversarial system that does not approach families from a place of offering healing, may ‘backfire’ and position someone who has real challenges to become ‘worse.’ A third mother stated, “Getting the kids away from their mother is painful and not a toy for the mothers...this one kid who
was fostered will think of suicide...He regrets from not growing [up with] the mother” (Participant 8). These statements get at the heart of the problem with child welfare in Arviat, namely that the involvement of social workers in families’ lives is not a compassionate approach to working with families, where the focus is on healing and the provision of support. Instead, however, the child welfare system is perceived by the mothers as a negative and destructive force to children and families. Research concerning the outcomes for children who grow up within the child welfare system in Canada is consistent with the mothers’ sentiments here. Children do not fare well in state care — just as the mothers described. Youth who ‘age out’ of government care in Canada overwhelmingly end up involved with the justice system in some way, have higher rates of suicide than those who are not involved with the child welfare system, are less likely to go to college and university, have increased likelihood to exhibit or have mental health issues, and often struggle with addictions (Barker et. al, 2014; Gaetz, O’Grady, Kidd, & Schwan, 2016; Patterson, Moniruzzaman, & Somers, 2015; Ward et al., 2010). As one mother explained, “what they’re doing to these kids, it’s painful to their hearts” (Group Analysis 1). Current literature on child welfare outcomes in Canada demonstrate the mothers’ understanding of the impact of the child welfare system is highly insightful here. The comments also indicate that foster care is not what they would have chosen for any family in the community given the importance they place on mothers being able to remain with their children. An alternative to the current approach is discussed later in this chapter.

The fear of apprehension the mothers expressed was based in their fear of losing their children, as well as the impact on children, but also in how the process of
apprehension creates “orphans” (Group Analysis 1). Mothers indicated that the removal
of children from their homes created an emotional distance between them and their
children. For those children that are removed from the community, there was great
sadness expressed at the lack of contact between these children and their parents and
family members. One mother described a family member’s lack of contact with a child
placed outside the community:

   Even though when they sent kids out of town by social services, they never
   contact—they don’t contact back... Never—no word. Don’t hear from him. Like,
   they (child welfare) don’t think about if they’re going to lose the culture, our
   Inuktitut or not. (Group Analysis 1)

This comment highlights what mothers perceived to be a lack of concern on the part of
social workers for maintaining the child’s family relationships, culture, and language.
These potential losses can have intergenerational impacts that are only now becoming
better understood as per the legacy of residential schools in Canada (Bombay, Matheson,
& Anisman, 2009; Partridge, 2010).

Related to this concern for the disconnection that can occur between Inuit children
and youth with their family relationships, culture and language, were concerns held by
the mothers for the child welfare system as a foreign approach to addressing social
problems. Mothers explained how the approach of child welfare (an adversarial and
investigative method) was at odds with their culture. For example, one mother explained:

   When social services are worried, they can take any kid. Us Inuit, in our culture,
   the only time we could take kid (take a child away from their family) is when you
   can’t have—when you can’t make babies, when you can’t—when you can’t have
babies (when someone is infertile). Like, that’s the only time we take babies”

(Group Analysis 1)

This statement was offered by one mother during the first group analysis as part of a large discussion concerning child apprehension via child welfare, and whether it was ever ok—if there were any circumstances that would make the need for a child welfare apprehension necessary. The reference to ‘taking babies’ in this quote it should be noted, pertains to the traditional practice of Inuit custom adoption between families when a couple was unable to have children themselves. Indeed, being childless or incapable of having children has long been reported to be the most common reason for adoption in the Arctic (Guemple, 1979). Tester and Kulchyski (1994) have also described how the adoption of children by those who were childless, often Elders, also occurred so some families could access Family Allowance benefits provided by the government. Paul Quassa, current Premier of Nunavut, has remarked previously concerning child welfare: “you can see children being apprehended in the smaller communities. It is not part of Inuit culture and tradition to apprehend a child from a family” (Legislative Assembly of Nunavut, 2013, p. 56). The perspective possessed by the mothers interviewed in Arviat for this study is consistent with this perspective, namely that children should never be apprehended by social workers. This belief, however, rests on two important points. That Inuit families must make decisions for their children, and most importantly, that families remain together. A different mother during the first group analysis session explained children must remain “inside the family. When it goes outside, [it is] stressful. Very stressful when they’re with others” (Group Analysis 1). It should be noted that the reference to ‘inside the family’ here means the much larger extended family. This can
mean the child could be placed temporarily, or over the long-term, with a large number of people within a community; in some communities in the Arctic, this extended family may include up to almost half of the people who reside there.

This is not to say that the mothers did not see a role for social workers in their community. The current role, approach, and specific tasks social workers are required to perform was perceived to be at odds with Inuit culture and Inuit beliefs about how to care for children. “It’s not Inuit culture” (Group Analysis 1) was a common description for how mothers perceived existing child welfare services. This was particularly the case when it comes to sending children outside of the community. As one key informant explained:

They (children) would still be living in the same camp [even if they had been taken away from their parents]. And so the child will just be with a different, in a different tent or a lean-to or whatever. Then once that, that would just be like for a few days, and then once everything is sort of calmed down then the child would go back. (Key Informant 9)

An alternative, and something that was consistent with Inuit culture, would be, as one mother explained, to work “within our own culture for our own solutions” (Participant 2). As this same mother suggested, this would involve:

The Elders. Because the Elders know about parenting, about disciplining, the traditional levels. There are different levels of applying forms of discipline...There could be an Elder’s committee formed by the Hamlet council, a Justice committee or an advisory group of some kind to act as intervention groups...They [Elders] could act as the decision-makers. (Participant 2)
This suggestion is important and one I have heard many times in my work in the Arctic. It is consistent with an approach commonly regarded as restorative justice or:

A wholly-different justice paradigm than the one that has captured the western system. It is not just their greater emphasis on healing that sets them apart—it is a very different perception of what human beings are, how they work, why they lose their way, and how they may be brought back on track again that makes traditional processes unique. (Ross, 1995, p. 435)

Although this approach is often understood and applied within the judicial/criminal context, it is an approach or philosophy to addressing problematic behaviours by individuals within a community. This could be applicable to child welfare. The process of restorative justice can involve bringing together all those who are impacted by an individual’s behaviour. This is commonly referred to as a conference. These:

Restorative justice conferences work by inviting victims and supporters (usually family supporters) of the victim to meet with the offender and the people who care most about the offender and most enjoy the offender’s respect (usually including both the nuclear and the extended family, but not limited to them). This group discusses the consequences of the crime, drawing out the feelings of those who have been harmed. Then it discusses how that harm might be repaired (Braithwaite, 2002, p. 153)

Obviously, providing support to the person and impacted individuals so that the harm may also be repaired is similarly needed. Having been applied in Canada for over 40 years within the justice system, this approach (and many of the models that fall within it) is often considered successful when tailored to the community, provided adequate
resources, and implemented properly (Berlin, 2016; Buller, 2004: Correctional Service Canada, 2016; Gaudreault, 2005; Pynn, 2016). Further, the mothers desire for an approach to child welfare that looked like something similar to restorative justice contradicts the beliefs held by some Qallunaat in the territory that Inuit do not want such a role, nor do they not want to get involved in other community members’ lives and problems (do not want to intervene), and consequently that Inuit both want and need Qallunaat in these decision-making positions (Johnston, 2009). In fact, one key informant (Qallunaat) stated:

And it’s quite clear that the Inuit don’t want to do their own child welfare because they had the opportunity with the first Child Welfare Act. They couldn’t, they have their own—there were a couple of communities that did try and do their own child welfare. (Key Informant 6)

This appears to be a common perspective held by Qallunaat social workers in Nunavut. However, it also appears unfounded. In reality, the two communities in Nunavut, Igloolik and Cape Dorset, had sought out and attained legal authority through Community Transfer Agreements in 1994 to provide their own child welfare services (Muskox Program Development, 1994). This was in keeping with the Government of the Northwest Territories’ commitment to devolution, or the transfer of responsibility to the community level, and the realization of Indigenous self-government (Muskox Program Development, 1994). These services, however, had to be provided within the constraints of the existing legislation of the NWT, and later, of Nunavut, and were to some extent supervised by the GN. They can be understood as somewhat similar to the delegated or mandated model in place in British Columbia (Sinha & Kozlowski, 2013). In my
experience, and consistent with the audit by the Office of the Auditor General (2011), where these communities may have had some control in terms of the work being provided on the ground, they were largely constrained by the requirements in place to operate the same way as every other community in the territory. This has been articulated as the difference between participation by a community in a program and community control over a program (Muskox Program Development, 1994). Both communities had participation, which “does not mean that they ha[d] power or control, or that their participation w[ould] automatically result in control” (Muskox Program Development, 1994, p. 20). What the communities may have thought they were achieving in 1994, appears to have evolved into something quite different over the years. Since this time, both communities have relinquished their control over these services; Cape Dorset in 2011, and Igloolik in 2013 (‘Cape Dorset,’ 2011; Hansard, 2013; ‘Nunavut takes over,’ 2011; Office of the Auditor General of Canada, 2014). Related to the concern that communities are reluctant to ‘do social work,’ however, the same key informant stated:

Nobody wants to apprehend—nobody wants to apprehend your neighbour’s kids.

So they’re happy to have the government do that piece of it. But I do think that there is this growing movement and sense that we should be supporting that they want to do their own wellness. They want to do their own community support.

They want to do their own daycares, and that we should help build that capacity.

(Key Informant 6)

Yet the mothers’ comments here demonstrate Inuit mothers are not happy with the government (social workers) conducting apprehensions. This key informant appears to be only partially correct. Mothers agreed that an Inuit-developed approach to child welfare
would be welcomed. However, having to operate within the existing system (one that involves adversarial relationships and apprehension) is not the same thing. While discussing the idea of Elders involvement in child welfare with mothers during this study’s analysis, the idea was widely agreed upon as an important alternative. It also rings of Justice Sisson’s comments in 1961 regarding the social management of children, including the use of custom adoption, within Inuit communities. He stated:

The Eskimos [sic]...are clinging to their culture and way of life which they have found to be good. These people are in process of cultural change and have a right to retain whatever they life of their culture until they are prepared of their own free will to accept a new culture. In particular, although there may be some strange features...customs which the experts cannot understand or appreciate, it is good and has stood the test of many centuries (Sissons, 1961, p. 2–3)

Only in one community, that of the Splatsin First Nation (formerly known as Spallumcheen Indian Band) in British Columbia, does an Indigenous community have complete control over their child welfare (MacDonald, 1983; Sinha & Kozlowski, 2013).

Discussion concerning an alternative approach to child welfare, one that involved Elders as a group, was in keeping with the mothers’ desire to have those they work with understand their culture. One mother explained how she would like social workers to “understand where I come from, how I feel about my values, about my home, about my kids, about how I want them raised, about their limits. I never want my youngest son to be frightened, or to be afraid” (Participant 2). This comment points to the mother’s desire to protect her child and do so in a way that is consistent with her culture. It was discussed within the two group analysis sessions and all mothers were in agreement with it. It
appears to suggest social workers, particularly Qallunaat social workers, who arrive into communities for short periods of time, are not perceived to possess this knowledge or understanding, nor do they necessarily attempt to seek it out. This was confirmed by a key informant. Another mother described how her child welfare involvement unfolded. She stated:

I spoke with the social worker myself then to let them know that I would be leaving soon (for medical appointment outside the community) and that I have no one to care for my children in my absence so I told them I needed someone to please take care of my kids for me. That’s how it happened. I indicated to the worker that upon my return I would take my children back. So since the time social services came by to pick up the kids the day before I was scheduled to leave, I haven’t been able to get my children back. (Participant 16)

This experience suggests a few things. It points to the challenges within extended families to offer support to each other. Given the degree of poverty experienced by many Inuit as previously described, the ability or willingness to take on another child can understandably be limited. I have personally worked with families that wished to help or support their extended family members but were faced with financial challenges that prevented them from doing so. Families may feel their resources are ‘stretched’ too thin, given the large number of children being born in the community, as previously described. In these situations, as the social worker, I was often unable to help because the Department of Family Services (at the time, the Department of Health and Family Services) did not provide funds for families to care for their own children. Although it was not examined in this study, it is worth considering whether with adequate supports,
financial and otherwise (e.g. childcare), extended families would be willing and able to provide this care so as to prevent children going into foster care. The quote above, however, also relates to the training, understanding and supervision of social workers in the community. This is because what the mother had requested is what is known as a Voluntary Support Agreement (VSA); something that allows parents —when there are no concerns for a child’s protection— to enter into a voluntary agreement with the GN (Consolidation of the Child and Family Service Act, 1997, s. 5). This agreement can include having their children enter government care (e.g. receive respite care) or receive services for a specific period of time. This is because the agreement is to “provide support services in a preventative and proactive way to prevent further intervention” (Government of Nunavut, 2016a, p. 6). Under this agreement, parents are entitled to cancel or revoke their consent at any time and have their children returned to them immediately. As this mother’s experience suggests, this did not occur. Unfortunately, this is in keeping with my own experience of what I witnessed in Nunavut. If this situation occurred as the mother describes, it constitutes an illegal act on the part of the GN as well as an incredible abuse of power by a social worker; one likely related to the social worker not knowing his/her job, or not having adequate training, and or supervision. The mothers’ experiences here were confirmed through discussions with key informants who had been or were currently working within the child welfare system. As one informant suggested, it is possible such situations have occurred. This informant stated:

We haven’t developed a system which would orient and help support people (new Qallunaat social workers to Nunavut) that, you know, when you come (to the territory), this is how we do the work. This is what the expectation (is by the
government). This is the training you have. This is the coaching and support. And yes, you are a team and you’ll work together with families and get their consent. And—you know, but be working as a circle of care around families. I mean, I’m sure that that happens, but I always—I’m also quite sure that there’s places where it doesn’t. And then we’ve never gotten, at the senior level, our act together. (Key Informant 6)

This statement highlights a few things, namely, that Qallunaat workers arrive to Nunavut with their own understandings that may conflict with how the government would like child welfare workers to operate. Further, that there can be a lack of training and supervision provided to these workers when they arrive and work in the territory. Another key informant, when discussing this mother’s experience stated, “I would say, that [there are] some really interesting problems with the kind of front line supervision [in certain locations]” (Key Informant 10). Highlighting the challenge this issue of training and or supervision creates for parents, one mother explained “Once they just take the children away without any explanation, we are at a loss on how to deal with it, or where to start” (Participant 21). Parents can be placed in a particularly difficult situation as they must prove themselves safe and able to care for their children in order to have their children legally returned to their care. The burden of proof rests with parents to then demonstrate they can care for their children, as opposed to it being placed on social workers to show that the parents cannot. This is consistent with research by Bryson (2016) who explained the challenge parents can face in these situations. She stated, “the return of custody in child welfare is akin to applying for a loan with an unfixed rate of interest and varying terms” (Bryson, 2016, p. 2082). This highlights how powerless
mothers can feel throughout the child welfare involvement—including after apprehension, when it does occur.

It is important to note here that the concerns for child welfare presented by the mothers was in no way focused on specific social workers. Instead, they were related to experiences that mothers had over the course of their lives with child welfare. It is also not to suggest that the social workers who had worked in the community were not kind, compassionate, and knowledgeable in their jobs. The interviews with mothers in this study does, however, present serious issues with the role and approach of child welfare social work in the territory in general. Notably, key informants and those working in and around this field in Nunavut were ultimately in agreement with the mothers on many different points. Social workers themselves often struggle with the role and work they are required to perform. This has been a long-standing problem within social work in Nunavut (Johnston, 2009). Importantly, some key informants who had worked in the field of child welfare in Nunavut commented on having to leave the job because “I’m quite an ethical person and I can’t do a job unless it coincides with my personal values” (Key Informant 5). This suggests, the work this informant was expected to do was not perceived to be ethical. The work was also described as particularly challenging for those who were born and raised within the community. One informant described the hardest part of the social work job as “Just...not seeing changes happening” regarding positive impacts on families (Key Informant 11). In effect, this suggests that the child welfare system, despite the work of well-intentioned and hardworking social workers, was not addressing the problems the same system was set up to resolve.
Albeit, the challenges community social workers are up against, given the approach to child welfare—or the system itself—were described as vast. One key informant commented:

Just the administrative challenges of the system [were large]...Much less trying to help organize a vision of what child welfare might look like and recognizing that there’s—from the lived experience of Inuit, quite a resistance to the government’s involvement with their families. (Key Informant 6)

This same informant also stated:

Those frontline workers end up with this huge scope of responsibility as well as family violence. And so not only do they have a broad scope of responsibilities, but it’s all kind of at this deep end of the system. So we recognized that we needed a lot more Inuit workers that were family support workers, outreach workers and that could help where there were families who were having challenges to address those. (Key Informant 6)

These comments highlight the challenges and difficult work social workers must contend with “at the deep end.” It is here that social workers are faced with some of the largest and most complex social problems in Canada. Within this context, transformative structural change does not appear to be something individual social workers can bring about. This is consistent with the description of another key informant, who stated, “I came up North thinking I was going to do all this kind of social work and then I was told, no, it’s child protection” (Key Informant 8). This suggests that although social workers may arrive with certain ideas for how they will work, once given the range of responsibilities in the job, their primary focus on a day-to-day basis remains child
protection work. This is consistent with my findings in previous research (Johnston, 2009). Front line social workers in the communities, such as Arviat, are consequently placed in very difficult situations. They are tasked to enforce legislation as well as provide a number of services to address a range of social issues. The requirement to do so many different things, in addition to being child welfare workers, means social workers are typically overworked. Another informant explained how social workers:

Don’t just do child welfare. They do a lot of adult services work, including guardianship work. That takes up an enormous amount of time. And they do everything from driving clients to appointments, to providing some monetary relief, to investigating a child abuse matter, to dealing with an Elder with dementia. There’s no end to the responsibilities they have, and they do it oftentimes in isolation. (Key Informant 7)

This large job occurs within a context of very few other resources. In many cases, social workers have only what they bring with them to the role; their education, experiences, and the skills they have attained over time to work with families. This same informant stated:

These are people who do, by and large, with the resources that they have, an excellent job, are, you know, really focused inasmuch as they possibly can be, you know, with respect to doing the kind of preventative and supportive work with families as they possibly can, you know. (Key Informant 7)

This is consistent with previous research regarding social work in Nunavut (Johnston, 2009; McKenzie, 2016). This lack of resources related to the structure of the department and its organization, resources and operations. Specifically, social workers are in effect,
often the only resource provided to communities. This is likely because in 2017–2018, only 9% of the territorial budget was dedicated to the Department of Family Services (Government of Nunavut, 2017). This funding includes all monies dedicated to income assistance payments—over one third of the entire budget—as well as residential care (e.g. foster care placements), career development (student loans to those entering social work education), and corporate management and any territorial poverty reduction initiatives (Government of Nunavut, 2017). In my experience, this can mean social workers are, in effect, an ‘expense’ within the Child and Family Services budget. Thus, one or two social workers (more in some larger communities and in the territory’s capital), are often on their own when it comes to addressing challenges within communities. They typically have no budget of their own to support families. Their supervision is commonly provided by senior social workers in regional centers via telephone, and system-wide decisions are typically made in Iqaluit, where the Department’s headquarters are largely situated. The result is a top-heavy system (i.e. financially, administratively etc.) built on the backs of social workers and their individual capacities. This strain on workers has led to many social workers ‘burning out’ or finding they are unable to continue working after a period of time, often in part due to the emotional toll of working within a system they do not necessarily agree with (Johnston, 2009; Johnston & Tester, 2015; McKenzie, 2016).

What may be surprising to some, is that everyone interviewed within this research agreed that the existing child welfare system in the territory is in need of substantial change. Recognition of the issues plaguing the system was understood at a range of different levels within the Government of Nunavut (GN). In fact, some key informants held significant authority in the GN and yet demonstrated a strikingly similar or parallel
frustration to the mothers involved in this study. Social workers, both past and present, recognize these challenges, and yet still do their best to provide support to families where they can. However, as one key informant explained:

For a community, like the size of Arviat, two permanent social workers is not enough...Casual social workers come and go all the time on contract. And it depends on how often they’re there and I think that—how do I say it—the shorter time they’re there—it’s harder because [families] don’t often get used to a new social worker. And they don’t, like—they’re not much help” (Key Informant 8)

Consequently, the reliance on temporary social workers from southern Canada can be problematic as it can mean an increased workload on local or permanent social workers. For those social workers who work within their own communities, where they have long-standing relationships, the work can be that much more difficult (Johnston & Tester, 2015). Knowing the community members and being intimately connected to the community means it is “not a fun job” (Key Informant 8). Social workers are also not always provided direction on some contentious issues, such as what constitutes a mental health ‘file’ and or what can or should be passed along to a mental health worker (where one exists). This matters to workers because it means “we leave our frontline staff to duke it out and our regional managers similarly to—and some of them will make a decision” (Key Informant 6). It can further mean social workers unknowingly take on more work than they need to, or should be, given their already large caseloads. This lack of direction and supervision on issues such as whether they should or should not be ‘taking a file’ also reinforces many of the problems associated with child welfare already pointed out by the mothers involved in this research.
When these problems facing social workers in the community are taken together with the mothers’ explanation that the existing approach is not a culturally relevant, nor does it focus on supporting families, it is perplexing as to why the GN’s Department of Family Services priorities do not appear to have been adjusted. Instead the focus continues to be on staffing, and not structural change. As one key informant explained:

The government of Nunavut itself is a highly-bureaucratized organization. Its administrative support systems are very difficult and complicated to navigate through. So even in terms of the basics around people having offices and places to live or a vehicle to, you know, go out and be providing services, all of these things will be kind of administrative challenges that can use up an enormous amount of time which, of course, is a direct competition, then, with regard to service delivery. (Key Informant 10)

This perspective is important because it points to the challenges in terms of both structure and service delivery the GN faces, but will also continue to face, if this approach remains where it places its energy. Another informant summed up the problem as:

Within the department it’s, frankly, about being fixated on the kind of administrative activities in terms of, you know, when children are being apprehended, well, where do they go? And, what arrangements are made in looking after them, and how much is that going to cost? And, you know, who’s doing what. So, you know, it’s very, very focused, then, in terms of case management. But really, in terms of asking the kind of broader questions around, you know, what’s needed in order to support, you know, Inuit children and
families and, you know, and the kind of family development sort of basis to this, those conversations are not occurring. (Key Informant 10)

This points to a large gap in terms of what is not occurring within the Department of Family Services in the territory; namely that structural change, so as to better support Inuit families, is not occurring. Instead, the focus remains on maintaining the existing system—despite an awareness by the GN for its serious inadequacies. Another key informant reinforced this perspective and explained that although it is common knowledge that substantial changes to the child welfare system are necessary, there remains a poor, if not a complete lack of, political appetite to make them happen. Consequently, the focus of the GN as described by key informants is not on how to improve the system, or how to make it culturally relevant to the Inuit families it is supposed to serve, but rather on just keeping it going. Summed up, the issue is one where “you’re building the bus as you’re driving it or whatever. It’s not like you can stop” (Key Informant 6). Almost word for word, this same sentiment was expressed in my previous research in the territory almost ten years ago (Johnston, 2009). It appears little has changed in this time. As another informant explained, “Everything’s based on real cost savings. So you don’t invest in new resources because you can’t tangibly demonstrate savings. Well, that kind of thinking’s never going to get you anywhere” (Key Informant 7). This suggests that the child welfare system has become fixated on how to cut costs, as opposed to focused on how to fix what is widely known to not be working. Importantly, another informant stated:

There just isn’t the capacity in Family Services to provide those supports (those beyond child protection services). And I think that there is a hesitancy on the part
of everyone in the system, all the way up to the senior levels of government, to grow Family Services, because there is this perception, if you give them (the Department) more money, they’re going to hire more social workers. And the role of social workers here is child apprehension or messing around with families in a negative way. And they don’t want any more of those people. So why would you build a system any more? They want to keep it limited. They want to keep it hobbled. (Key Informant 6)

This suggests the cost cutting may be an intentional act and serve as a means for limiting the reach of child welfare, or as a means for addressing concerns for the approach of child welfare itself. This same informant stated, “I think it’s a really fundamental issue, because there’s no vision of anything other than child apprehension, that it’s—that there isn’t a sense of how it could be grown out” (Key Informant 6). Such a perspective highlights how little attention the GN has placed on supporting families and subsequently, keeping families together. Research concerning child welfare in Canada points to a lack of political will towards change, a range of governance issues, and a technical inflexibility all of which suggest governments prefer tinkering with existing systems in a range of ways, from changes to policy, to the occasional adjustment of legislation, but not necessarily altering them in such a way that improves outcomes for children (Montgomery, Badry, Fuchs, & Kukulwe, 2016). This signals a reluctance to truly support families. Perhaps the greatest example of this is the ongoing struggle for funding of child welfare services for Indigenous children and youth on reserve resulting in multiple compliance orders by the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal (First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada [FNCFCSC], 2016).
5.4 Theme: Desire for Change (Culture & Community)

5.4.1 Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ)

Increasingly, the GN has indicated it wishes to incorporate Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ) or Inuit traditional knowledge, and Inuit culture within government services in the territory (see Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit Katimajiit, Government of Nunavut, n.d.a). Unfortunately, only small adjustments to the Child and Family Services Act have occurred. Where changes have been made, these appear to have been focused on increasing the consistency of the legislation with other jurisdictions (within southern Canada), rather than changes to ensure the legislation was more consistent with Inuit culture in Nunavut. For example, the legislation now includes a section concerning the protection of children from family violence and child pornography, an adjustment of court time lines for social workers to follow, and lays out guidelines for the support of youth—something that had previously been absent in earlier legislation and ruled as unconstitutional (Consolidation of the Child and Family Service Act, 1997; “Nunavut fixes,” 2011; Varga, 2014). What could have been significant changes, such as the inclusion of an entire section on Inuit societal values, likely offers only minimal impact on practice given that it offers no real direction for its use. For example, the Act states, “Inuit societal values may be used or incorporated in the administration or interpretation of this Act” (Consolidation of the Child and Family Service Act, 1997, s. 3). Given the large number of Qallunaat employed by the Department of Family Services as described in previous chapters, how this statement is translated into day-to-day practice is unknown. Further, the definition concerning what is in the “best interests of the child” still does not include specific reference to a child’s extended family or to their
community, but instead only to their parent, family and “cultural ties” (Consolidation of the Child and Family Service Act, 1997, s. 3). This ignores the larger relationships that some Inuit have identified as important to connections through space and place, and those that contribute to their overall wellbeing (Kral, 2003). Further, the GN has kept in the legislation what can be understood as an escape hatch for itself so as to avoid committing to providing support to families as well. For example, the principle “children removed from their family should be provided with a level of care adequate to meet their needs, within available resources, and consistent with community standards” offers this option (Emphasis added) (Consolidation of the Child and Family Service Act, 1997, s. 2(m)). This allows the GN to make decisions without putting additional resources forward. Where resources are not available or have not historically been available, there is no requirement on the GN to offer them. Consequently, families that require resources to remain together, may not necessarily receive them. In my experience, this has largely been the case. From a government perspective, such disclaimer is understandable. However, without a commitment elsewhere, there is nothing that suggests the GN will alter its course and focus its attention and resources on family support services. It is noteworthy that the Act requires child protection workers take a child’s “cultural, linguistic and spiritual or religious upbringing and ties,” into account when deciding what is in a child’s best interest (Consolidation of the Child and Family Service Act, 1997, s. 3). It states there must be a “recognition that differing cultural values and practices must be respected in making that determination” (Consolidation of the Child and Family Service Act, 1997, s. 3). Although this signals a recognition that many child protection workers in the territory are non-Inuit, it arguably appears to read as if it were written for
Qallunaat child protection workers—and not Inuit workers (Consolidation of the Child and Family Service Act, 1997, s. 3). This notion that social workers should recognize differing cultural values and practices, takes for granted that this is even possible as well.

Importantly, beyond the statement that Inuit societal values and practices must be respected, no other real inclusion of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ) is not found within this legislation. Further, what employing ‘respect’ for these values and practices means in practice can be highly subjective. This is despite this legislation being revised numerous times since it was adopted in 1997 in advance of the creation of Nunavut in 1999. This suggests how little the incorporation of IQ is likely to be implemented within the GN’s Department of Families as well. Thus, it is not surprising that the existing approach to child welfare remains one understood to be a Qallunaat model by the mothers in Arviat. This is consistent with the work of de Leeuw (2014) as she describes child welfare in British Columbia. She associates suggestions concerning the importance of integrating and recognizing Indigenous identity and community and culture with rhetoric, as little discussion for how to employ this within child welfare has been held (de Leeuw, 2014).

The minimal incorporation of IQ within Nunavut’s child welfare legislation, and the mothers’ perspective that child welfare is not consistent with Inuit culture, cannot be untied from colonialism in the territory. Note the dialogue between two mothers in this study:

Participant 2: We do things the Inuit way and we’re okay. There are people from large cities who don’t understand the Inuit ways who make these decisions for us too. Baa.
Interviewer: Where we (Inuit) are the controlled people?

Participant 2: Yes, and we have no option but to do what he (the GN) says. We can’t work within our own culture for our own solutions. We aren’t given the chance to talk to him (the GN). It’s not right. (Participant 2)

Within the group analysis, the subject of colonialism was discussed at length. The mothers all agreed to this sentiment of being controlled by Qallunaat decision-makers that exist both within and beyond their community. A key informant spoke to this point and explained, “Just like a lot of the communities don’t speak Inuktitut. Like here, I think 90-something percent of the time we speak Inuktitut” and yet, as was previously described, the majority of those employed in decision-making positions within the community are English-speaking Qallunaat born outside the territory (Key Informant 11). One mother stated, “We Inuit were quiet when Qallunaat are taking over. They don’t ask what we think.” (Group Analysis 1). This reinforces the description by Kuptana (1993) regarding ilira as previously described. A key informant commented on this same notion of lack of power attributed to Inuit and lack of Inuit representation within decision making. For this key informant, this held direct implications for mothers in terms of their parenting and discipline, as previously described.

Importantly, discipline has been described as something that Inuit have traditionally enacted slightly differently from Qallunaat. Traditional forms of discipline employed by Inuit have been described as involving a dependency and emotional vulnerability that were necessary to creating interdependent communities (McElroy, 1975). In keeping with this, the story by Arviarmiut Elder Mark Kalluak of a little boy named Kaugjagjuk, who is physically abused and neglected, is often told to Inuit children
to encourage them to be kind to everyone; emphasizing how one might need another person’s help at a later date (Karetak, Tester, & Tagalik, 2017). As previously mentioned, a sensitivity to shame through tactics that involve teasing, as well as ignoring a child’s behavior, has also been described to have historically been used to encourage positive behaviour and the approval of others (McElroy, 1975). Briggs (1970) explained (in what she assumed was a solely Qallunaat audience for her text):

[A] child was not punished in our sense of the word. Adult disapproval of children’s actions was often clear to see, and sometimes, especially if a child were persistently obstreperous and tended not to heed ordinary instruction, strong pressure to conform might be exerted in the form of false threats... [e.g.] ‘The kapluna (Qallunaat) will adopt you, he likes disobedient children.’ (p. 140)

This threat of giving Inuit over to Qallunaat is something I have experienced in my work in Nunavut. Such threats highlight the risk Qallunaat social workers pose to Inuit children. Importantly, this form of parenting continues today.

Turning to Elders to learn traditional parenting and disciplinary techniques, as well as how and when to apply them was understood as important by many of the mothers. As one mother explained, “the Elders know about parenting, about disciplining, the traditional levels. There are different levels of applying forms of discipline. For instance, you can give a warning, and you don’t spank a 29-year-old person” (Participant 2). Specifically, one Elder explained, “I first state my issue(s) to my child, very briefly, then when the talk-back and the arguing from the person starts, I will ignore it and not respond at all” (Elder 3). Unfortunately, Qallunaat social workers could interpret a caregiver ignoring a child or child’s behaviour as consistent with a neglect of a child’s...
physical or emotional needs. This form of discipline can involve consequences for children as well:

In the old days, when we were ready to have our children, our parents guided us with rules that would be applied. They would outline the ways in which we were treat our children, for example. Our parents would ensure we knew of these things ahead of time. If you don’t do these things with the children, this will be the consequence, that sort of thing. They would explain to us what to expect and how it could turn out if we aren’t observant. (Elder 2)

Elders were understood to provide highly valuable information that guided mothers’ parenting. As one mother stated “When [my] father told me how to raise kids and how I [was] suppose[d] to raise them (to encourage independence), I opened my eyes and I let my kids do their things on their own” (Participant 11). Elders advised parents to encourage their children and youth to be independent. This advice, however, is provided within a vastly different social context than it was historically given to parents. One possible consequence of this may be the continued value of child and youth independence, but without the supportive network that would have traditionally been available or provided, or the smaller community surrounding children or youth, to ensure such independence is guided adequately or happens safely. As one key informant explained, “The number of kids there are here, like it seems to be going out of control, especially at night, the kids are on the streets, no supervision—even little kids. That’s scary, that they’re damaging properties too (Key Informant 11). As this tends to be a perspective often possessed by Qallunaat concerning the freedom allotted to Inuit
children and youth, I think it is important here to indicate this informant was Inuk. Elders agreed with this sentiment. One Elder explained how historically:

Raising children well was very important. The teachings began when the children are very young. In fact, it began as early as in pregnancy. The in-laws and the parents of the pregnant person would provide instruction on what was expected of her to raise her child in the proper manner. These discussions would occur during the woman’s pregnancy. We no longer do that within our society. (Elder 2)

As this Elder explained, raising children through instruction of parents may not be occurring to the same extent today as it did previously. Another Elder concurred, “Our parents used to teach us thoroughly, disciplined us and raised us the very best way they could. Our parents made sure we were taught about sad or serious situations during our childhood” (Elder 1). These teaching involved many things, including the importance of naming as previously discussed. Such teachings are understood as important to the development of the child:

When it comes to parenting or even grand-parenting, adopting or giving names to child, you typically don’t just name your child; one must consult about these matters and know where the name come from such as their background and we go to our ancestors for those answers. It was a very useful avenue for obtaining knowledge. For example, concerning my Inuktitut name; who am I named after? Why? These sorts of questions arise. (Participant 2)

One of the Elders offered an important example of where passing along certain teachings, such as naming, can become complicated and impact relationships. This Elder described
how the naming of one of her sons, led her to not feel any love for him, and consequently, meant that he experienced a very difficult life. This Elder understood it as:

   My love (for him) was empty. The sayings and predictions from the named person really can come true. So make sure that when a person gives a name to a child and the named makes a prediction, beware! If some older person gives a prediction, then pay attention to what they say. It could become real. If the named Elder, a mother, Grandmother, a father or a Grandfather tells you the future, it will happen the way they predict it. (Elder 2)

The description of the failed relationship between this Elder and her son was associated with negative traits possessed by the person she had named her child after. The warning stands to ensure Inuit parents name their children after well-loved and respected people within their families. It also requires an understanding or knowledge to be passed between generations. This teaching hinges on the importance of relationships within Inuit communities, as consistent with the work of Kral (2003).

   Indeed, kinship relationships are intrinsic to the transmission of traditional knowledge, and consequently to how a child is raised. One informant explained how children are not cared for by extended families in the way that Qallunaat are. Instead:

   Third cousin, like that. They’re just ‘cousins.’ And then once you get to, like, your second cousin you go back [to ‘just cousin.’] Here is an example. My—this is me, this is my dad, his uncle. His uncle, instead of calling him my great-uncle, I would call him my ‘grandpa.’ (Key Informant 9)

By referring to second, third and fourth cousins as ‘just cousins’ and great-uncles as ‘grandpas,’ along with adjusting of other associations of relations to children, the
boundaries between immediate and extended family becomes intentionally blurred. It means:

Everybody raises each other’s children. All my nieces and nephews I would treat the same as my children. I will scold them the same as my children—I would teach them right from wrong. Treat them as my own child...And so, when we’re, when a situation comes up in the Inuit culture, say there was a case where a child was being abused, family members would gather together and talk to the individual and be there to support them to stop that behaviour, to protect the child and stop that behaviour. Sometimes they would take the child. (Key Informant 9)

This again speaks to the involvement of family members in the protection of children. Families can play a key role in monitoring child and youth wellbeing and are often understood as tasked with the responsibility to intervene if there is a behavior or issue that may impede the proper care of the child(ren). This comment also speaks to the need to protect these relationships as protective elements for children. It points to the importance of Inuit culture to the protection of children, as well as how the transmission of this knowledge and approach to protecting children has continued over time.

Where families lack an understanding of IQ or lack the family relationships to support the passing of such cultural knowledge between generations, the community may become more involved. For example, the school in Arviat is attempting to incorporate Inuit traditional knowledge within the classroom. The Department of Education in Nunavut has developed a framework for incorporating IQ within the elementary and secondary levels. This includes teacher guidelines and manuals, as well as lists of competencies for their application. This approach has been described as one that is:
Generic in nature. [It serves to] transcend subject-specific content areas, and result[s] in the application and transfer of specific learning to new contexts and situations. This approach to learning is designed to focus on the development of complex intellectual (metacognitive) skills and lead students to transformational ways of thinking and processing. (Nunavut Department of Education, 2007, p. 49)

It has been described as having positive scholastic results and experiences for Nunavut students (Ayres, 2012). Mothers commented on this inclusion of IQ within the school system. One mother stated, “I got so excited. Two of my kids were getting IQ awards like almost every month—two of my kids for 12 months, I was so happy about that” (Participant 8). A key informant discussed how the school also conducted outreach to work with parents by hiring Elders to help teach parents and intervene with children and youth where there are issues that impact the school, or a child’s schooling or performance. This informant stated, “With the school, I know they have Elders working there and the Elders go and do home visits, talk to the parents and try and correct the child’s behaviour and stuff like that. And that seems to be working really well for them” (Key Informant 9). Similar support has been provided through child welfare in Arviat—but only when it was court mandated. A different key informant explained how this support through the child welfare system was arranged, “[There was a] hired homemaker for a mother because it was court ordered and [they] hired an Elder because she has knowledge to pass on to the mother. And the mother found that very helpful” (Key Informant 8). This same informant stated:

More than one time I’ve heard [mothers] say that, “I was never taught.” And, like they just need some guidance into like, if you do this or that or like, do hands-on
learning. I think, because even for me, hands-on I learn more that way, and I think a lot of Inuit learn better that way. (Key Informant 8)

This provision of support appears to be positive. However, it is also perplexing that such support can occur regularly through the school but must be court mandated to occur through the child welfare system. That this support is received so positively by parents is also consistent with the mothers’ perspectives that additional help for parents is needed and should be made available.

That support can be provided by Elders to mothers, through to children and youth, can be of benefit to all involved. One key informant explained how Elders specifically appreciate the opportunity to connect with children and youth. She stated: “A lot of these Elders are isolated in their own homes, they can't do stuff. So, what can you [do?]...show up, have tea with me and do my dishes, shovel my steps” (Key Informant 12). In exchange for these tasks, Elders are typically willing to provide support or advice to younger people. The benefits to Elders in terms of having visitors and remaining connected to young people may be great and important to their mental wellbeing and to their overall health. Research suggests those who are aging may experience loneliness (Perlman, 2003) that can be off-set by social participation (Betts Adams, Leibrandt, & Moon, 2011). It can be particularly important to share food. As one mother explained:

When I have visitors, children and lady friends, I welcome—to my table, try and eat with them. That helps to eating with somebody. And little bit of food is still going to come when we share it. That’s the culture we have in Inuit culture. If we give, we get. Like, someday we’re going to give it—get it back. (Group Analysis 1)
This sharing of food with wisdom or advice appear to be key ingredients in the support women provide to other women in the community. As another informant explained, the connection between women is one of mutual empowerment. Or, “once you see other women being empowered, then it tends to—it’s like a little bit of leaven—a whole loaf, you know. It just keeps growing” (Key Informant 13).

Despite a recognition for the importance of IQ by almost all the mothers (except one), and that the vast majority of the mothers understood what IQ meant, and saw it as important and wanted to incorporate it within their parenting, all the mothers (aside from the Elders) struggled to describe IQ or offer an example of what this might look like in practice. All the mothers, however, indicated Elders would be the appropriate teachers of this knowledge. Although this calls attention to the gap in the transmission of knowledge between generations as previously discussed, it also points to a strong desire for increased understanding of traditional knowledge. It is also consistent with Elder Mark Kalluak’s description of the traditional relationships families held with their Elders:

Elders were the main source of keeping social order. They were our supreme guides in everything. When things went wrong, they steered us away from poor decisions and led us onto a happier path. We often heard of incidents where families were experiencing temporary hardships and didn’t know exactly what to do to maintain happiness because they had lost their Elder and had no one to steer them. Elders were extremely important for maintaining social order because of their extensive knowledge of how to keep living a balanced, happy life. For this reason, their teaching continues to be very important for Inuit. (Karetak, Tester, & Tagalik, 2017, p. 43–43)
As expected, Elders offered a range of examples when describing IQ principles and were able to be specific in their descriptions for how to incorporate IQ into parenting. They also indicated a desire to share their knowledge with younger people. For example, one Elder stated:

The term Pilimmaksarniq' (or Pilimakharniq) is trying to say...that's how you should be learning. You too must also know what your mother’s and your father’s previous experiences [were]. That is what you should know; that is what the term is trying to explain...You have to learn as much as you need to...about sewing techniques, about hunting... And not just know about it. Do not just be idle, there is always something to be done (around you). Keeping yourself busy...Hunting skills for the sons if you have them, for daughters, teach her what she has to know, so she will be knowledgeable. About sewing skills, about cooking, about cleaning up—meaning useful skills that would be needed in life. Yes, applicable skills that is required for life. That is what they are trying to say (Elder 1)

Another Elder offered a similar definition, and the following example:

When a child is in need of sleep, he will get cranky. Your mother or your in-laws will then let you know that your child is crying now because he is hungry. After repeating these observations with you a few times, you will know what the conditions are on your own in time. (Elder 2)

Similar examples and definitions were provided for other IQ principles. Elders indicated they were interested in discussing these principles more widely with mothers in the community and how they could be best applied. In response to the question: Are these IQ principles relevant to today? One Elder stated:
Yes! They can be very useful to the mothers and the children, both... they are very real and useful for living... The way they were used for raising children. In the Qallunaat system, the adult age of 18 is very important to them. The people are recognized as adults then. This happens even when the teen is far from ready to be a fully responsible adult he becomes deemed as such. In our ways, we were treated as being the children of our parents for a very long time even at ages 18, 19, 20, we would still get disciplined and spoken to as their children because we haven’t yet learned the concept of having a good life...When the person is your child, you always view the person as your child, you always correct him or help him out as your own, still, no matter at what age. That’s the way it should be. Don’t treat him like the adult [because] the law says he is now. We will be ready to let him go when he is ready...If we ignore how the Inuit survived in the old days using common sense approaches, we too can miss the path to a good life. They are useful even today. Especially for our descendants...we still need to live by them. We’ll still need them in 2222! (Elder 2)

Margo Greenwood, an Indigenous academic, agrees that Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit is relevant today (Karetak, Tester, & Tagalik, 2017). She has explained that although IQ is “uniquely Inuit” the principles and teachings are:

Grounded in relational ways of knowing and being that are anchored in the land, these teachings are relevant far beyond the Inuit context. I strongly believe that all other peoples of this planet, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, can learn much from studying and understanding Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit. (Karetak, Tester, & Tagalik, 2017, p. 221)
In practice, these teachings, as the Elder above explained, highlight not only the distance between two very different worldviews, but also a common-sense utility within Inuit teachings. Her example of the arbitrary adoption of ‘adulthood’ at 18 or 19 years-old in Canada is something that many Inuit and Qallunaat parents alike perceive as not suitable or appropriate for their children. For many youth, being granted access to things at this point, such as to alcohol at 19 years old, may be far too soon, while for others it may be fine. However, here one can understand quite easily how traditional knowledge and Inuit cultural perspectives can come up against Qallunaat culture and logic. In my experience, Inuit youth for example, often drive ‘Hondas’ or all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) when they are younger than the prescribed age of 14 as set out in bylaws, such as those in Iqaluit and Cambridge Bay (The Corporation of the City of Iqaluit, 2002; Hamlet of Cambridge Bay, n.d.). This is because within Inuit culture, the parenting of children into adulthood is largely dependent on the development of each individual child, as opposed to an approach associated with a general policy that may not suit all individuals or families. As Elders Atuat Akittaq and Rhoda Akpaliapik Karetak have explained, within Inuit culture rules cannot just be given out in a list, they must be provided as needed, and perhaps most importantly, in context (Karatak, Tester, & Tagalik, 2017). Taken together, this points to a Qallunaat way of thinking and doing things (enacting bylaws and age restrictions) that has historically, and continues today, to be enacted upon Inuit families and communities. It also, once again, represents the limiting of the authority of Elders, parents, and families over their own children.
5.4.2 Support in the Community

Despite all the struggles mothers experience in Arviat, many of the mothers interviewed in this study reported receiving significant support from other women in the community or nearby communities. Many also offered, or wanted to offer, support to other women as well. Some of those who had been in the most difficult circumstances described a desire to help other women, both informally, but also in a more professionalized way as well. Some indicated they would be interested in working professionally as support workers in their communities. Mothers routinely commented on how challenging it can be to access this informal support within the community. This is because so many other mothers are experiencing many of the same problems. Despite this, such caring for one another still occurred. As one mother explained during the analysis, “sometimes we help when we’re being helped” (Group Analysis 1).

Unfortunately, not all mothers can access these same levels of support. Just as extended families can sometimes present the greatest support to mothers, they can also sometimes prevent mothers from getting the help they need. This can be particularly difficult in situations where there has been domestic violence. For example, a key informant described how mothers often experienced:

A lot of abuse. And if somebody tries to stand up for themselves, the family would like attack or something, the person. So that prevents people too, from standing up or seeking help. So there’s really no escape from family. (Key Informant 11)

In some situations, this same informant explained:
The woman [may attempt to] lay charges or whatever against their partner and the family is on her like, ‘How could you do that? It’s your fault. You weren’t listening and that’s why he got mad,’ and things like that. So next time the woman doesn’t want to do anything if there’s another issue. It’s too much pressure and she can’t really escape it. (Key Informant 11)

Such perspectives have led to Inuit organizations to produce materials and awareness campaigns aimed at educating families as to the root causes of abuse in families and communities (Gregoire, 2015). Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada (2006) have stated, “Fear and denial have paralyzed us. Leadership is needed to turn the tide” (p. 1). Unfortunately, leadership by the GN on this issue appears mute beyond promoting a Violence Prevention Month and encouraging Inuit to “learn who to contact if you or someone you know is experiencing abuse” (Government of Nunavut, 2016b, p. 1). As the mothers make clear in this study, this is advice is empty when there are so few resources in place. Specifically, mothers have indicated that they do not contact social workers when in crisis, such as that of experiencing violence, for fear of losing their children. The inability to leave abusive or troubled relationships, or seek help within a community such as Arviat, have led some mothers to repeatedly call for a women’s shelter. In fact, in an Integrated Community Infrastructure Sustainability Plan for Arviat developed in 2011, a safe house/shelter was considered a priority via community consultations (Aarluk Consulting Inc., 2011). Unfortunately, no time frame was identified associated with this need and subsequently, no action has yet been taken on it. Other challenges include mothers not knowing where to turn. The local Wellness Centre provides a range of programs, but some are funding dependent (only operated when there is money to do so).
One mother explained how she refused to meet with social workers at the health centre (child welfare workers), and she instead opted to seek support from the Wellness Centre. She stated, “I didn’t want them [social services] to be involved with my marriage and family problems. I go to the Wellness Centre instead” (Participant 10). This same mother explained:

Those people from Wellness Centre, I talk to them, [about] what is wrong with me. And they seemed to know how I am when I go there and talk to them. I talked to them and get through my problems. (Participant 10)

When asked if this relationship she had with the Wellness Centre was positive or negative in her life, she responded “positive.” This perspective held towards the Arviat Wellness Centre was common. Mothers described the Centre as a helpful and supportive environment for them, but few could speak to their specific programs, and none appeared to be involved in their current programming. Future examination of this relationship between community members and the Wellness Centre might be helpful to understand the degree of involvement of mothers and when this support is sought at the Centre.

The provision of supports for mothers and their families within the community of Arviat faces additional political obstacles. One key informant commented on the Government of Nunavut having “a real desire for traditionally based counselling and healing and supports,” but that this may come more from those associated with the Department of Health, rather than the Department of Social Services (Key Informant 6). This same informant explained how one option in the future for supports could mean “growing the community-based system” where local organizations, such as the Wellness Centre, would be considered to play a vital role (Key Informant 6). This same informant
described an ‘alternative’ to the existing child welfare. S/he stated the goal could be for “the government to get out of the business of trying to do all this [child welfare and social services] stuff ourselves. And to actually provide supports and put money into helping build local capacity” (Key Informant 6). This appears to be a suggestion for the contracting out government support. Research by Dunlop (2006) on this topic suggests the privatization of public services, including the public-private partnerships, are often perceived as cost-effective, but this may not necessarily be the case. Further, a range of other issues indicates this approach is ill-suited to social services, specifically, a lack of public accountability and ability to monitor programming. Dunlop (2006) states, the privatized model of social service provision further “downplays the competitive nature of the market and mask[s] the motives of government as it transforms social welfare from a social rights based public policy to a market commodity” (para. 14). Unfortunately, movement towards a privatized model for Nunavut may be in keeping with how another key informant described the current focus of the GN. This informant stated, ‘The story line over the last 10 years would be, ‘well, you know, sorry, social development, that’s really not our thing.’ It’s all about the resource and economic development’” (Key Informant 10). This same informant also commented on the territory in a follow up email stating:

There is a leadership vacuum regarding social development in Nunavut and the vision of creating a new department (family services) to promote social development is not occurring (a failed venture to date). The major dynamic tensions of culture change, economic/resource development, climate change, etc. are not being adequately addressed by Government(s), Inuit organizations and the
resource sector is contributing to ongoing and major social disruption. The child welfare services are inadequate, crisis oriented and lacking the prevention and early intervention services (e.g. parenting, family support) along with an array of other services to address the critical issues of change, disruption, intergenerational trauma that are occurring within this young rapidly growing population. Overall a recipe for disaster in unprecedented circumstances for this population... In summary—two key observations: 1. How do we support [Inuit] “beneficiaries” through change?; And 2. Social development is about much more than child welfare. (Emphasis added)

This perspective considers the existing economic, social and cultural changes impacting Inuit families and asks what this thesis also questions, how are Inuit being supported through this change? It also points to the contradiction made clear by O’Connor (1973) as previously described. O’Connor (1973) described the economic contradiction or competing needs of the state to simultaneously accumulate capital by way of supporting monopoly industries, such as mining, while maintaining a level of social harmony through state expenditure (legitimation function). This informant points out, alike O’Connor (1973), how the monopoly sector produces many of the social issues and problems (social disruption) that the state must redress (increasing costs to the state). Yet the state requires these monopoly industries to in turn support and provide for its legitimation functions (e.g. child welfare). The state, however, never accesses an adequate amount from these industries to support these functions given the industries’ goals concerning private accumulation (e.g. increasing dividends for shareholders etc.).

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24 Referring to Inuit beneficiaries of the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement
The result in Arviat appears to be one where the GN, without adequate revenues from mining corporations to cover the social costs that stem from mining, tends to ultimately neglect the social needs of families and communities.

5.4.3 Mothers’ Recommendations

Despite the vast range of challenges—socially, culturally, and economically—facing families in Arviat, mothers are optimistic and positive about the changes in direction concerning child welfare for their communities. They expressed an interest in being the drivers of this social change. They do, however, require support to do this work. By drawing on the interview data that was discussed during the two group analyses, mothers developed recommendations for how they could be better supported in their community. They saw this support as something that could be provided by both the territorial and local (hamlet) levels of government, as well as through possible partnerships between their community, mines, and local organizations such as the Arviat Wellness Centre. The mothers’ recommendations have been summarized below within the following three themes:

1. A restructuring of child welfare within the community

The mothers involved in this study do not perceive the child welfare system as supportive or consistent with Inuit culture. Instead, they describe feeling as if they are being policed or surveyed by a Qallunaat system. This monitoring of their parenting created stress for them and led them to avoid social workers for fear of losing their children. The existing system was one that did not offer them any solutions or options for better meeting their needs. The mothers recommended a new model of child welfare for Arviat that involved the following key elements:
• The focus of child welfare should not be centered on investigations, but instead on family healing and strengthening relationships. The mothers believe that strong families, as opposed to child apprehension, should be the foundation for protecting children;

• Child welfare should be centered around an Elders committee that is professionalized (paid) and tasked to make decisions to support and strengthen families. This committee would receive reports of abuse and neglect, rather than these reports currently going to social workers;

• The role for social workers in this new approach would be one that is focused on providing family support, such as offering marital counselling services, and running workshops (e.g. budgeting and financial literacy), and helping to organize and run land-based camps or healing supports for women/men/families;

• Inuit should be involved in the design of the child welfare model and employed as family support workers. Inuit should hold authority associated with oversight of all those involved; and finally,

• Children should remain with their families and stay in their communities. This last bullet constitutes what may be the most important part of the mothers’ recommendations. Notably, all the changes they envision for child welfare in their community must hold Inuit culture, and Inuit control and decision-making as central. It should be noted that the mothers’ recommendations here are directly in line with the 94 Calls to Action offered by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC, 2015b).
2. Community-based programming for families, children and youth

Mothers commented on struggles within relationships, both with their partners and their children. Some of these struggles were related to, and made more difficult by, mining employment (i.e. jealousy, infidelity, financial control, inequitable division of parenting and labour within the home etc.). Programs that could support families, so they may be better able to maintain their employment, without risking the health and wellbeing of their family, were important to them. This included programs for kids and teenagers outside of school, as well as the creation of places for young people to go throughout the year (especially in the summer). These programs were particularly important for those mothers that worked outside the community at a mine. They desired a dedicated space that is always open, safe, and accessible for children and families.

One program the mothers discussed in detail was a hot-lunch offering or community kitchen. This same suggestion was raised by multiple key informants, such as this one that suggested, “Poverty is a big issue here. Maybe have a soup and sandwich—soup and sandwich night, or lunch like every day” (Key Informant 11). During the first large group analysis all the mothers agreed there was a need for a meal-focused program that operated every day of the year and was open to everyone. Although this was perceived as much-needed, it was also understood as only a partial solution to the issue of food insecurity. Mothers understood that Elders would not approve of a ‘free meal’ and, therefore, suggested that this program could involve community members contributing to the meal in different ways. Mothers described an interest in participating in hunting and cooking the meals and suggested this be a training opportunity for them and/or youth. Unfortunately, barriers to the mothers’ idea of a daily meal were identified through
following discussions with key informants and other community residents. A meal-program for Arviat has been long discussed. Unfortunately, access to community infrastructure (e.g. the industrial kitchen at the Arctic College), remain the greatest barrier to community organization on this issue. Decision making regarding this local infrastructure occurs outside of the community (in Rankin Inlet and Iqaluit) and those with the authority to approve such a program have yet to agree to support such an initiative. This lends support to the concerns raised by mothers regarding the colonial decision-making and decision-making power being held by Qallunaat outside of the community. It also suggests that where there may be both a grassroots or local desire and means for supporting Inuit families from within the community, a lack of political will or initiative at the higher regional and territorial levels, acts as a substantial roadblock.

Mothers also expressed a strong desire for more Inuit cultural programming, and opportunities to learn about Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ). They were interested in participating in parenting classes and believed young women should have access to such programs when they are preparing to start a family. Such programs may serve the mothers’ goals of encouraging smaller family sizes so as to ensure parents are better able to support children. Finally, mothers routinely discussed the need for a women’s shelter within their community, but also a place where women can go for support and social and cultural connection to other women. Described similarly to what in southern Canada might be called a recreation or women’s centre, the mothers indicated this infrastructure would require accommodation for a mother and her children for when it was needed (i.e. when fleeing an abusive partner). The mothers perceived this as urgently needed within their community. Being able to access Inuit cultural support at such a place was
understood as important, as well as the ability to use a telephone in private to call one’s spouse at the mine. As one mother explained, having this kind of infrastructure and support can be critical to those in crisis, particularly if that crisis was brought about by that same mother’s behaviour. She stated, “if we can intervene and form a caring compassionate alternative. It could result in changes in behaviour, and not repeat their action” (Participant 2). Having dedicated Inuit staff for this work was considered critical.

3. A focus on the community

The difficulty the mothers described with having to be apart from their children for work, alongside the necessity to also provide for their children—often all on their own, led the mothers to discuss the need for more jobs in the community. Mothers repeatedly commented on the need for the development of more jobs within the community as opposed to the focus on employment at mines. This includes supporting those who do not have employment, as income assistance rates are so low that they are “too hard” on mothers (Key Informants 1, 2). This would go hand-in-hand with increasing the ability of local organizations to support families to meet their own needs. Expansion of the existing daycare and or alternative child care options, and consistent funding for the Wellness Centre would be necessary. Emphasis, the mothers explained, must be on collaboration and working together, in keeping with Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ).

6. Discussion

This study has brought together two phenomena that significantly impact the lives of mothers in Arviat and how they care for their children: namely, employment within the mining industry, and the territorial child welfare system. The findings offer important
insights to these two fields of literature. The major contributions from this work are detailed below.

6.1 Findings

Mothering in Arviat is largely provided by women (with both biological and adoptive relationships to children), including grandmothers (to children and grandchildren), and as mothers, women face a range of issues that can impact their ability to care for their children. Many of these issues are tied to mining employment and the territorial child welfare system. Through this study a range of paradoxes that Inuit mothers experience in relation to caring for children have become apparent. Each paradox is discussed below.

One of the most notable challenges mothers face in the community concerns access to adequate food for their children. These challenges occur despite whether the mothers or their spouses possess what are often considered ‘good jobs’ at local mines, as detailed previously. The food insecurity mothers in Arviat described is consistent with research in the Arctic that has occurred over the past decade (Arriagada, 2017; Beaumier & Ford, 2010; Chan et al. 2006). Between 2007 and 2008 almost 60% of the households with young children (ages 3 to 5 years old) in Nunavut were reported to not have enough food to eat (Egeland, 2009). A new contribution to this literature is that many of these families that experience food insecurity are also those with jobs in mining. This indicates that mining employment does not necessarily address the financial challenges associated with feeding families in Nunavut.

Given the depth of poverty many families experience, as illustrated by the struggles associated with accessing food for their children, this study points to a real
vulnerability of Inuit mothers in particular. This vulnerability can be tied to the realities women can face while working in mining as it remains a globalized industry, typically operating in remote or rural regions. In these locations, Indigenous people often find themselves dealing with the exigencies and logic of an economic and social culture that they are ill-prepared to understand and to deal with. Kuokkanen (2008, 2011) makes the case that Indigenous women are most vulnerable to the negative impacts of globalization. Where there may be few other options for employment, Indigenous women can be positioned to have to accept low-paying jobs (e.g. housekeeping, janitorial work) in mining. Women may also provide significant unpaid domestic labour and childcare at home so as to enable their husbands, boyfriends, or common law partners to maintain their employment at a mine. Yet as Arviarmiut mothers described, a job in mining for one parent does not necessarily provide enough income to support a family. This may be a different situation from other locations in Canada. Although the average annual pay in mining in Canada has been reported as exceeding $100,000 per year, and there are likely families that may be able to live comfortably off such an income, this is not necessarily the case in Arviat (The Mining Association of Canada, 2017). Instead, and as described throughout the last few chapters, a number of factors can make this form of employment less advantageous and more complicated for Inuit. Firstly, the annual salary in Nunavut has been reported to be much lower. Research here indicates it can be anywhere from $35,000 to $66,000 (George, 2011). Further, the exorbitant costs associated with living in the territory, as illustrated by the cost of diapers and baby formula, and the large family sizes and social and cultural obligations to support extended family members and friends (larger dependency ratios), as well as increased housing costs in relation to one’s
employment income, few formalized childcare options, substantial debts due to periods of unemployment and/or housing repairs, and the lower-paid positions typically provided to Inuit, given their lower levels of education and training, all point to greater challenges for Inuit to participate in, and support their families with, this form of employment. In other words, once one is employed, the demands on a family’s income can be excessive, and for a range of social, cultural, and economic reasons, these demands can be far more than a mine employee would typically experience anywhere else in the country. The implication is that even with a job in mining, Inuit mothers can financially struggle to care for their children. This is not consistent with a statement made by Previous Prime Minister Stephen Harper during a northern tour where he announced increased funding for skills training related to mining. He stated:

The North’s rapidly growing extractive industry is driving prosperity and creating demand for local skilled workers…The support being provided today will help aboriginal participants in the North gain the training they need to access the jobs and prosperity being generated by the industry’s growth. (Emphasis added)

(Chase, 2013, para. 4)

Although there are some Inuit who have found higher paying positions within the mining sector, the findings from this study contradict claims made that have promoted mining employment as bringing prosperity to Inuit communities.

While mining has contributed to social, cultural and economic changes in families’ lives in Nunavut, it is not the case that, over time, all families have become better-off. The parallels between the experiences of mothers in Arviat today, with those of Inuit who were involved in mining in the 1950s and 1960s in Rankin Inlet are obvious
(Dailey & Dailey, 1951; Tester, 2016). Many families today live in dilapidated 3-room houses, just as they did when the first families moved to Rankin Inlet to work at the North Rankin Nickel Mine. It appears that similar experiences may have been had by Inuit employed at other mines in the territory. For example, the Nanisivik mine (1976 to 2002) near Arctic Bay is known to have offered lower-level employment opportunities for Inuit, as well as led to some negative social impacts on women and mothers in particular (ReSDA Atlas, 2016). Specifically, researchers with Resources and Sustainable Development in the Arctic (ReSDA) (2016) found:

Social impacts at the Nanisivik mine, as in other mining operations, were noted to be gendered, with more women experiencing domestic violence, sexual harassment and poverty. Changes to marital structure, in part due to poor ability of women to contact their husbands, and the effects of father absenteeism on children were noted by Inuit families. [And] substance abuse, alcohol in particular, became a problem. (p. 4).

Women’s experiences in Baker Lake in relation to the Agnico-Eagle, Meadowbank Mine (2010 to present) also are largely consistent with these impacts (Czyzewski & Tester, 2014). This is again consistent with the findings of Battle and Torjman (2013), who stated:

Jobs in mining generally need higher levels of education and skill than many local workers can provide. The mining industry [in Nunavut] demands that its workers meet certain literacy and numeracy standards. Inuit participation is often limited to the unskilled and semi-skilled jobs involved in the project. These jobs do not offer sufficient financial incentive for some of the unemployed to leave social
assistance (more commonly known as ‘welfare’) once various benefits for recipients are factored in. (p. 4)

They further stated:

Nunavut has committed itself to a strategic approach to reducing gaps between those who are unemployed and available job opportunities. It will take stock of the current labour force in the Territory and compare it to the demands of the labour market. Subsequent initiatives will expand training capacity for mining occupations, in particular. Fortunately, over the past ten years, Inuit participation in mining projects has improved. The advances have come about, in large part, through the implementation of the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement, the signing of Inuit Impact and Benefit Agreements, and increased training by Inuit organizations, governments and mining companies. [However,] while education and market-relevant training are key pathways to economic success, they do not guarantee a life free from poverty. In fact, thousands of women and men across Canada work full time for wages so low that they still end up living in poverty. (Battle & Torjman, 2013, p. 14)

This is consistent with the experiences of many of the mothers in this study. Mothers made it clear that they required additional financial support to raise their children, even with mining employment. Their employment offered salaries that were considered too low to sustain their families given the social, cultural and economic context they faced, and they were not provided adequate support (financial or otherwise) from the state. This is also despite poverty planning being in place in the territory since 2011 (Nunavut Roundtable, n.d.). Taken together, such findings highlight how neither mining
corporations, nor the state—through employment, training, programing, nor additional supports—have adequately addressed the most basic needs of mothers so they may adequately feed and care for their children. Although mining may be considered the greatest ‘economic driver’ in Nunavut, the suggestion that it leads to ‘good’ jobs for Inuit is, therefore, far less certain (Klein, 2012; “The North’s resource boom,” 2014).

The array of challenges facing Arviarmiut mothers point to structural barriers that can often prevent them from being financially independent. Many described how relying on the income of husbands, boyfriends, common law partners or other extended family members as a means of providing for their children, can place them in particularly difficult circumstances, but that they typically had few or no other choices. What women require in order to care for their children is housing, money for food, and often, physical help with their children (childcare). Mining corporations—in fact, all industries in which men are employed—benefit from women who are financially dependent on their earnings. Women not only reproduce (nourish, socialize, educate and generally develop) future generations of labour, their presence in the home supports their partner’s emotional and physical needs so that their partners may engage in employment (Harvey, 2014). Or as Luxton (1980) explained, workers “need the opportunity to re-energize—to reproduce [their] labour power—before [they] go back to work” (p. 45). This support, as unpaid domestic labour, contributes to a worker’s productivity (Harvey, 2014). Women’s unpaid labour in the home also supports the state through the work of raising children to be future labourers and tax-paying citizens. Here we find the first paradox of care that mothers experience. Namely, that mothers require additional financial support to care for children in Arviat. When this support comes by way of their partner working at a mine,
mothers find themselves, in turn, supporting not only their partner’s employment, but the mine itself, as well as the state through their unpaid labour. When women also provide paid labour, as in two-earner households, the demands on them increase even further as they provide both paid and unpaid labour (Lyonette & Crompton, 2015). Regardless of whether a woman is employed in Arviat, however, such labour typically remains an expense borne not by the state or the mine, but by the family, and largely, as this study demonstrates, by Inuit mothers.

Challenges facing Inuit families that stem from mining employment fall on the shoulders of mothers. These challenges disproportionally impact women by way of the labour they must perform to care for their children. This is because men are those most commonly employed in mining and in Nunavut, are typically away from home for two-week (or longer) intervals (via FIFO employment, as previously described in Chapter 1) (Mining Industry Human Resources Council, 2016; Moyser, 2017; Nunavut Bureau of Statistics, 2008; Rodon & Levesque, 2014; Sharma, 2010). Consequently, the work of raising children or “motherwork” that Inuit mothers described as necessary to meet the most basic needs of their children is considerable (Davies, Krane, Collings, & Wexler, 2007, p. 25). Depending on circumstances, this may not only include the daily routine of shopping for and preparing food but may also include visiting family members and friends to ask for food, going to the foodbank, and seeking income assistance etc. This labor-intensive work can be understood as part of a subsistence economy (within the existing mixed economy) of Inuit communities. In it, women share food, buy and trade in a range of material things from furniture and household belongings to parkas and groceries, and provide or receive a range of services (e.g. baking bread, agreeing to be
sexually intimate with someone) so as to care for and house themselves and their children as described in the previous chapter (Kuokkanen, 2011). This is labour that can be largely invisible to men who more commonly possess greater decision-making power over money and resources. Furthermore, the labour required by mothers who participate in this economy (or in other words, what mothers do) to ensure their children have food, clean diapers, a place to sleep etc. is also largely unrecognized or invisible to child welfare workers who commonly assess what mothers can materially offer their children (what mothers have) (Kline, 1993). In other words, social workers’ typically focus on the outcome or results of a woman’s labour, with little attention to, or appreciation for, the circumstances and circumscribed labour that may have contributed significantly to what a woman has. This draws attention to the fact that perceptions and understandings are also a function of class and to be a well-paid and professional social worker in Nunavut is a position of privilege. That social workers in Arviat check to see whether a mother has food in her cupboards illustrates this point. This approach taken by social workers regarding the assessment of what a mother has can be linked an individualistic focus within child welfare (Kline, 1993). Such an approach places responsibility for both a mother’s circumstances (i.e. her poverty), and her capabilities (her perceived ability to provide food)—as proxies for her children’s wellbeing—on her, and her alone. It ignores the structural realities under which women mother. In the process, it serves to devalue the subsistence economy within which women work. As Kuokkanen (2011) explains:

The dependence of capitalist economy on the subsistence sector is characterized by a gender dynamic that has remained largely unrecognized. For example, women farmers have long subsidized male wage labor. In a similar fashion,
Indigenous women’s household production has subsidized the formal market sector… Thousands of ‘dark-skinned housewives’ effectively subsidized the trading post system on the reservation system.” In circumstances where their housework was not regarded as valuable as wage economy, it was not unusual for women to feel isolated and overburdened. It is a well-established fact that women’s economic contributions have a tendency of “counting for nothing.” …Not counting women’s economic contributions, however, is not merely a simple, innocuous oversight. By dismissing subsistence economies as backward and primitive, it is possible to devalue them and make them invisible while at the same time to exploit them to subsidize and uphold the process of capital accumulation. (p. 226–227)

The consequence of ignoring or devaluing the subsistence economy and the work of mothers to care for their children within it, ultimately means the perpetuation of the role of mothers to provide labour for men, corporations, and the state, while receiving no recognition, and little to no support to do so. This is the nature of patriarchy. It locates women in subjugated positions in relation to men, and thereby maintains the existing order. The child welfare system in Nunavut, failing to appreciate the labour of women and factors affecting their labour, perpetuates this order and these relationships. It may punish women (via constant surveillance and the apprehension of their children) who fail to perform within this regime.

The relationship between what is often understood as ‘neglect’ within child welfare and poverty becomes obvious here. As previously described, this link has received considerable attention within literature concerning Indigenous child welfare in
Canada, given the high level of poverty often experienced by Indigenous peoples (Schumaker, 2012; Sinha et al., 2011; Sterritt, 2017; Trocmé, Knoke, & Blackstock, 2004; Trocmé et al., 2005). The underfunding of social supports for Indigenous communities, and the low incomes typically earned by Indigenous peoples, increase the likelihood of child apprehension by social workers from Indigenous families under the category of ‘neglect’ (Macdonald & Wilson, 2016, p.21). Despite the relevance of these observations to Nunavut, policy initiatives have yet to address these realities and circumstances. Instead, in addressing matters of child protection, social workers typically consider families’ material conditions in relationship to existing ‘community standards’ in making decisions about the care of children (Consolidation of Child and Family Services Act, 1997). The lack of focus on the poverty experienced by mothers and the relationship between it and child welfare, is illustrated by the fact that there is no real attention paid to child welfare within Nunavut’s poverty reduction strategy beyond extended support agreements for young adults in care (Department of Family Services, 2014; Nunavut Roundtable for Poverty Reduction, n.d.b). There are no proposed indicators of progress that directly tie poverty reduction to child welfare outcomes (Department of Family Services, 2014). A further weakness of this strategy is that it does not define poverty, nor include any means by which to assess or measure the poverty reduction efforts underway (Crump, 2016). The implication of this is that social workers can continue to define poverty in relation to their own ideological constructions of motherhood, based in dominant and culturally biased beliefs concerning race, gender, and class. This contributes to mother-blaming. Illustrations of this can also be found in child welfare cases concerning Indigenous women that draw:
Upon ideological constructions of the physical home environment [that are considered] 'proper' for raising children. Women whose living situations do not meet these standards are judged as inadequate mothers. A mother is presumed not to be a 'good mother' if, for example, she moves from place to place, or if the place where she lives is not clean and tidy. Such behaviour is taken as evidence of the quality of a mother's care, regardless of whether there is actual neglect or inadequate care of the children. Failure to meet the expectations of the 'proper' home environment provides a ground in itself to deem the mother deficient.' This poses particular difficulties for First Nation women in child protection cases. Once again, the specificity of the application of the 'proper' home requirement to First Nation women takes a "mother-blaming" form. The difficult life circumstances of many First Nation women, which are largely the consequence of historically rooted structures of colonialism and racial oppression, are regarded by judges as indicators of, and risk factors for, inadequate mothering. This is particularly apparent in cases which manifest ideological expectations that a home be an established if not permanent one, and that it be 'clean and tidy.' (Kline, 1993, p. 323–324)

As described in the previous chapter in more detail, mothers in this study pointed out how they were often compelled to move and live in a different house or residence from that of their boyfriends or husbands so as to access enough money to feed and care for their children. They did this because they were not eligible for income assistance if they were living with a spouse who was employed at the mine—regardless of whether the mother had access to any of this money. Thus, mothers face a second paradox of care. Given
their need to access money to pay for food for their children, mothers indicated they often had no option but to move from their home to care for their children. But this same movement and lack of a permanent home can place them at risk for losing their children to child welfare social workers as well. Christensen’s (2016) work has described this link between housing and the child welfare system and the associated risk for mothers to lose their children when they are homeless. In my personal experience, risk assessments within child welfare often require social workers to note the number of times children have moved to different homes within a one-year period. The more moves a family has made, the more ‘risky’ the family’s situation is often perceived to be. Further, when children are apprehended from families living in public housing, it is often the case that the parents are no longer eligible to remain in larger family-sized units (Christensen, 2016). Having to leave a larger unit can then make it difficult to regain one’s children back into their care because the parents may be homeless or no longer have what is considered an ‘appropriate’ home to care for them.

The measures mothers took in order to care for their children, as described in the previous chapter, demonstrate their desperation, but also their desire to protect and care for their children. Often, this included doing or not doing things to protect their children from social workers. It is notable here that despite serious problems within the community, mothers’ fears remained centered on social workers as one of the greatest threats to their families. An example of this was the description by mothers of how they adjusted their parenting (i.e. opting not to discipline their children) for fear this could bring them to the attention of a social worker. Their strategies for protecting their children and maintaining the togetherness of their families are noteworthy. They illustrate
ongoing *ilira* (Kuptana, 1993) or a fear of social workers consistent with research by Dumbrill (2006). These strategies can also be seen as cultural resistance to a colonial state and its associated power. However, the colonial history and experience of ongoing colonialism today, as well as the difficult material circumstances that Inuit mothers face, have not been included or taken into consideration within the current approach to child welfare within the territory. The mothers in Arviat describe the result of this as a child welfare system that does not promote positive, helpful, or supportive interactions dedicated to helping families focus on healing and becoming stronger. Instead, they point to the continuance of adversarial and colonial relationships, built upon inequitable power relations between social workers and the Inuit families they serve.

The desperate situations families often experience in relation to poverty and food insecurity can lead some Inuit to accept mining employment, even though this employment can create a host of other challenges and disrupt family relationships—one of the most important things within Inuit culture (Kral, 2003; Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, 2006). This disruption to relationships can result in circumstances that put families at risk and draw them to the attention of social workers. Where one or both parents are working at a mine and away from home, relatives may play an important role in assisting with child care. But absence from the community for long or intermittent periods of time affects the quality of family relations and can impact the role that relatives might otherwise play in assisting with child care. It can mean ‘burning bridges’ or straining relationships when a mother comes to rely on another family member too heavily. Still mining employment remains an elusive opportunity for many of the mothers interviewed as part of this study. For some, a lack of childcare and the rigid FIFO
schedules that take workers outside the community and away from their children, as described in Chapter 1, remain significant barriers to their employment in this field. Single mothers from Arviat are also largely unable to contemplate employment in the mining industry unless they possess extended family support that includes significant childcare. Further, Inuit women can experience other negative impacts when they or their boyfriends, spouses, or common-law partners work in the mining sector. As previously described, these include increased family violence, substance abuse, and sexual assault and harassment in the workplace (Czyzewski & Tester, 2014; Deonandan, Deonandan & Field, 2016; Gibson & Klinck, 2005; Rodon & Levesque, 2014). This range of problems that mothers can encounter regarding mining employment is consistent with the findings of a report by Women in Mining (WiM) Canada (2010), which pointed to a range of issues associated with mining employment that specifically affect women. This included mines typically possessing male-dominated work-cultures and offering limited role models for women in senior positions (WiM Canada, 2010). When the barriers to mining employment for women are considered alongside the challenges of the work and the disruption to relationships, it becomes evident how the mining industry tends to offer few benefits to Inuit mothers.

Arviarmiut mothers’ participation in the industry is also affected by social and cultural norms and values—as well as family pressures—that place burdens on them to be home with their children. This is consistent with Hays (1996) research. She describes mothers “feeling pushed and pulled in two directions” (p. 145). Hays (1996) states:

A woman can be a stay-at-home mother and claim to follow tradition, but not without paying a price of being treated as an outsider in the larger public world of
the market. Or a woman can be a paid worker who participates in that larger world, but she must then pay the price of an impossible double shift. In both cases, women are enjoined to maintain the logic of intensive mothering. (Hays, 1996, p. 149)

This is consistent with the experiences of many mothers in Arviat concerning mining employment. Some of the mothers that could potentially work at the mine chose not to because it involved leaving their children. This suggests that for many Inuit mothers, leaving their children may mean greater consequences (or alternatively, fewer benefits), than being a paid worker—even under desperate conditions, such as not having enough food. Mining employment outside the community can keep mothers and their children apart; something that the child welfare system can also do in response to reports of abuse or neglect. The separation of children from their mothers, in both of these situations, was described by the mothers as incredibly painful. Gibson and Klinck (2005) have pointed to the challenges families can face given the separation of parents from their children that is often necessary in order to participate in the mining industry. Although internationally, much of the literature concerning child welfare has focused on the impact on children when they separated from their parents, the toll on parents who become involved with child welfare has also been documented (Broadhurst & Mason, 2017; Haight et al., 2001; Rodriguez-Jenkins & Marcenko, 2014; Takaoka et al., 2016). Mining employment and the child welfare system in Arviat both appear to negatively affect the bonds between parents, as well as the relations between parents and their children. The rupture of these relationships is something that has been shown to indirectly make Inuit unwell (emotionally, mentally) given the primacy placed on family and kinship relationships.
within Inuit culture (Kral, 2003). This is because “relational life is paramount for Inuit” and “family life is essential to Inuit conceptions of well-being” (Kral, 2003, p. 434–435). Mothers in Arviat confirmed this as they repeatedly explained how they were ‘okay’ as long as they were with their children. Ultimately, even if mothers may be able to manage mining employment in the short-term, the separation of mothers from their children, and the emotional pain that can be associated with this separation, may make mining employment outside of their communities an unsustainable option for many mothers.

Community-based employment is understandably both required by Inuit mothers due to the pressures placed on them in relation to their provision of domestic labour, but also desired due to the difficulty associated with being apart from their children. Research by Maksimowski (2014) is consistent with these findings. Ballard and Banks (2003) similarly point to the unequal prospects within mining for women, alongside what commonly becomes an increased pressure on women to provide the majority of household labour given male absenteeism from the home when men work in the mining industry. Luxton’s (1980) research pointed to these same issues. The Government of Nunavut appears to be aware of the disproportionate benefits that flow from mining to men and the hardships that mining can create for women and communities as indicated in the Economic Outlook (2013) for the territory. Although this knowledge is not new, mining continues to be perceived as what is “breath[ing] new life” into Nunavut’s economy (Conference Board of Canada, 2018, para. 1). It is this promotion of mining, over other forms of employment that could be largely based within communities, that serves to highlight a lack of gender equity being fostered by the Government of Nunavut via its social and public policy decisions. Simply put, the employment needs of women
are neglected while considerable attention and resources are put toward promoting and subsidizing the mining industry in Nunavut. Consequently, the priority placed by the Government of Nunavut (GN) on mining employment for Inuit, as demonstrated through the funding of training and employment opportunities appears to represent an unjust privileging of policies that most commonly support employment opportunities for (largely) men, as opposed to local community-based jobs for (largely) women (Economic Outlook, 2013). To feed this industry, the promotion of mining education being brought within the high school system, as well as funding put towards mining-related courses through the Arctic College, both described in Chapter 2, which can be set against the very few alternative options for advanced education in Arviat that could lead to community-based employment, as described in the previous chapter, are examples of this point. When taken together with the lack of daycare for children and adequate programming for children and youth outside of school, as described by the mothers and key informants, and the dearth of programs that support women through things such as leaving violent relationships within the community as detailed in the previous chapter, it becomes clear that there are few, if any, programs that help women, let alone those that help women go to work. In fact, Assistant Deputy Minister for Nunavut’s Department of Education was quoted in a recent newspaper article regarding child care in particular: “It's keeping people from being able to work, from being independent, from being able to support their families” (Burke, 2018, para. 15). Although a lack of child care can impact men, because women spend more time caregiving, it disproportionately impacts women and their ability to enter or re-enter the workforce (Milne, 2016; Status of Women Canada,
Therefore, the lack of childcare available to all women who wish to access it in Arviat so they may attain employment, suggests a continued reliance on women to provide it through informal and unpaid means. Thus, the GN can be said to be exploiting women within the family environment (Hartman and Markell, 1980). By maintaining this socially disadvantageous positioning of women, women may find it hard to develop a solidarity with men and vice versa (Hartman and Markell, 1980). In part, this can occur because such positioning can lead to a dichotomized thinking of men vs. women (Gimenez, 2005). A solidarity is needed, however, because as Gimenez (2005) has explained:

Feminist struggles for women’s rights, though important for the attainment of substantial improvements in the opportunities and quality of life of many individual women, do not and cannot substantially alter the status of all women. Women’s success in their struggle for economic, political and civil rights does not alter the material conditions that created the problems that motivated those struggles; it only implies full membership in capitalist society. This is indeed important, for most women, like most men, must work to support themselves and their families. The abolition of gender barriers to education, employment, career advancement, political participation, etc. is a necessary and key aspect of the struggle against the oppression of women. But, as Marx argued, political emancipation and the attainment of political and civil rights are inherently limited achievements because, though the state may abolish distinctions that act as barriers to full political participation by all citizens, it does not abolish the social

25 Having children has also meant mothers in Canada earn less money than those without children as well (Zhang, 2009).
relations that are the basis for those distinctions and are presupposed by the very existence and characteristics of the state. (p. 28).

These social relations include the benefits that flow to industries, such as the mining industry, in relation to the limiting of working class solidarity. The inability of workers to unionize offers perhaps the most obvious example here of such benefits. The result is a reproduction of class relations, where the best possible outcome may be a reduction in the disproportion of women experiencing poverty, but where the dismantling of inequality that is foundational to the existing capitalist economic system does not occur (Gimenez, 2005).

The inequality that can exist within the mining industry, both in relation to those that receive the lions-share of benefits (e.g. shareholders, executives, and investors)\(^{26}\) and the lowest-paid workers, and in relation to men and women, and as evidenced by the distribution and location of employment opportunities as previously described, may be increasingly becoming mirrored within intimate relationships in Inuit families, or at a minimum, creating greater complexity within relationships. Where Inuit families historically divided labour in relation to gender, this division does not appear to have involved patriarchal values and beliefs, even if it did hold power differentials (RCAP, 1996). By this I mean, it does not appear that women were positioned to receive less or be perceived as lesser people than their husbands. However, as Mancini-Billson and Mancini (2007) point out, patriarchal values may be increasingly present within Inuit relationships. They point to Reimer (1983) and the observation that women described

\(^{26}\) Beyond increased profits and high salaries, flow-through shares offer another example of benefits. Flow-through shares enable investors to fund mining operations, while taking on mining-related expenses that can then reduce their taxable income (Natural Resources Canada, 2017).
having felt “more productive and useful when they lived in the camps... [as well as] older women [who] tend to view themselves as more subordinate to men now than they were in the past” (p. 83). However, at the same time Mancini-Billson and Mancini (2007) also explain how increased employment opportunities for women have “create[d] complexities” (p. 223). They described how some men have money to hunt only because of the wage labour provided by their female partners (Mancini-Billson a& Mancini, 2007). Such complexities were found within this study with mothers in Arviat as well. While some women described being the main wage-earner within their home and experiencing frustration with their spouse who did not ‘help out’ or support the family financially, others indicated their spouse was their greatest support. Some mothers described having little decision-making power, and as previously mentioned, many indicated they were often in a position where they were financially dependent on either the state, extended family, and community support, or that of men as spouses, boyfriends, and common law partners. This is consistent with descriptions of patriarchal relationships that can exist within dominant Western society more generally (Connell, 2009). Mothers in Arviat commented on the challenges within their intimate relationships as being one of their main concerns.

It is possible that a significant contributor to the current social, cultural, and economic positioning of women in Arviat, given these complexities, is related to mining employment in the territory. For example, the employment of primarily men at the North Rankin Nickel Mine, alongside the encouragement (and even coercion) of Inuit to adopt Western culture and the consumerism that accompanied it, can be seen as an example of how this form of male-dominated employment (and mining is not the only example) has
contributed to setting the stage for the current positioning of women. Women were immediately cast into a role of ‘housewife’ in Rankin Inlet when their husbands started working at the mine (Tester, 2016). Given the inability for families to maintain their traditional ways of living in this situation, men then became positioned as breadwinners. The nature of intimate relationships, or the ways in which women and men both interacted and came to understand and perceive each other, in this context likely changed. This is an observation that fits with theoretical considerations first articulated by Marx and Engels’ (1846/2004) who claimed that people tend to develop a consciousness of their life through their material circumstances and relationship to production. Swift (1995) has further explained “the positioning of people within society inevitably produces different and conflicting forms of consciousness among them” (p. 18). When men are positioned to be rewarded more than women for the opportunities that are largely directed at them, and women, not rewarded for their labour in the same way (or in any way), it is likely they generate certain thoughts and values associated with this positioning. For example, it may mean that men—and women—come to perceive women as less important, or lesser people, and value the work women disproportionately provide, such as household labour and childcare, less than they value paid work, such as that within the mining industry. Both men and women may then also reproduce these values in subsequent generations. In effect, mining employment may have encouraged the adoption of certain patriarchal values associated with the male-breadwinner model within Inuit families where previously such values may not have existed.

For those mothers in Arviat who wish to work at a mine, many encounter a range of difficulties associated with this form of unemployment. As detailed previously, finding
childcare and child or youth supervision is often a large problem, as is having one’s housing rent increase when employment at a mine is secured (if they are the primary tenant). However, these difficulties can be more than just practical or logistic. They can include having to request support from friends and relatives with whom a mother may have already come to rely on heavily, leaving her to feel guilty or that her needs are burdensome to another person or family. Alternatively, mothers may feel they need to remain in difficult or violent relationships with men or fathers so as to have them provide childcare while the mothers are at the mine. There can be implications for the mothers’ relationships, such as experiencing opposition or frustration on the part of Elders, boyfriends, spouses, and other friends and relatives in the community who might not approve of a mother working at a mine site. As described in the previous chapter, one Elder in this study made it clear that mining employment may be ok for men and single women, but not for mothers, particularly those with young children. A possible implication of this perspective may be some mothers being chastised for their decision to work at a mine. Since family and kinship relationships are paramount to Inuit, it is understandable how mothers may not wish to disrupt these same relationships (Kral, 2003; Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, 2005). These circumstances and the social and cultural realities of this form of employment are consistent with historical research in Northern Canada that has demonstrated how mining has brought with it a “complicated and mixed legacy” (Keeling & Sandlos, 2015, p. 11). In Arviat, mothers appear to begrudgingly accept mining employment for themselves and others in their community. Some indicated they had to accept mining employment, because so few other employment options existed for them (or none at all). Were there a range of alternative
employment opportunities for Inuit within the community, it is possible that many of
these mothers and other family members would opt to not continue working in the mining
industry. This is evidenced by the discussion with mothers during the group analyses, as
previously described, where they indicated a desire for community-based employment.

Beyond the social and cultural realities that can complicate mining employment
for mothers in Arviat, there is also a clear distinction between the material realities of
Inuit families and the perception that mining provides Inuit with ‘good’ jobs. Despite a
growing Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in Nunavut largely due to the mining sector
(Government of Nunavut, n.d.c.; NWT & Nunavut Chamber of Mines, 2018; NWT
Bureau of Statistics, 2017), the number of people who experience some form of financial
difficulty, as demonstrated through increasing numbers of those accessing income
assistance, continues to rise as well (up 37% from 2000 to 2015) (Department of Family
Services, 2016b). The GDP has also been reported to rise in Nunavut from 876 million in
2000 to 2.4 billion in 2016; rising 32 points from 2017 to 2018 (Statistics Canada, 2009b,
2017d). Although the rise in those accessing income assistance can also be attributed to a
quickly expanding population as previously described, it is clear that many Inuit continue
to struggle financially despite a quickly growing economy. Further, many Inuit lack the
well-paid employment so as to not require income assistance. As demonstrated in the
previous chapter, mothers in Arviat, regardless of whether they or their spouse or
boyfriend had a job in mining, however, often experience financial difficulty. Taken
together with salaries that do not necessarily support Inuit families, as described in
Chapters 2 and 5, one can see a mining job is not necessarily good enough. Further, the
industry may not necessarily be employing enough Inuit to make substantial impact to
communities through employment either. As detailed in Chapter 2, the number of Inuit employed through mining fluctuates. However, in 2016, there were approximately 388 jobs occupied in the mining sector by those from Nunavut. This was less than 20% of the total available positions within the industry in the territory (NWT & Nunavut Chamber of Mines, 2018). Given this situation, the Baker Lake Hunters and Trappers Organization (2017) has serious concerns regarding mining. Where Inuit from Baker Lake work at the same mine as those from Arviat, as described in Chapter 2, this is particularly relevant. They have stated:

The majority of jobs at the Meadowbank mine have gone to non-Inuit…The Meadowbank mine also has an ethnically stratified workforce — almost all high-paying management and professional positions are filled by non-Inuit, while the majority of lower paying entry-level positions are filled by Inuit…The community of Baker Lake has not received substantial permanent benefits from the Meadowbank gold project. While the employment opportunities have been very helpful for many families, when the gold runs out, we will not have any lasting benefits. We have seen no major improvements to our infrastructure or housing stock as a result of mining. (Baker Lake Hunters and Trappers Organization, 2017, p. 1–2)

Where mining has been understood, or at minimum promoted, as a remedy to the economic problems facing Inuit in Nunavut, such realities are rarely recognized (Chase, 2013). As detailed in Chapter 2 and through the interviews with the mothers in Chapter 5, the reality for many families is one of poverty. Consequently, when mothers face financial difficulty, it is often the case that their challenges are understood as an
individual problem, rather than a structural one. The unwillingness of the foodbank to support families that have some employment relationship with the mine is an example of this. A woman experiencing financial difficulties may be blamed for a) not attaining a job at the mine and/or b) not being able to manage her money. Further, when one opts not to work at a mine, or quits a job that she or he may be considered fortunate to have, this person can be framed as ‘undeserving’ or unwilling to work. This perspective dismisses the context that may make such employment unsuitable or unsustainable all together. Offe and Ronge (1975) describe this as one of the structural contradictions associated with capitalist societies, namely, that people must be:

Willing to accept whatever material outcome emerges from their particular exchange relationship—particularly if this outcome is unfavorable to them. Such outcomes must, in other words, be attributed to either natural events or to the virtues and failures of the individual (individualism). (Offe & Ronge, 1975, p. 146)

Research indicates that this individualized perspective results in mothers being blamed for their circumstances (Elliott, Powell, & Brenton, 2013). Further, where a mother may face real difficulties (e.g. with budgeting her money), it is worth considering whether this blame placed on her may also be more readily accepted by her. This is an individualizing of structural problems, or the ideological belief that an individual’s circumstances are the responsibility of this person and this person alone. If one is to accept this position, it follows that individuals are both the cause of their difficulties and at the same time, they hold the only possible solution. This perspective holds the potential to then serve to

27 What one exchanges for one’s labour.
strengthen support for the same things that cause this difficulty a person experiences (i.e. wage labour within a capitalist economy etc.) (O’Connor, 1973). In other words, by encouraging people to believe their problems are caused purely by their own doing, and not a result of structural conditions, people may be more likely to also seek ‘a fix,’ not from the state (e.g. by accessing income assistance, or protesting etc.), but through their own individual resources and capacities. In this situation, the mine and the state are exempt from responsibility for the problems people experience. People may turn to family and friends, or attempt to gain employment, such as at a local mine. For those that can overcome their difficulties, it is possible that their experiences and situation may then serve to reinforce the same individualized perspective towards social problems, such as poverty.

A perception appears to exist in Arviat that families employed at a mine are making substantial salaries, equivalent to those of teachers and nurses. This, as examined in the previous chapter is not typically the case. This perception, however, can contribute to families being considered ‘undeserving’ of help within their community. This is evidenced by some of the mothers participating in this study and their children have experienced discrimination when trying to access support systems in the community, such as at the local food bank. This can be related to research by Elliott, Powell, and Brenton (2015) in their examination of how gender, race and class intersect with the ideologies of mothering. This discrimination suggests mothers are perceived as “ultimately responsible for and capable of ensuring their children’s wellbeing, [but] then are also to blame for any problems their children encounter” (p. 367). Callahan and Swift
(2012) explained how these beliefs can then be associated with what are perceived to be ‘good citizens.’ They state:

> We are reminded daily about the risks around us and what we should do to avoid them. Good citizens are increasingly defined as those who manage their risks. Those who cannot are viewed more and more as irresponsible and a drain on the public purse if they need help or if the public must take action to protect itself from their activities. Attention has shifted from the ‘needs’ of the vulnerable to the ‘risks’ they create for themselves and others. The solutions arising from risk thinking are to shore up the commitment and skills of individuals so that they are self-managing citizens, or to segregate them if they will not comply. This attention to individual responsibility to manage an increasing number of risks fits with neoliberal thinking about citizenship and achieving reductions in the welfare state apparatus. (Callahan & Swift, 2012, p. 194)

This suggests that some local support organizations, such as the food bank, may function based on beliefs in keeping with neoliberalism (a commitment to free market capitalism), and or the concept of rugged individualism\(^\text{28}\), over that of cooperation and interdependence. Among other things, these ideological perspectives focus on individual responsibility, rather than social support, a reduced government role in both expenditure and scope, as well as privatization and free trade to enable the private sector to meet the needs of citizens. These are beliefs not typically associated with an Indigenous worldview (Hart, 2010). In other words, some community members, such as those in

\(^{28}\text{Rugged individualism is described by the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary (2018) as “the practice or advocacy of individualism in social and economic relations emphasizing personal liberty and independence, self-reliance, resourcefulness, self-direction of the individual, and free competition in enterprise”}

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control of the food bank, with regard to the way food is understood and treated in Inuit culture, may possess beliefs that are more aligned with Qallunaat culture, than with Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ Task Force, 2002). This suggests that some of the supports within the community operate similar to the child welfare system—via a Qallunaat perspective or approach. As the mothers described in the previous chapter, this approach is understood to form the basis of adversarial relationships, as opposed to strengthening families and building community togetherness. As Swift (1995) explains, “individualism provides the logic and moral force supporting the delegation of caring responsibilities to individual parents, regardless of the resources needed to carry them out” (p. 101). This form of individualism—an emphasis on individual initiative and responsibility—is also consistent with the ethos of mining, risk taking and the ‘frontier spirit or culture’ that tends to drive new developments within the mining industry (Bazzi, Fiszben, & Gebresilasse, 2017). It can be argued that the result is a criminalization of poverty; where even children are unable to access food in a place where the distribution of food is the primary purpose, and where the legitimacy of a mother’s need is questioned or denied. In this way, “mothers are held to account for the nurture of the entire human race—poor women are figured not as casualties of social and economic inequality, but instead as producers of the structural circumstances from which they suffer” (Bryson, 2016, p. 2072–2073). Such experiences can serve to then confirm both mothers’ suspicions and fears about the well-being of their children when they are away working at a mine. The potential for children to be considered ‘neglected’ by social workers in this context is heightened, as it can appear that mothers have not made adequate provisions for their children while they are out of the community. The final paradox of care facing mothers
becomes apparent here. In effect, mothers may be required to leave their children to work at the mine so as to afford to care and feed their children, but at the same time, risk losing their children for not being physically available or financially able to care and feed their children at home.

Unfortunately, where supportive and caring functions associated with social services may exist, in this study, these were vastly overshadowed by the mothers’ experiences of the child welfare system as dangerous and constituting a risk to their children and their family. These experiences and strategies are consistent with the findings of Elliott, Powell and Brenton (2015). As they explain, “mothering largely involves fending off the dangers, indignities, and vagaries of poverty, racism, and sexism” where “strategies take place within...impersonal and at times hostile, bureaucratic structures” (Elliott, Powell, & Brenton, 2015, p. 366). Mothers described how much of this experience is related to being powerless in comparison to those Qallunaat who occupy authoritative and decision-making positions within the territory. Some mothers believed this power was so great that Qallunaat could apprehend children from their parents ‘at a whim.’ Although it is not true that social workers have the authority to apprehend children ‘at a whim,’ it is notable that this is how mothers may have experienced the child welfare system. That social workers continue to be understood as all-powerful colonial agents, cannot be understated here. Mothers perceived this role as part of the ongoing colonialism within their community and territory. Jacobs (2009) has also made this link. de Leeuw (2014) offers insight here as

29 Territorial social workers can only apprehend children when those children are believed to be in need of protection under the Child and Family Services Act (section 7, subsection3) (Consolidation of Child and Family Services Act, 1997).
well. Concerning Indigenous children in Canada, she has described how the existing approach to child welfare is not grounded in the lived realities of Indigenous peoples—namely in the domestic space of Indigenous family homes and communities. Instead, child welfare is produced and informed by relationships of power, the history of colonialism, and the context of existing and continuing colonial relations (de Leeuw, 2014). Child welfare, therefore, operates within an additional and central paradox—where on one hand it purports to support the idea that children belong in families, while on the other hand, it tends to concentrate its energies on the disruption of these same family units (de Leeuw, 2014).

Mothers in Arviat described living this paradox. This experience stemmed from the inconsistency or disconnect between Inuit culture and the territory’s approach to protecting children. The mothers know that their experience, traditional knowledge, and Inuit culture offer a better place for them to explore how to best care for their families and communities into the future. Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit, thus remains the “foundation, kappianannngitituq [or] a ‘safe place’ made so by the historical struggle of Elders...a spiritual and intellectual home...from which Elders and youth alike can practice resistance through stories, art, music, research, writings, and very many forms of practice” (Tester & Irniq, 2008, p. 59). Resistance to colonial interference, therefore, plays a key role here in terms of child welfare. As part of their resistance, Arviarmiut mothers not only avoided social workers, but envisioned a different system to protecting children in their community; one that would privilege Inuit values and beliefs, afford power and decision-making to Elders, focus on supports and strengthening families at times of crisis, and employ strategies for managing social problems by drawing on traditional knowledge and
localized understandings. This is highly consistent with what is described as a decolonized social work approach (Grey, Coates, Yellow Bird, & Hetherington, 2013; Libesman, 2014; Razack, 2009). It is also consistent with the TRC’s (2015b) Calls to Action, specifically, “to develop culturally appropriate parenting programs for Aboriginal families” and the right for Indigenous governments “to establish and maintain their own child welfare agencies” (p. 1). Where some may point to the ability of social workers to be trained to engage with communities through cross-cultural practice, this has been shown to be insufficient. As Baltra-Ulloa (2013) has explained, decolonized social work should instead be the goal:

> For the most part, cross-cultural approaches to social work practice have been designed, developed and evaluated by Western social workers in the belief they are effective helpers across multiple cultural contexts though they know very little about whether or not the recipient of their help would agree. A decolonized social work would involve a critical stance on these issues – a stance no longer content with assuming that a ‘crossing’ of cultures is relevant or even possible. A decolonized social work calls for a view of the world as interrelated and co-dependent, a world where the redressing of inequality can only happen if there were solidarity, accountability and a commitment to both unveiling Whiteness and staying implicated in its critique. (p. 90)

The mothers desire increased opportunities to participate in the development of an Inuit-centred family programming that serves to support them through the social, cultural and economic changes families experience. This holistic focus on *family*, as opposed to a focus solely on children, highlights the theoretical movement away from the binary
approach that has resulted in the existing child-centered approach to child welfare. As perhaps one of the most important findings of this research, the mothers’ desire for increased involvement in this work runs counter to beliefs commonly held by many Qallunaat in the territory; namely, that Inuit do not wish to be involved in child welfare. Instead, Inuit mothers in Arviat indicated they were interested in supporting this social change and being change-makers themselves. The key difference is that they do not wish to be part of the existing system, and instead, want to be part of a culturally-relevant model that supports families. The mothers in this study strongly believe that families do not become stronger when children are removed, but instead become weaker. This should sit at the center of what could be described as a substantial change in philosophy to the existing system. Obviously, there are times when children cannot remain living with their parents, but what mothers have described here is a system that does not dismantle the entire (larger) family. In other words, when families experience crisis, that is when more support and compassion are needed, and not what are regarded as punitive measures that serve to fracture families further (e.g. child removal or apprehension). Strengthening families through small crises so as to prevent larger ones would be critical to this approach. Cultural values that Inuit place on family, and the relationship that exists between being with one’s family and being healthy, reinforce this same approach (Kral, 2003; Kral, Idlout, Minore, Dyck, & Kirmayer, 2011). However, as Salole and Abdulle (2015) point out, child welfare in Nunavut (alike other areas in Canada) tends to operate via a bifurcated approach as it places children and youth, often described as 'at risk', at the center of investigations. Those who are more privileged can access “more gentle strategies and support,” while the most vulnerable and marginalized families “are
governed through more punitive and disciplinary strategies” (Salole & Abdulle, 2015, p. 127). Discussion with the mothers in Arviat within this study indicates there are few ‘gentle’ support services available within their community. The social service exists more as a policing function. This approach has been linked to colonial racism and strategies of governance associated with imperialism by Stoler (2002). It is also consistent with the work of Kline (1993) and Denison, Varcoe, and Browne (2014), and findings of the Government of Saskatchewan’s Child Welfare Review Panel Report (2010). This particular report is highly relevant to the experiences of mothers in Arviat as it refers directly to the threat of child welfare to Indigenous families and it put forward a range of recommendations to address this issue. Most notable was the recommendation that “fundamental change[s] be made to the child welfare system—both in the kind of system it is, and who is responsible for operating it” (Government of Saskatchewan, 2010, p. 6). Other recommendations for change to the existing child welfare system concerning Indigenous peoples, such as those by Kline (1993) are also relevant here. Kline (1993), for example, pointed to the need to radically improve the material conditions Indigenous peoples often experience.

Further, the mothers’ experiences with social services indicate the current child welfare system is not only confusing, but it may (on occasion) be illegally keeping children from their mothers. I was not surprised by this finding for during my employment in Nunavut as a social worker, I witnessed, on more than one occasion, social workers employing Voluntary Service Agreements (VSA) when more intrusive legal measures would have been required under the Child Family Services Act (e.g. apprehensions, Plan of Care Agreements etc.) (Consolidation of Child and Family
I believe the social workers made these decisions because they thought they were employing a more gentle approach to working with a certain family rather than apprehending the children as per the legislation, because they were uncomfortable with having to do an apprehension, or because they did not understand the legislation and how to apply it. I do not believe the social workers did this with ill intent—quite the opposite. I think they may have, in their own way, been attempting to mitigate what they saw as a culturally inappropriate way to work with a family, and then attempt to manage it in a way that they thought was more compassionate or reasonable. In these situations, unfortunately, given the illegality of this approach, I also watched these same social workers later come to employ coercive means to keep children in care when the parents wished to rescind voluntary agreements. This resulted in what was not a more gentle or supportive approach, but instead one that left families confused and distrustful of both social workers and the power they exercised. In each of the situations to which I was witness, social workers lacked adequate supervision. When my experience is considered alongside the findings of this study, the immediate implication is a need for additional training and supervision of social workers. I discuss this further in the subsequent section. However, the mothers’ experiences and confusion also point to serious gaps in communication between Inuit families and the social workers they encounter. This may be more than just the need for translation. In my experience, the colonial encounter within child welfare is one that can lead to the inability of all parties to always hear and understand each other. The power dynamics within meetings, given the adversarial nature of the child welfare system, can mean a refusal to consider the other side’s position.
Unfortunately, many of the problems within the current system stem from the foundation of the child welfare system built in the 1950s. As a colonial and paternalistic approach that sought to protect Inuit children in keeping with Qallunaat values, beliefs and standards, while also encouraging the assimilation of Inuit within dominant society, the initial child welfare system in the Arctic was designed to conflict with Inuit culture. Within it, Qallunaat were positioned as experts and provided considerable legislative power and autonomy to carry out its associated work. The challenges the mothers experience with the child welfare system in Arviat indicates how little change has occurred since this time. It appears to remain just as foreign and confusing to the mothers interviewed as part of this study as it likely did when it was first introduced. Mothers in Arviat not only have concern for the ability of social workers to apprehend children from their families, they do not always understand why they would do such a thing, whose interests this really serves, or how this is even possible. Thus, the fear associated with the child welfare system is rooted in the colonial experience.

It is through the health system, education system, and the child welfare system, that the relationships between Inuit parents and their children have been most severely disrupted. Although the Inuit experience with residential school offers perhaps the best example of this (Anawak, 2009; Legacy of Hope, n.d.), the movement of children and youth to tuberculosis (TB) sanatoriums (Bennett, 2016; Willis, 1963), and the placement of Inuit children and youth in Qallunaat homes through fostering and adoption have had similar impacts (Bolger, 1959; TRC, 2015a). One of many outcomes of these disrupted relationships has been on the role of parents in relation to their children. Parents, fearful of the authority of social workers in the child welfare system, are uncertain and confused
about what authority they have—and how to exercise it — when it comes to raising their children. Although a fear of child welfare is not uncommon among parents in southern Canada, particularly Indigenous parents, in Nunavut this is often heightened given the size and remoteness of communities. Children, when removed from their families by social workers in Nunavut, can end up outside their communities—often outside of the territory altogether. As previously noted, nearly one third of the 209 children and youth in care of the Government of Nunavut in February 2016 were reported to be living in other provinces, and more than half of the children in care were placed in Qallunaat homes (Department of Family Services 2016; Gregoire, 2016). Thus, the fear of losing one’s children, particularly to the southern provinces, left mothers reluctant to talk to or seek out social workers for help, or likely to avoid contact with them at all costs. Further, in a small community where everyone knows everyone else, it is possible that child apprehension can have an impact on a family’s reputation or other social relations as well.

Where were mothers to turn during difficult times? To each other. Many mothers in Arviat seek support informally within their community during times of crisis. They described turning to other mothers. This was both an appreciated and fulfilling experience to those who at different times both sought help and helped others. This is important because it again points to the willingness of Inuit to be a part of what could be a much different approach to protecting children, were it devoted to supporting and strengthening families. Research by Fraser, Parent, and Dupéré (2018) has touched on

30 The Department of Family Services offers some different statistics. The Department reported 15% of all children in government care were placed outside the territory in 2015–2016 (Department of Family Services, 2016). This number rose to 16% in 2016–2017 (Department of Family Services, 2017).
informal support networks among Inuit women. Their study indicates Inuit families
desire services and supports located within community gathering spaces, where the focus
would be on general wellbeing and connection (Fraser, Parent, & Dupéré, 2018). Such
space was understood to be critical for families to teach and learn from each other (e.g.
cooking, sewing, sharing experiences etc.) (Fraser, Parent, & Dupéré, 2018). Although
such networks can pose negative health effects as well (e.g. when exposed to high stress),
research on the importance of social support networks within other Indigenous
communities, indicates that these supports (positive interaction, emotional or tangible
support) are correlated with women reporting positive health (Richmond, 2009;
Richmond, Ross, & Egeland, 2007). This is also consistent with research on the meanings
of wellbeing within Inuit communities (Kral, Idlout, Minore, Dyck, & Kirmayer, 2011),
and research findings concerning social support and community wellness in Nunavik by
Kirmayer and Paul (2007). Fraser, Parent, and Dupéré (2018) have, however, also
pointed out how Inuit families can experience a ‘moral and emotional conflict’ between
wishing to provide support to others in the community who are facing social problems,
while at the same time attempting to protect one’s own children from the social problems
within the community itself. Social support networks can also involve highly complex
webs of relationships given the interconnectedness of small communities over time
(Fraser, Parent, & Dupéré, 2018; Richmond, 2009). The mothers and key informants in
Arviat participating in this study explained how these informal support networks are also
vulnerable to the rapid increase in community population, as increased children stretch
the available resources the community can offer. In light of this, it is concerning that a
key informant indicated the GN may be deliberately keeping social services “hobbled.”
With so few social workers employed within the community of Arviat (typically two to four), even if the child welfare system were restructured such that social work was to be refocused to providing support to families, the existing social workers’ ability to meet community needs would likely be limited. It is this low number of social workers set to work with an expanding community population that has contributed to high levels of social worker burnout in the North (McKenzie, 2016). This is an example of how the legitimation functions of the state suffer because the state cannot extract the resources needed to deal with the social costs of progress and development from monopoly capital (O’Connor, 1973). Mental health services in the territory appear to have largely been dealt with in this same manner (George & Ducharme, 2017). Given the limitations of formal services, in the community, a natural consequence is the offloading of such support onto the community. Formalized support that could be provided via Inuit professionals and paraprofessionals, through workshops, counselling, and supportive outreach services is highly limited as well. Where support does exist through non-profit organizations such as the Arviat Wellness Centre and through the daycare, the funding that supports this (and all NGO attempts to address these problems) is ‘soft’ money and vulnerable to cuts and reassignment at any time. Mothers in Arviat were clear that they would like to have more inclusive support for mothers provided by other Inuit mothers. Yet, rather than focusing on how to meet these mothers’ needs, how to develop ground-level systems of support to strengthen families and prevent the apprehension of children, the GN was described by key informants as ‘wasting’ energy and resources through maintaining the existing child welfare system. Informants explained how the focus of the GN remains on hiring and issues related to staffing social workers in Nunavut’s
communities. In other words, the GN is focused on maintaining the status quo. This is highly consistent with research I conducted almost ten years ago, which suggests there has been little change in the territory during this time (Johnston, 2009).

The lack of focus on Inuit culture and traditional knowledge within the Department of Family Services also means social workers are missing out on important opportunities to work with mothers. Given the importance of naming to kinship and relationships within families in Inuit culture, discussing a child’s name with mothers could provide important understandings as to how a child may be perceived and treated within the family. As one Elder in this study described, the naming of her son led to a lack of love for him. Social workers could, therefore, by way of example, be asking what does your child's name mean to you? Do you feel good about their name? Who chose it? Does this name make you love your child more or less? Serving as just a small example, these questions constitute an incorporation of Inuit culture within child protection work, but they are not likely asked by Qallunaat social workers who do not possess a depth of understanding of Inuit culture. It appears that there has yet to be any real instruction or direction provided to social workers in the territory, the majority of whom tend to be Qallunaat, regarding how to practice in a way that is culturally relevant or in keeping with IQ principles. This includes a lack of attention to existing research on the topic of Inuit mental health and healing approaches (Korhonen, 2002), and Inuit spirituality within individual counselling (Wihak & Merali, 2005). Where the education system is currently attempting to address colonialism through the incorporation of Inuktitut, the promotion of Inuit culture, and integration of IQ and Elders within its approach, the same cannot be said for social services (Nunavut Department of Education, 2007). This is
perplexing. The GN has yet to indicate any movement towards implementing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s (2015b) *Calls to Action* regarding child welfare.

Further, traditional knowledge can be adapted and incorporated into the work of the Department of Family Services, but this has yet to occur. As the Honorable Joe Enook stated in the Legislative Assembly in Nunavut,

> As we all know in Nunavut and the Inuit societal values that many hold strongly, it’s preferred to keep families together. Keeping that in mind, we have observed that the *Child and Family Services Act* has not even remotely applied Inuit societal values and culture, especially when attempts are made for children to be moved or taken away from their homes and looked after by other people.

(Hansard, 2014, p. 132)

In fact, an *Inunnguiniq* parenting program based on traditional knowledge has been developed, but there is no evidence that this is being incorporated into the day-to-day work or approach by the Department of Family Services (Healy, n.d.; Tagalik & Joyce, 2011). Instead, social workers in Arviat can refer families to the Arviat Wellness Centre, where the program may be run—if and when the Centre has adequate funding to run it. This reaffirms the focus of social services in the territory as being largely fixated on conducting child protection investigations. It also suggests a reluctance on the part of the GN to offer meaningful support to Inuit families.

Unfortunately, this research with mothers in Arviat points to a lack of political will within the GN for making the substantial changes to social services to both decolonize the existing system and begin to support and strengthen families in Nunavut. This may be because such a change would require new legislation, policies, and possibly
even new infrastructure to support the work to be developed. It would be a considerable
undertaking, but one that is necessary. The lack of political will to move in this direction,
however, appears to occur despite many of those who have previously worked for, or
currently work within, social services in Nunavut, who are well-aware of many of the
child welfare system’s problems. Everyone agrees child welfare in Nunavut is in need of
change, and yet those with the decision-making capacity to set such changes in motion
appear instead to be fixated on maintaining the status quo.

6.2 Practice and Policy Implications

This thesis has focused on problems within the current system of child welfare in
the territory. It has also pointed to directions that can be taken to address existing
problems, shortcomings and concerns. The research provided here points to the need for
decolonizing the territory’s child welfare system and the working with Inuit to create a
new system that is focused on healing and family support. This means the creation of a
unique community-based child welfare response. Mothers emphasized the importance of
Elders within formal (and professionally compensated) roles, where a priority must be
placed on Inuit culture. This positioning of Elders may serve to strengthen their existing
roles within families and the community. A community-based response would be in
keeping with the adoption of a mission or goal by the Department of Families Services
towards supporting and strengthening Inuit families. Such an emphasis has proven
positive for other Indigenous communities, such as Bella Bella of British Columbia,
where an approach developed under similar goals has contributed to what has been
described as a transformed community (Macdonald, 2016). One article even went so far
to comment that this approach has “solved suicide” (emphasis added) (Macdonald, 2016,
Moving in the direction of community-based child welfare, however, requires funding. As mentioned, a new approach would be a considerable, and costly, undertaking by the GN. It would include the development of programs aimed specifically at strengthening families. Based on this study, programs that appear to be most needed and desired by the mothers are those that aim to increase IQ-based parenting skills, improve budgeting skills, develop greater communication and anger management skills within interpersonal relationships, and promote healing from trauma.

Offering training and education initiatives to support Inuit mothers so as to access local employment opportunities coincides with this approach. This includes training and education that seeks to place Inuit women in these supportive roles, but also within other decision-making positions within a community-based child welfare system. Employment policies that currently encourage Inuit to travel to different communities should be examined in light of the barriers they present to Inuit mothers. At minimum, some mothers should be able to receive training and education, as well as to then attain employment, all in Arviat. This requires conducting a gendered analysis concerning the goals and objectives regarding employment and related policy within the territory. For example, industries that are selected to be supported by way of dedicated training programs and government subsidies require this gendered analysis. This will mean adjusting the current focus on employment in mining, which tends to disproportionately benefit men, to that of more diversified employment opportunities, including some professional and para-professional positions that may better benefit mothers. Research in the United States has indicated there is evidence of a ‘resource curse’—that increased resource development, such as mining, tends to “exacerbate the economic and political
ills associated with patriarchy” (Simmons, 2016, p. 142). Given the mothers’ experiences and research conducted here regarding Nunavut, the findings by Simmons (2016) are highly relevant to Arviat. At minimum, these findings should be taken as a warning in the context of Nunavut for it suggests that more diversified employment opportunities within a region may improve life circumstances for women via increasing their economic and political power. A shift such as this could better position women within Arviat by providing increased financial independence, allowing them to better care for their children (Rahman, Nakamura, Seino, & Kizuki, 2013a). Diversifying employment opportunities may also serve to decrease social ills such as family violence, which could in turn, lessen child welfare involvement (Benson & Fox, 2004; Renzetti, 2009). However, in order for mothers to participate in education and training, child care options and supports for mothers must also be available. This is because childcare is a necessary element for many women to enter or re-enter the workforce (Flynn, 2017). Until additional infrastructure is in place, government credits and benefits made available to mothers who provide care for other mother’s children could provide immediate support for those mothers working at the mine.

Until real change is observed in the material conditions within which many Inuit families live, policy reform concerning access to food is critical. Important recommendations were offered by the mothers in Arviat. These include the need for an inclusive daily meal program that could be organized, staffed, and managed by Inuit. This is consistent with the current poverty reduction strategy and, therefore, it can be understood as lending support to poverty reduction goals for the territory (Nunavut Roundtable for Poverty Reduction, n.d.b). Such a program, however, would require
collaboration between organizations and different departments within the GN. This would be in keeping with the principles of Piliriqatiingniq (collaboration) and Aajiiqatiingniq (consensus decision making) (Arnakak, 2002; Tagalik, 2009). The mothers have a detailed plan for how such a program could work, but also for how it could be sustained over time, requiring only access to existing infrastructure within the community (i.e. the industrial kitchen at the Arctic College). Policy requiring incorporation of collaborative approaches such as this should be central to food security measures. Further, consideration for the relationship between poverty and child welfare should be included within all future poverty reduction strategies for the territory. All of this, however, cannot occur without leadership, both within the community, and within the highest levels of the GN.

Finally, until a new child welfare system is put in place, immediate action concerning the supervision and support of existing social workers should be taken. Social workers who arrive in the territory require thorough training concerning Inuit culture and community and family values. There is a need for much greater education of social workers so as they may be better able to work across cultures and classes, and to develop a more detailed and in-depth appreciation of different contexts from that which is their own or the ones in which they were born, raised, and socialized. The development of a class consciousness, or awareness of classes that includes an understanding of their own social location, would be an essential aspect of this education.

6.3 Limitations of the Study

This study encountered a number of limitations. The most notable one, however, was related to my personal circumstances. I had a child during this research, which
limited the amount of time I could physically spend in Arviat. When I was in the community, I was pregnant and then later I had a five-month old baby with me at all times. These situations can obviously complicate data collection. Without any childcare while I was in Arviat, and with limited childcare when I was outside of the territory, the research was secondary to my responsibilities as a mother. Additional time with the mothers in Arviat may have provided more opportunity for collaboration and additional analyses (three or more group analyses may have been possible instead of two). Additional in-person and follow-up interviews may have occurred. Further, trips to review more archival material held in Yellowknife and Ottawa may also have been beneficial.

Although my pregnancy and my son’s subsequent birth limited me and the study in some ways, it also served to benefit this work and the relationships I was able to build with the mothers. For example, my limitations demanded a greater partnership with Roseanna and Nadine, and this meant they were far more involved than perhaps they may have been if I were able to travel and stay in Arviat more often. Our partnership involved a great deal more communication by telephone, email and social media, and this required we communicate regularly, directly and clearly. I believe power dynamics within this partnership were also less hierarchical because of my distance. Roseanna and Nadine trained me and while doing so, routinely offered information as experts on the mothers’ experiences. All of us became researchers in the process. We also became great friends and developed a deeply trusting relationship; one that was predicated on experiencing motherhood together. As I mentioned previously, I believe my ability to understand the intricacies of mothering in Arviat was vastly improved by becoming a mother myself.
Thus, what perhaps was initially the largest limitation to the study, may have become critical to the study’s success.

Related to my personal circumstances, but also as is common with most participatory research, this study took longer to complete than most conventional Western research approaches (Bergold & Thomas, 2012; Cornwall & Jewkes, 1995; Healy, 2001). Consequently, this study was also more costly than anticipated, and I long-ago exhausted all of my funding sources. Although I was able to return to the community to share the findings and hold the group analyses, due to cost, I am unable to take another trip now to work with the women to put their recommendations into action. Instead, I will continue my work with them via email and social media. Another trip would also be useful to follow up with some of those mothers that had just started working at the mine at the time of being interviewed. It could be useful to know if those mothers that looked at their new jobs rather positively, continued to feel this same way, or if their perspectives, and or employment, had changed since the time of their interviews.

A further limitation was the challenge of accessing information from the local mine. I believe this study would have this benefited from more information provided directly from mining representatives (e.g. interviews). Although I contacted Agnico Eagle Inc. on many occasions, and I did get the chance to speak briefly with four representatives at different times, I was not provided an interview, nor was I provided any of the specific information I requested. For example, I was unable to access salary tables or levels associated with the range of employment positions that Inuit men and women typically occupy at Meadowbank Mine. I also asked for information pertaining to the programs the Mine offers (e.g. budgeting courses) and again, I was not provided this
information. Unfortunately, this means I am unable to substantiate the mother’s descriptions of their experiences and salaries beyond what is publicly available.

Fortunately, the description from mothers of what they and or their husbands or boyfriends earned at the mine was consistent with all the research I have conducted. I had also sought additional information regarding the changes being made at Meadowbank Mine since the report concerning the women of Baker Lake was released by Czyzewski and Tester (2014). Despite my attempts to explain my use of this information, I believe that the mine held a fear for how I might incorporate the material into the study.

Finally, the opportunity to interview children and youth, and the spouses of the mothers would have offered a more comprehensive perspective to the challenges mothers can experience in Arviat. Unfortunately, this was both too costly and beyond the scope of this research. It constitutes work for future study as described below.

6.4 Directions for Future Study

This study points to a number of areas where additional research is needed. The perspectives of children and youth and their experiences of the social, cultural and economic impacts of mining employment on their families, and on the community, could offer a greater depth of understanding related this industry. Their perspectives and experiences in relation to the child welfare system are also sorely lacking. Children and youth may have strong opinions on these topics and could offer important perspectives that may affirm the mothers’ viewpoints or offer a different perspective altogether. Research with young women might be particularly telling. What would young women make of the suggestion by mothers in this study regarding smaller family sizes? How do youth feel about pursuing employment in the mining industry? Where do they seek
support when it is needed within their community? These questions, among many others, may offer policymakers insight regarding support services and programming, as well as considerations for future employment initiatives.

Likewise, research with fathers in the community is also needed. What do fathers make of the challenges mothers face in the community? How do fathers experience mining employment in relation to their families? And what do fathers think of the mothers’ concerns for what was described to be at times an under-involvement or lack of involvement by some fathers in their children’s lives? Given the social issues that disproportionately impact males, such as suicide, this information may be useful to the development of programming aimed specifically at fathers’ needs.

Additionally, research with the Splatsin First Nation (British Columbia) is relevant to the discussion of a restructuring of Nunavut’s child welfare system to that of a community-based model. As previously mentioned, the Splatsin are the only Indigenous group in Canada to possess complete control over their child welfare services. How are the Splatsin First Nation currently managing child welfare issues in their community? And what insights can be gleaned from their experience that could be applied to the mothers’ vision for a community-based child welfare approach? This information could be useful to discussions both within the community of Arviat and to the GN for how to develop a community-based child welfare response.

Finally, additional work with the mothers regarding IQ could be useful to existing child welfare services in the community of Arviat, but also to any future development of a supportive approach to working with families. Research that explores specific ways IQ might be incorporated within a helping relationship, could offer social workers and
community-helpers tools for addressing different problems families may face. It may mean that services become more culturally-relevant and therefore, possibly more suitable and useful for Inuit families.

6.5 Summary

Formed within a context of assimilation, Inuit mothers in Arviat describe the existing child welfare system in their community as one that has not changed enough to rid itself of this function. The current approach has resulted in mothers actively working to protect their children and families from the child welfare system itself. Inuit mothers want change. They want to see a child welfare system that respects them and their culture and prioritizes family healing and wellbeing. Unfortunately, it appears they are up against a reluctant machine—a government that is more concerned with maintaining a broken system, than fixing it. The reasons behind this are unknown. Yet even those in the highest administrative positions of the system can see the problems. Thus, leadership at the ministerial level is needed to initiate changes. Unfortunately, the existing focus of the GN has been largely devoted to mining employment for Inuit—something that is serving to disrupt relationships and create a range of problems for families, particularly mothers. The GN is aware of these problems but has yet to examine this direction they have taken through a gendered lens. It is likely that by doing so, the GN may understand the necessity to develop policy that supports Arviarmiut mothers, and as a result ensure the better care children.
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Appendices

Appendix A: Recruitment Poster

Safe and sound: Exploring Inuit mothers’ experiences of child welfare in relation to Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ) in Arviat, Nunavut

Are you a mother with young (under 18 years of age) children:
• who has been involved with the child welfare system (social services) in Nunavut; and/or;
• who is, or has been, part of a mine-involved family,

If you participate in this project you might meet with Patricia 5 or 6 times.

Each time you attend a meeting with other mothers in this project, and when you conduct an interview with an Elder, you will be provided with a $25 gift card.

You will also be interviewed for which you also be given a $50 gift card

If you are interested in learning about or participating in this study, please contact Patricia Johnston on Facebook (Patricia Johnston) or email her at Patricia.Johnston@ubc.ca.

Or call Sarah and Kim to book an appointment at the Wellness Centre.

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Appendix B: Consent form – Inuktitut

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Appendix B: Consent form – Inuktitut

Paq tumpyuqtaq?  
- C.'n Terel Johnston, Anunngakuq Arnatsiaq, Inuktitut  
  Patricia.Johnston@ubc.ca

- Frank Tester, Inuktitut, Arnatsiaq  
  Frank.Tester@ubc.ca

Naqtaq piqpiaq tusaq?  
E. Tuyaq B. Johnston, Anunngakuq Arnatsiaq, Inuktitut  
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Appendix C: Consent form – English

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Appendix E

'Safe and sound: ’ Exploring Inuit mothers’ experiences of child welfare in relation to Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ) in Arviat, Nunavut

Interview Consent Form for Mothers and Elders

Who is conducting the study?
- Patricia Johnston, Graduate Student, School of Social Work, Patricia.Johnston@ubc.ca
- [Redacted] Frank Tester, Principal Investigator, School of Social Work, [Redacted] Frank.Tester@ubc.ca

This study is part of Patricia Johnston’s doctoral research (public document).

Roseanna Alareak is also working on this study.

Why are we doing this study?
The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of mothers in Arviat as they meet their family’s needs, and to learn about Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ) (traditional knowledge) in relation to present-day childrearing, and concerns that may come to the attention of child welfare (social services). For example, one development that may affect child care is the opening of mines in Nunavut, with parents coping with a ‘2-week in, 2-week out’ work schedule. This study will examine the relationship and relevance of IQ to Inuit families, childrearing and child welfare. The objective is to produce information that will inform child welfare policy in Nunavut.

Why should you take part in this study?
Mothers: You are invited to participate in this research project because you are an Inuk mother who has been involved with child welfare (social services), and/or a mother who is, or has been part of a mine-involved family. Your information will help improve child welfare policies and practices in Nunavut. Because we are using participatory methods, you will also learn about research; how it is done and how it works.

How is this study done? Patricia Johnston or Roseanna Alareak will discuss the study with you and then one of them will interview you. Each interview will be recorded. They will be the only people that review your interview. Together they will review all the interviews for important ideas and issues. Patricia and Roseanna will bring these ideas
and issues back to the group for everyone to discuss together. If a translator is used, a confidentiality agreement with this person will be signed. The person interviewing you will maintain your confidentiality.

If you participate in this project you might meet with Patricia or Roseanna a few times. You may also be asked to participate in interviewing other mothers or Elders in the community. When you are interviewed for this study, you will also be given a $50 gift card. If you interview other mothers or Elders, you will also be provided with a $50 gift card.

**Elders:** You are invited to participate in this research project because you may have knowledge relevant to this topic. Taking part in this study will provide you with an opportunity to be involved in research that could impact your community. Your information will help improve child welfare policies and practices in Nunavut.

**How is this study done?** Inuit mothers from Arviat will be participating in this study. Roseanna, Patricia or one of these mothers will contact you for an interview. They will come to your home (or somewhere else you prefer) with a translator if required. They will explain this consent form to you. They will also tell you about the study and answer any questions you might have. The person interviewing you will maintain your confidentiality.

During the interview, you do not have to answer any questions. You can talk about anything you believe is important in relation to the study’s topic. The interviewer will record your conversation and provide this to Patricia and Roseanna. You will be provided $50 gift card to the grocery store as an honorarium for participating.

Patricia and Roseanna will review your interview for important concepts and ideas. They will bring the concepts and ideas back to discuss with a group of mothers involved in this study. The mothers will discuss these things together.

**How will the study findings be used?**
The findings of this study will be reported in Patricia Johnston’s graduate thesis and will also be published in journal articles. The study will be made available on UBC’s Circle website ([https://circle.ubc.ca/](https://circle.ubc.ca/)). The findings will also be communicated to you and the community of Arviat in a plain-language report. A summary of this report will be available in Inuktitut. The results will be shared with Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada. Findings will also be discussed via social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter), made available on the *Arviat TV* website, and shared with Nunavut’s *Department of Family Services*.

**Is there any way being in this study could be bad for you?**
We do not think there is anything in this study that could harm you or be bad for you. Depending on your experience with childrearing, some questions might upset you. You will be treated with respect and can terminate the interview at any time.

Version #4 November 2, 2014
You may enjoy volunteering your time to participate in this study with other women. Patricia and Roseanna will try to make your participation in this study as comfortable as possible. You can let them know if you have any concerns. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer.

At any point in the study, if you reveal that there has been an incident that involves abuse and/or neglect of a child or an elderly person (or that there is a risk of such occurring), this must, by law, be reported to a social worker.

**How will your privacy be maintained?**
While we are doing the study, your interview will be identified only by code number and kept on a password-protected computer. Only Patricia Johnston, Roseanna Alamek, and Frank Tester will have access to this information. If a transcriptionist is used, this person will be required to sign a confidentiality agreement. Your confidentiality will be respected and your identity will never be released without your consent.

You can choose how you would like the information from your interview to be used. Please indicate below what you prefer:

**CHECK OFF WHAT YOU WANT TO DO**

- [ ] **Do not share my name with anyone:** Your identity will remain confidential and cannot be linked to your interview. If your information is used for this study, we will make sure that no one will know your identity.

- [ ] **Share my information with the Wellness Centre:** In addition to using your information as part of this study, the transcript from your interview will be provided to the Arviat Wellness Centre. Your name will not be included. If your information is used for this study, we will make sure that no one will know your identity.

- [ ] **Share both my name and information with the Wellness Centre:** In addition to using your information as part of this study, the transcript from your interview will be provided to the Arviat Wellness Centre. The Wellness Centre will communicate with you to determine how you would like this information shared in the future. If your information is used for this study, we will make sure that no one will know your identity.

- [ ] **Share my name and information with everyone:** In addition to using your information as part of this study, the transcripts from your interview will be associated with your name. Transcripts from your interviews and your name will be provided to the Arviat Wellness Centre. If your information is used for this study, your name will be attached to the information you have provided.

Version #4 November 2, 2014
Who can you contact if you have questions about this study?
If you have questions or if you want some more information about this study, you can contact Patricia Johnston on Facebook, email her at Patricia.Johnston@ubc.ca or call her at [redacted]

This study is being supervised by Frank Tester (Professor) at the University of British Columbia. You can contact him at Frank.Tester@ubc.ca or at [redacted]

Who can you contact if you have complaints or concerns about this study?
If you have any concerns about your rights as a research participant, and/or your experiences while participating in this study, you can contact the Research Subject Information Line at the UBC Office of Research Services at 1-877-822-8598.

Consent:
Taking part in this study is entirely up to you. You have the right to refuse to participate in this study. If you choose to participate, you may choose to pull out of the study at any time without giving a reason. If you wish to stop participating during an interview, you will still be provided with the gift card.

If you have difficulty or do not understand this consent form, you may contact Patricia Johnston on Facebook, email her at Patricia.Johnston@ubc.ca or call her at [redacted] to have the consent form and the study explained to you. You may also contact Roseanna Alareak. If you would like to have this consent form explained to you in Inuktitut, she will arrange for this to occur.

A copy of this consent form will be provided to you for your record. Please keep it as it contains the names and phone numbers of the study investigators, so you may contact them if you have any questions about the study.

By completing this consent form with your name and your signature, you have indicated that you consent to participate in an interview.

Please read and sign below:
I have been fully informed of the objectives of the project being conducted. I understand these objectives and consent to being interviewed for the project. I understand that steps will be undertaken to ensure that this interview will remain confidential unless I consent to being identified. I also understand that, if I wish to withdraw from the study, I may do so with any consequences.

Signed __________________________ (Signature)

By: ___________________________ (Print name) _________ (Date)

Witness: ____________________________

Contact Information:

Version #4 November 2, 2014
Appendix D: Consent form – Key Informants

"Promises of prosperity: exploring support for mine-involved Inuit families through culturally relevant child welfare services"

Interview Consent Form for Key Informants

Contact

• Patricia Johnston, PhD Candidate, School of Social Work, Patricia.Johnston@ubc.ca

• Frank Tester, Principal Investigator, School of Social Work, Frank.Tester@ubc.ca

This study is part of Patricia Johnston’s doctoral research (public document).

Purpose

This research project responds to concerns expressed by Inuit about the child welfare system (social services). Inuit have stated that Qallunaat (non-Inuit) ways of doing things do not work in their communities – child welfare is no exception. Mining is seen as the economic future of Nunavut yet it can also hold implications for child wellbeing. An increasing number of families are finding employment in the mining industry. Research concerning the social impact of mining has noted some of the problems that can result from this form of employment on families.

The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of mothers in Arviat as they meet their family’s needs, and to learn about Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ) (traditional knowledge) in relation to present-day childrearing, and to concerns that come to the attention of child welfare. For example, employment at a mine in Nunavut can require parents cope with a ‘2-week in, 2-week out’ work schedule. The objective is to produce information that will inform child welfare policy in Nunavut.

You are invited to participate in this research project because you hold a particular knowledge related to this study. You are being invited to participate in this interview due to your involvement with child welfare and/or families in Arviat who may have worked with child welfare services and/or been involved in mining.

Version #2 September 1, 2015
Study Procedures:
You are asked to participate in an interview. It is expected the interview may take up to one and a half hours of your time. Should you agree to participate, once we have received your consent form, a researcher will contact you to arrange a convenient time for the interview.

Use of Study Findings:
The findings of this study will be reported in Patricia Johnston’s graduate thesis and will also be published in journal articles. The study will be made available on UBC’s Circle website (https://circle.ubc.ca). The findings will also be communicated to you and the community of Arviat in a plain-language report. A summary of this report will be available in Inuktitut. The results will be shared with Pauktuatit Inuit Women of Canada. Findings will also be discussed via social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter), made available on the Arviat TV website, and shared with Nunavut’s Department of Family Services.

Confidentiality:
While we are doing the study, your interview will be identified only by code number and kept on a password-protected computer. Only Patricia Johnston and Frank Tester will have access to this information. Your confidentiality will be respected and your identity will never be released without your consent. You can choose how you would like the information from your interview to be used. Please indicate below what you prefer:

CHECK OFF WHAT YOU WANT TO DO

☐ Do not share my name with anyone: Your identity will remain confidential and cannot be linked to your interview. If your information is used for this study, we will make sure that no one will know your identity.

☐ Share only my information with the Wellness Centre: Transcripts from your interviews will be provided to the Arviat Wellness Centre. Your name will not be included. If your information is used for this study, we will make sure that no one will know your identity.

☐ Share both my name and information with the Wellness Centre: Transcripts from your interviews and your name will be provided to the Arviat Wellness Centre. The Wellness Centre will communicate with you to determine how you would like this information shared in the future. If your information is used for this study, we will make sure that no one will know your identity.

☐ Share my name and information with everyone: Your interviews will be associated with your name. Transcripts from your interviews and your name will be provided to the Arviat Wellness Centre. If your information is used for this study, your name will be attached to the information you have provided.

Version #2 September 1, 2015
Risks and Benefits:
There are no known risks to participating in an interview. All information provided is confidential. You may enjoy volunteering your time to participate in an interview; but there are no other known benefits to you in terms of participating in the study.

Contact for Information about the study:
If you have questions or if you desire additional information about this study, you may contact Patricia Johnston at [Redacted] or by email at patricia.johnston@ubc.ca. If you have any concerns about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Research Subject Information Line in the UBC Office of Research Services at 604-822-8598.

Consent:
Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time.

A copy of this consent form will be provided to you for your record. Please keep it as it contains the names and phone numbers of the study investigators, so you may contact them if you have any questions about the study.

By completing this consent form with your name and your signature, you have indicated that you consent to participate in an interview.

Please read and sign below:
I have been fully informed of the objectives of the project being conducted. I understand these objectives and consent to being interviewed for the project. I understand that steps will be undertaken to ensure that this interview will remain confidential unless I consent to being identified. I also understand that, if I wish to withdraw from the study, I may do so without any consequences.

Signed _____________________________ (Signature)

By: _______________________________ (Print name) __________ (Date)

Witness: ____________________________

Contact Information: ____________________________

Version #2 September 1, 2015
Appendix E: Interview Guide

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Appendix D

'Safe and sound: Exploring Inuit mothers’ experiences of child welfare in relation to Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ) in Arviat, Nunavut

Interview Guide for Mothers

This interview should take between 45 minutes to one and a half hours to complete. The information you provide is may be very useful to this study.

Although we would like as much information as possible, you can stop the interview at any time. You will still be provided with a $50 gift card.

The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of mothers in Arviat as they meet their family’s needs, and to learn about Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ) (traditional knowledge) in relation to present-day childrearing, and concerns that may come to the attention of child welfare (social services). For example, something that may affect child care is the opening of mines in Nunavut, with parents coping with a ‘2-week in, 2-week out’ work schedule. This study will examine the relationship and relevance of IQ to Inuit families, childrearing and child welfare. The objective is to produce information that will inform child welfare policy in Nunavut.

You are invited to participate in this research project because you are a mother from Arviat who has been involved with child welfare (social services), and/or you are a mother who has been part of a mine-involved family (you or someone in your family has or is working at the mine).

Within this interview, you will be asked about Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ) (traditional knowledge) values associated with childrearing. You will be asked to what extent these values are relevant to your life today. You will also be asked about your experiences with child welfare and/or being part of a mine-involved family. You do not have to answer any question you do not want to.

Before we begin, do you have any questions about this study? (Answer all of the participants’ questions)

1. Perhaps we can begin with you telling me a little about yourself and why you were interested in participating in this study? (Use probing questions here)

2. Could you tell us a little about your family?
○ How many children do you have?

3. With respect to childcare (raising your children)
   ○ Can you share some of the challenges that you have experienced as a mother (or parent)? (For example, not having enough money, not having enough family support, feeling pressure to do certain things etc.)
   ○ What’s the hardest part of caring for your kids?
   ○ In Arviat, can you describe some of the things that make (or have made) your life difficult?
     ○ Things that make (or have made) your life easier?
     ○ What makes caring for your kids hard/ harder?
       ▪ Can you tell me more about this?
   ○ What makes caring for your kids easier?
     ▪ Can you tell me more about this?
   ○ How have you dealt/ dealt with these difficult experiences? (focus on one or two if the person provides many)
     ▪ How do you cope (or manage) with these things?
   ○ Do you get any support to raise your kids the way you want to in Arviat?
     ▪ If so, where do you get this support? (For example, do you get it from your family, your friends, social services at the health centre?)
   ○ How many people live in your home?
   ○ Is there enough space for everyone in your home?
     ▪ If no, how do you deal with this?
   ○ Is there enough food for everyone all the time?
     ▪ If no, how do you deal with this?
4. Can you tell me a little about your relationship to child welfare/the mine/mining? (Answer #5 or #6 or both questions if possible)

5. Have you been involved with social services before? Have they come to your house or ever told you they wanted to talk about your children or your parenting?
   - When did this happen and for long did they work with your family?
     - How come social services got in touch with you? What did they want from you? How did things end up with them? Or are they still involved in your family’s life? How come?
     - Can you tell me a bit about this experience?
     - Is this relationship with social services at the health centre positive or negative in your life?
       - How come? What made it good/or bad?
   - Can you tell me a story/tell me about a time that social services made you upset? What was it and why?
   - Can you tell me about a time when social services was helpful?
   - If both of these situations happened, what do you think made one upsetting and the other helpful?
   - In Arviat, what would make your life as a mother easier if it were to change or if things were different?
   - Or what needs to be changed to make your work and responsibilities as a mother, easier?

6. Have you (or your family) been involved with the mine or mining in some way?
   - When and for how long has your family been involved in mining?
   - How did you (or your family) get involved with mining?
   - What has this experience been like for your family? Good? Or bad? Or both?
     - How come?
   - Can you tell me a story about your experience with mining?
   - Has anything about mining ever made you upset?
6. What made you upset and why?
   o In Arviat, what would make your life as a mother easier if it were to change or if things were different?
   o Or what needs to be changed to make your work and responsibilities as a mother, easier?

7. In Arviat, regarding social services – what needs to change?
   o What would make things better?
   o What do you think would make families stronger, healthier and happier?
   o How can families be better supported?
   o How can mothers be better supported?

8. Regarding mining – what needs to change?
   o What would make things better?
   o What do you think would make families stronger, healthier and happier?
   o How can families be better supported?
   o How can mothers be better supported?

9. Are you familiar with the guiding principles of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ) (traditional knowledge)? *(Sorry these are in Baffin dialect!)*
   o Piitirsirniq (or the concept of serving)
   o Aqiiqatigingniq (or the concept of consensus decision-making)
   o Pilimmaksarniq (or the concept of skills and knowledge acquisition)
   o Piliriqatigiingniq (or the concept of collaborative relationships or working together for a common purpose)
   o Avatimik Kamattiaq (or the concept of environmental stewardship)
   o Qanuqnarunarniq (or the concept of being resourceful to solve problems)

   o Have you heard of these words or concepts before?

   o What do you think of these principles?
     o Do you think they are important to raising kids in Arviat?
10. Is Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ) (traditional knowledge) important to you?
   - Is it important to how you parent your kids?
     - If so, why are they important?
   - Are the values of IQ relevant to how you raise your kids in Arviat today (in 2014)? Given the big changes over the last 50 years in Nunavut, do these principles still make sense in 2014? Why?

11. Are you familiar with the four maligait (rules) associated with traditional knowledge?
   - working for the common good
   - respecting all living things
   - maintaining harmony and balance
   - continually planning and preparing for the future
   - Are these maligait relevant or important to life today in Arviat?
     - If so, how are they important to your life?
     - Can you give me an example of how you use them?
   - Do you try to bring them into how you raise your kids?

12. Do you try to incorporate or bring Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ) into how you care for your kids?
   - If so, how do you do this?

13. What would make using Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ) in your parenting easier?

14. What would making using Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ) better?

15. Would you like to know more about Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ) and raising kids?
   - If so, where would you go or who would you speak to learn more about IQ and childrearing?

16. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about your experience with social services and/or mining?

Thank you for your time today.
Mutua!