WESTERN ARCTIC WOMEN ARTISTS' PERSPECTIVES ON EDUCATION AND ART

by

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We accept this dissertation as conforming to the required standard

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ABSTRACT

In the Western Arctic, women from two indigenous cultures, Inuit and Dene, have made art for hundreds of years. Women's art was different from men's, but was essential to the survival of families. Their skills were also used by colonial explorers and traders. Now a third group of women, of European heritage called 'others' or 'non-natives', are also making art in the Western Arctic. Each cultural group has a rich heritage, and where the cultures mix and co-exist, mutual influence is observable, and unique forms of art have developed.

Women of all cultural groups make artwork to contribute to family use as well as for sale. While their artwork is known, as individual women they have remained unseen, unheard, and unrecognized outside their communities. This study focuses upon the women who produce the artwork; what they call art; how they influence each other; how new materials and techniques have changed their work; how they learn their skills; their ideas for how future generations should be taught; what artwork means in their lives; how they value cultural history, and how they practice aesthetics, and/or art criticism.

Forty-five women artists were interviewed over five summers, between 1992-1996. Most were videotaped in Inuvik at two festivals, or in Aklavik, Yellowknife, Tuktoyaktuk or Fort Smith, NWT. Each woman tells, in her own words, how her artwork evolved from early learning, and its meaning now. These women do not call themselves feminists but they discuss issues and struggles common to feminism. The lives of the women are interwoven; they are producing artists, teachers, organizers, wives, mothers, elders and community leaders. Their voices provide a historic link between old cultural traditions and new generations.
The conclusions drawn from this study include differences in individual choices, power, education, various ways of learning, and how the women value their artwork. Influences on women's art include necessity, new materials and techniques, and other arctic peoples and land. The meaning of art in their lives is connected to individual self-development and economic survival, but also to families, and community recognition. They recommend that future generations be taught art skills at home as well as at school, and provide practical ideas for effective art education in schools in the Western Arctic and beyond.
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inspired and supported me in numerous ways, and for whom I want always to set a good example.

Thank you all very much.
CHAPTER ONE: DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

This dissertation describes a research project that grew out of personal involvement with arctic peoples over the past ten years. Vast changes were occurring in arctic communities, including the decline of the fur and petroleum industries, and a shift in the economic base of families from hunting to a wage economy. Complex inter-relationships developed between indigenous cultures—the Dene, Metis and Inuit—and the non-natives or colonial 'others'. Recent changes include the settlement of land claims, the impending political division of the Northwest Territories (NWT) in 1999, Federal devolution of authority to local and regional authorities, financial constraint, and the approach of unknown self government structures.

Women's lives in the Western Arctic

Through the changes in all co-existing cultures, women's work seemed more or less constant. The women bore, raised and educated children, worked within or outside their homes, and some did artwork, independently or in groups, to contribute to family survival. The changes, however, have affected women's lives and artwork as much as they have affected the lives of hunters and trappers. Today, women in the Western Arctic produce art in many forms which are widely acclaimed for their aesthetic value, including mukluks, moccasins, mitts and parkas, paintings, prints, pottery and sculpture. In order to understand their art and its role in their lives, it is important to do more than talk about the women, we must talk with them, and listen to their perspectives. It is necessary to study the historic, social, cultural and aesthetic context in which women's art is created in this region.

Therefore, through conversations with Western Arctic women artists themselves, the purpose of this study is to discover the context of, various reasons for, influences on, meanings
and importance of making art in their lives from their point of view and in their own words. It also illuminates the role of women in education, and how they feel future generations should be taught. This study, therefore, focusses on the perspectives of several generations of women who create artwork, rather than on the artwork itself, which has been documented elsewhere (Duncan 1989, Karklins, 1992, Tippett 1992, Hall, Oakes, & Webster 1994, Thompson 1994, Hall et al 1994).

As I taught, worked, studied and collected information over five years, I talked with many women who were artists or were involved in the arts. This study presents the individual voices of a number of Western Arctic women artists. They are not strangers, their lives are interwoven by sharing life in an arctic environment, and the influence of the interwoven cultures is observable. The elder women artists talked about past and present practices, and about changes that occurred within their memory. The middle and younger generations talked about their cultural and artistic legacy, and how changes affected their artwork and lives. They all shared insights to help the next generations, and I felt privileged to learn from them.

The voices of these women contribute to our understanding of art in a culturally diverse region. In turn the perspectives of the women on their art and education reveal their perception of art criticism, history and aesthetics, and how art production has evolved in this region.

**Evolution of the Project**

I first visited Eskimo Point, NWT (now Arviat), in 1987, where I stayed in a room in a parka factory, and was taken out on the tundra by a local family. Eskimo Point is located above the tree line, where there are no trees and the ground is permanently frozen, and where warm buildings are built up on posts to keep them from melting into the ground. This frozen state,
called 'permafrost', makes life very different from anything I had previously known. I was amazed
at the physical problems created by the cold, such as the trucks delivering water daily to a tank in
every house, and other trucks pumping out waste-water tanks. I was intrigued by the warmth of
the Inuit people, their culture and lifestyle, and way they faced life on a frozen land. I became
friends with a family who helped get artists' work to galleries in southern Canada, and listened to
their views on bridging cultures through art. I saw the incredible artwork of Inuit artists in a
variety of media being bought and sold, and I realized that here was a whole way of life that few
knew about or understood.

Teaching in the Arctic

Two years later, 1989 to 1991, I taught at Arctic College in Fort Smith, NWT, which
further exposed me to arctic cultures. My teacher education students were largely indigenous
women, from several diverse groups of Dene (Indian) and Inuit peoples, along with a few 'whites'.
They came from a number of small communities located around the western and central Arctic.
I was hired to teach art education methods, along with health and social studies methods, for use
in the elementary classroom. The students had little formal knowledge in these fields, which
meant that I also had to introduce the basics of each subject before we could go on to classroom
methods. I did not realize how closely the subjects of health, social studies and art were linked in
all our lives until I observed it in theirs. That link, along with the strength of the women I
taught, prompted my interest in this research project.

Learning from Arctic students

In the process of teaching these Arctic College students, we learned from, and educated,
each other, in an exchange of knowledge. The students taught me about their world, their
experiences living on the land, about their families and raising their children, their traditions, patience, acceptance, and skills. They brought elders and beautiful artwork to class and we visited their relatives in hospital together. I shared my own traditions and experiences, and we discussed differences and commonalities. Most of the students had little knowledge of the world outside their communities, except what invaded their living rooms on TV. Somehow I had to help them gain the skills of good teachers and researchers, enabling them to teach their own students their connection to the world.

I knew very little about their cultures and life in the Arctic, but had some knowledge of the rest of the world. We embarked on an educational journey together. My job seemed to require first listening well, in order to understand their perspectives and discover what they knew. When we first met, most of the students could name only a few countries of the world. In terms of the new NWT curriculum, they knew little about body systems, and they told me they had never seen 'art'. I used the library and gathered information from everywhere--books, tapes, magazines, newspapers, TV, video and slides--to bring the rest of the world to class. We used the resources with discussion, direction, and encouragement, challenging each other with new concepts and ideas.

They seemed to feel very isolated from 'the South', yet southern TV images and junk foods had become part of their daily lives. I felt my job was to help them build a bridge between two worlds, within the structure of the formal NWT school system, because, as teachers, they had to be aware of both in order to teach the curriculum. It was a daunting task, requiring both the students' enthusiasm for learning, and my willingness to be taught, in order to narrow the chasm between us. Both sides had information to share. The students told me that their world was changing, and that they now needed more formal education to help support their families.
They said 'art' was 'that stuff that hangs on the walls in rich people's houses', yet the beaded mukluks, embroidered parkas and mitts they wore daily, were works of art in themselves. I asked them about their beading, sewing, and embroidery, and they said they did not think it was 'art', because it was just their clothing, it was necessary. We talked about what art is, and they came up with words like *skill, value, design, originality, workmanship* and *beauty*. We listed those words on a chart, then applied them to their own work, and they were very excited and pleased to think that someone might call their work 'art'.

The subject matter of the art, health, and social studies courses were interwoven with, and relevant to, the students' daily lives. During the social studies course we explored social norms, family structures, history of the region, cultures, influences, and changes occurring in their communities. We talked about changing power structures, prejudice, racism, and individual power to make choices. They identified social problems and discussed what could be done about them. They taught me about traditional women's and men's roles, about the acceptance of physical and social situations that seem to be a part of survival in both Dene and Inuit cultures, and about their sense that change was imminent. They taught me about their history, cultural traditions, and what the fur trade meant to them. They explained how the decline of the fur industry destroyed the pride of hunter or trapper husbands who provided for their families. The men must now find paid work, yet have few skills outside their vast and personal knowledge of the land.

During the health course we talked about body systems, current health issues in the communities, about birthing, raising families, and their own experiences with sickness, healthcare systems, aging relatives and death. Some of the women had several children but did not know how their reproductive systems worked. Sometimes we talked about things that they usually do
not discuss at all: traumatic personal experiences such as infanticide, violence, abuse, alcoholism, and suicide. Sometimes tears were shed as they told these personal stories, and I felt privileged that they entrusted me with family secrets. The exchange of information at times became quite personal, and we learned to respect each other.

**Community Life**

Outside of the college setting, I was invited to visit some of the women in their temporary homes, and some came to visit me. We drank lots of tea, the social lubricant on these occasions. Some of the students shared personal situations, worries, problems and concerns. As I got to know them, I noticed the women often made 'crafts' to sell in exchange for groceries at the Northern (formerly Hudson's Bay Company) store. Although they were not signed, the Northern store sold them as local 'artwork'. I noticed that most of the women made major contributions to their family's survival, yet they expressed little self confidence.

However, when they spoke about their 'crafts', their faces lit up, they spoke with enthusiasm, and they were obviously proud of their work. The economic power the women's artwork brought them became obvious. They had the courage to pick up and leave the comfort of their communities, moving their families to a larger center to take a college program. They wanted to get the education required to teach in local schools at a good wage.

Many of my observations while teaching in Fort Smith underscored my sense that there is some connection, especially for the women students, between their education, their artwork, and their self confidence or sense of personal power to be in control of their lives.
Visiting other arctic communities

In June, 1990, I flew to Inuvik, above the Arctic Circle on the Mackenzie River delta, during 24-hour daylight or the 'midnight sun'. I taught art methods for three weeks, and again, I learned a great deal from a new group of women students. We had class in the daytime, and then worked on projects into the evening. Most of us were staying on site at the Arctic College dormitory, so we shared personal stories and experiences and we laughed as we worked.

In Fall 1990, I taught more classes of art methods in Fort Smith, along with health and social studies methods to mostly women students. In January and February, 1991, during the coldest months of winter, I flew in small unheated planes to three small communities (pop. 400-900) to supervise student teachers. These small planes, with wind whistling through floorboards in -50 temperatures, sometimes landed on school yards, and everyone in town came to see what and who had arrived. I was introduced to the way of life in these remote places, and found each community intriguing.

My student teachers took me to meet elder women who were well known for specific skills such as birch-bark basket making, or to community meetings where all the men wore wonderfully hand-embroidered and fringed jackets, while the women wore plain store-bought nylon jackets and printed kerchiefs. Other times there were dog team races, feasts and dances, and I was privileged to participate with my students. Again, they quietly taught me to respect their cultures, about their relationship with a rugged and sometimes treacherous land, and to understand their joy in its beauty. In all, there were several different groups of student teachers that I taught over the two-year period between 1989 and 1991, perhaps thirty women and five men, and I learned a great deal from all of them.
Before I left Fort Smith in June 1991, another woman teacher and I decided to stage a dinner theatre concert to benefit the women's shelter. Our concert followed the history of women in song, and we were in the final stages of rehearsals, when my mother died of Alzheimer's. It was not unexpected, but it was still a shock, as I was planning to visit her later that month. She had taught me 'the show must go on', so later that week we sang our concert, and I dedicated special songs to her. Although our concert was for everyone, only 'white' people came, mostly women. The indigenous women for some reason did not come, and I was puzzled. The concert was successful in raising money and was later the subject of an article in *NorthernHer Magazine* (Crompton 1991). My experience of arctic cultures and the women students affected me deeply, yet there were many unanswered questions. Eventually, interest in the women's lives became the impetus for this research project.

**Transitions: integrating theory with personal experience**

In July 1991, when I began the doctoral program, my experience in the Arctic was always on my mind. My arctic teaching and learning made every book, theory, and lecture either relevant or irrelevant, and informed my new understanding of the field of art education. I wanted to set a good example for my daughters who were both in university, and I also felt overwhelmed with ignorance. The more I learned the more ignorant I felt. There was much to know about the fields of art, education, and women's history, about the world, and about things that were not yet written. My new arctic knowledge left me wanting to know more, to understand my own place in what happened around me in my lifetime, as well as in the world context.
There was also much more to learn about the Arctic. There are many small communities, each different, with a variety of traditions and languages. They have ways of life that few people in the rest of Canada or the world know about, let alone understand. I could see parallels in the lives of the arctic women and my own that I wanted to understand. Arctic women, like my students, seemed to be the strong link to cultural survival and the key to preserving traditional arts and their children's future. Many were single parents, as I had been a single parent for many years. I appreciated their strength as well as their artwork. I wanted to explore connections I had observed, and I wanted these women to get the recognition I felt they deserved.

I began to realize that I was uniquely positioned to enable the voices of arctic women to be heard. I did not know how I could do it, but I knew I wanted to try. I decided that I wanted to talk to women artists, and record the stories of their lives, their education, their art, and its importance in their lives. This project, therefore, became much more than an academic research topic, it was a very personal quest for knowledge and understanding.

Research realities

How was I going to talk to women all over the Arctic? I had no savings, no research grants, and airfares are very expensive. I had talked to women in the Fort Smith and southern regions of the NWT, but I knew little of the northern regions, except Inuvik, and what my students had told me. The scope of the project seemed overwhelming, the Northwest Territories is a vast region that is frozen most of the year. There are more than thirty communities, most with populations under 1000 and accessible only by air, or sometimes by water or ice road during the winter. My former students lived in many of these communities, and I thought perhaps they could help me identify and get in touch with the important women artists as they had done
before. Still, how was I going to travel to all these communities? I simply couldn’t: travel logistics and lack of funds were harsh realities. I had to find another way.

I remembered hearing about The Great Northern Arts Festival, and that it was held during July every year. I knew artists were brought to Inuvik from all over the Arctic, and I thought maybe I could talk to participating women artists while they were in this central location. I wrote to the Festival coordinator, asking if I could work for the Festival in exchange for a place to sleep on the floor. A few weeks later Charlene Alexander called me and offered me a summer student job at the Festival for five weeks during July and August, 1992. I was thrilled, and I paid my own airfare, stopped a week in Fort Smith on my way North, a day in Yellowknife, then on to Inuvik, where I house-sat for someone who was on holidays.

To my delight, I found there were two festivals happening while I was there beside other major events. The Western Arctic Crafts Festival and The Great Northern Arts Festival, as well as the Inuit Circumpolar Conference and the Northern Games were all being held the latter part of July. People came from all over, and the Town of Inuvik grew from 3000 to 6000. The artists who participated were chosen to represent their communities in both the Arts Festival and Crafts Festival, which seemed criteria enough to validate their recognition as artists for my study. It was a very exciting and busy summer, and through my work at the Festival I was introduced to many of the women I later interviewed.

Education informs and transforms personal experience

In the two decades of adulthood before I went North, I had been a single parent, raised two daughters, got a Masters degree, worked four jobs in four careers at one time, and renovated several old houses on my own. Yet, when I began the doctoral program, I knew little of women's
history, and nothing of feminist theory. A women's studies course, *The History of Women in Education*, made me increasingly aware of inequities in my personal life. I learned about the Suffragettes in England, the North American women's movement, and I began to recognize my own privileged education and class. I had always thought of my parents as relatively poor, yet my childhood was rich in so-called 'cultural' experiences. I was taken to museums, galleries and concerts, and was encouraged to believe I could do anything I wanted to do. I was unaware of gender discrimination, until I realized I had experienced it myself. This was not separate and irrelevant theory, but holistic learning which enhanced and instructed my very personal view of life.

Studying feminist theory on an academic level shook my consciousness on a personal and emotional level. I had remarried when my daughters were in their late teens, and my husband had promised to support me through the Ph.D. But he deserted me after just one week of school, a month after my mother died. Then my husband returned after a few months, and later I finally realized I was tolerating an abusive marriage for reasons I did not understand. Something had to be done, and my new awareness empowered me to act. In the second year of the Ph.D. I sought advice from a lawyer and I left my abusive husband in the middle of a term. I moved all my furniture into storage, found homes for my dog and cat, and impatiently worked through my anger and grief. After I left, my life was threatened repeatedly, and I sought help through the RCMP, Battered Women's Support Services, the UBC Women Students' Office, and poured my anguish into writing and artwork. My new consciousness was very disruptive to my studies, but my daughters were very supportive, and I managed to pass the term. Processing my emotions through art and singing helped greatly. My experiences helped me understand the theory I was learning, which in turn, informed my new awareness of what was happening to me and others.
My traumatic experiences also gave me a new appreciation of some of the issues I had experienced in the North. My women students had shared their experiences of abuse, and I had a new capacity to understand. My impression that the women's artwork was their key to self-esteem, was reinforced. I wanted to learn more about them, and what their artwork meant to them. Did their artwork and education empower them as mine had done? The theoretical learning of the doctoral program became more relevant, my research direction clearer, and the topic more urgent and personal.

The next two summers, 1993 and 1994, I served as Assistant Coordinator of The Great Northern Arts Festival, each summer living in Inuvik for longer periods of time—three months and five months. I recorded more interviews each year and followed up on the ones I had done earlier. I also collected newspapers, documents, took photographs, videotaped, visited people and places, and experienced first hand many aspects of life in the Western Arctic.

Immersion in the field

In January 1995 I was asked to coordinate the first fine arts program ever offered in the Western Arctic, in Inuvik, NWT, at the newly divided western half of Arctic College now called Aurora College. I accepted the challenge, spending fourteen months (March, 1995 to May, 1996) planning and coordinating a one-year Fine Arts Certificate Program. I shared a house with Charlene Alexander, who I had first interviewed in 1992 as a stranger and her new husband Brian, and their Golden Retrievers. As before, I learned a great deal from my students, my colleagues, my friends, and by being part of the community.

In summer, 1995, my fine arts students needed a practicum, so we opened a storefront exhibit area in Inuvik so they could talk with the public, and some students worked for the
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Festival. We got to know a lot of people in the region, and that Fall I was elected to the Festival Board. I was no longer just a summer resident, I was becoming an accepted member of the community. During the winter I taught during the day, and worked evenings/weekends on my research transcripts. I talked to more women, and updated information as I could. In July/August 1996, I worked again for *The Great Northern Arts Festival* in Inuvik, doing inventory, pricing, and organizing and facilitating artist seminars. I got to know both artists and other people of the region.

All of this work, over seven years in the Arctic, provided an opportunity to learn about arctic cultures, peoples and artwork first hand, and to meet and work with aboriginal and non-native colleagues and students. I observed and experienced a rich variety of events in the South Slave, Yellowknife and Mackenzie Delta regions of the Western Arctic. I felt the tension between the different cultural heritage groups, witnessed overt acts of racism, and looked for ways to understand. I went to concerts, presentations, dances, aboriginal healing circles, and other community events, in order to learn and observe.

Through all of this, it seemed to be the women who were the steadying force. They fought for education and community health, kept families together, and bridged old and new traditions. They quietly went about their work, doing art or getting more education, and making a difference in their communities. Non-native women seemed to be organizers of major events like festivals that benefitted all, and I tried to learn about the complex interrelationships between cultures. When I reflect on these events, the dynamic changes occurring in the lives of arctic people and communities seem quite astounding.

Throughout the years since 1990, I have kept in touch with many of my former students, and I saw some of them every summer. They helped me identify women artists from their
communities that I should talk to. They introduced me to people I would not have been able to meet, and took me to places I could never have visited without them. They even took me in their boats to fish camps, community festivals, and to visit prominent elder artists. Because of their assistance I was able to talk to the wide range of women included in this study, for which I am grateful. I interviewed some former students themselves, because they are recognized as outstanding local artists, or they served as cultural interpreters. It was a rich and personal experience. I was not just a stranger, I was a participant observer, involved in the community, collecting experiences of a lifetime.

**Definition of Terms**

A number of terms used in this dissertation require defining. For clarification, the word 'Arctic' when used as a noun describing a particular place, is capitalized, such as 'the Arctic'. When 'arctic' is used as an adjective, as in 'arctic communities', it is not capitalized.

The usage of some terms is a very sensitive issue in the Arctic. The terms 'aboriginal' and 'indigenous' are commonly used almost interchangeably, although they have somewhat different meanings. Aboriginal means the original inhabitants of a country, and originated from Colonial descriptions of land ownership by aboriginees in Australia. The words 'indigenous' and 'native' are sometimes used as synonyms for 'aboriginal'. The word 'indigenous' is often used in defining 'aboriginal', with further criteria, connoting people that originally inhabited a land before the arrival of colonists. The word 'indigenous' means that which is produced naturally in a region. Common usage in the Arctic reflects these definitions. On some NWT government forms, there are boxes to check cultural heritage, including Inuit, Dene, Metis, and European, with a category called 'non-native indigenous', meaning a person of 'non-native' origin who was
born in the NWT. The term 'aboriginal' would not be used in this way. Berger quotes The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms: 'In this Act, "aboriginal peoples of Canada" includes the Indian, Inuit, and Metis peoples of Canada' (Berger 1982). Terms like indigenous and aboriginal do not refer to particular groups of people, so I have not capitalized them here. Specific cultural groups of people are capitalized. 'Native' is sometimes used by non-natives to describe all indigenous people, but the Inuit women I talked to used the term 'native' to mean those of 'Indian' heritage (see E. Klengenberg).

The term 'Indian' is now considered derogatory, as awareness grows of the pride, culture and languages lost in residential schools (LaRoque 1975). The term 'Status Indian' is a specific legal classification of Indian peoples in the Indian Act of 1876, revised 1951 and 1985. In the Indian Act, Indian peoples were required to register as members of a particular band and given a number to receive 'treaty' monies and rights.

Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (1986) explains:

Status Indians are those who are registered with the Federal government as Indians according to the terms of the Indian Act. Non-status Indians are those who are not registered. An Indian woman who married a non-Indian, for example, was no longer considered to be an Indian within the meaning of the act. Nor were her children. The reverse situation did not hold true, however, and it became possible for non-Indian women marrying Indian men to gain actual Indian status. This blatant discrimination against Indian women lasted for nearly 100 years, until long overdue amendments to the Indian Act were passed in 1985 (p. 60).

'First Nations' is not used much in the Arctic, but 'First Peoples' is used occasionally. The Dene people refer to the 'Dene Nation' collectively, which includes five groups in the Western Arctic. Most often Dene peoples refer to themselves by regional group names such as Slavey or Gwich’in. The term 'Metis' was and is used to describe specific peoples of mixed Native
and French heritage, but is sometimes used more broadly to describe anyone of mixed heritage, along with the derogatory term 'half-breed'.

The term 'Inuit' is a modern term for 'Eskimo' which was recently disfavored as demeaning to Inuit, especially in the Eastern Arctic. In the Western Arctic, some women still refer to themselves as 'Eskimo' depending on their awareness of terms and what they are used to (see B. Lennie summary Chap. 3). The Inuit were not included in the Indian Act, and there were no treaties affecting Inuit lands until recently. The Inuit are governed directly by Canada, and were given numbered tags at birth to wear for identification (Crowe 1991). The Inuvialuit are a group of Inuit living in the Western Arctic, and are related to Alaskan Inuit (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada 1984). An individual of Inuit heritage is referred to as an 'Inuk'. An Inuvialuit woman of mixed blood would never be called 'Metis', but might refer to herself as 'Inuit' with 'white' or 'Indian' relatives. The term 'Inuit' is not used in Alaska, the Yup'ik and Inupiat use the general term 'Eskimo'.

My students explained that many arctic peoples have mixed blood, and that heritage is sometimes hard to figure out. They said now that land claims have been settled, some people have a choice of which group to register with. The choice depends on several things: the amount of blood they have from parents of different heritage groups, where their traditional hunting lands lie, and formal registration and recognition by that group (see R. Wright summary Chap. 3). It is not a simple matter. For instance during the Festival when identifying artists for Gwich'in or Inuvialuit artist awards, we had to submit names of potential artists to each group office, and they told us which artists were legally registered as part of their group. I interviewed a woman I was told was Gwich'in, but she corrected me, saying she was 'Inuk'.
The 'non-native' group of people living in the Western Arctic may include Caucasians, blacks, mid-Eastern and Asian individuals from a variety of religions. The majority are 'white', of European heritage, and Christian. Sometimes this group is referred to as 'whites' or a minority of 'others'. The various terms can be confusing, but awareness of the history of the region assists in developing a sensitivity and understanding of these complex issues.

Nature of the Western Arctic Community: Past and Present

The Land

The geographic region defined in this study as Western Arctic generally covers the western half of the Northwest Territories and may include the Yukon. The southern boundary is the sixtieth parallel, the eastern boundary roughly follows the diagonal line of the Canadian Shield or 'treeline'.

This lies west of what is generally called the 'Eastern Arctic', which is 'barren ground' or permafrost above the trees (see Figure 1). The Eastern Arctic coast is inhabited by Inuit, and will become the new territory of Nunavut in 1999. Baker Lake is the only inland community on permafrost inhabited by Inuit.

The Western Arctic contains two kinds of land: 'permafrost' barrens or 'tundra', and the sparsely treed 'taiga' along the tree-line and sub-arctic boreal forest. The Towns of Fort Smith, Fort Simpson, and Hay River lie along rivers in the southerly sub-arctic region of the Western Arctic. The sub-arctic has trees of various sizes, forest animals, and houses that may have basements.

The capital and largest city Yellowknife, and Inuvik, the largest town north of the Arctic Circle, sit right at the edge of the treeline. This diagonal line is sometimes called the 'Canadian
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A hiking trail through the Mackenzie Mountains.

Taltat Nigait National Park Reserve
Valleys, coastal highlands and the Hornaday River.

Aularvik National Park Reserve
Muskoxen by the thousands in the Thomsen River valley.

Great Bear Lake
Home of some of the largest lake trout ever caught on a hook and line.

Fig. 1: Map of Canadian Western Arctic Territories & Nunavut borders.

The political division of the present Northwest Territories planned for 1999 falls partly along the treeline. (Arctic Tourism 1996).
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Shield'. The Mackenzie River Delta communities near Inuvik lie at this northern edge of the trees, where spruce trees are small 'taiga', rock is exposed, the ground is 'permafrost', and buildings are set up on poles. Tuktoyaktuk, only a hundred miles north of Inuvik, is above the treeline on the barren 'tundra'. The severely cold climate of all this land defines the existence of the animals, plants, and humans that survive there. Generally, the Inuit lived along the coast above the treeline (Morrison and Germain 1995), while the Dene lived inland along rivers and lakes in treed regions.

Western Arctic peoples

For hundreds of years in the Arctic two indigenous cultures co-existed: the Inuit, and the Dene. Both groups of people were nomadic, hunting some of the same animals. The Inuit peoples camped along the arctic coast north of the treeline, while the Dene peoples lived below the treeline, usually inland along rivers and lakes in woods and forests. The men of both cultures hunted, fished, and/or trapped, while women's essential roles were bearing and raising children, sewing warm clothing and footwear, and preparing hides and food to contribute to family survival (NWT Education 1989, Hall 1986). They were drawn or photographed by numerous visitors such as Edward Curtis (Silversides 1994).

The vast distances and isolation of the Inuit and Dene groups of peoples, allowed wide variations in language and customs to develop within each large group over hundreds of years (Crowe 1986). The Inuit people in the Western Arctic are known as 'Inuvialuit' and are related to the Alaskan Inuit to the west along the coast (NWT Education 1991). They have quite different customs from the Copper Inuit living in the Central Arctic (Hall et al, 1994), as well as from the Eastern Arctic Inuit (Bruemmer 1985).
The Dene nations living in the Western Arctic include the Gwich'in, Sahtu Dene, Hare, Mountain, North and South Slavey, Dogrib, Yellowknife, Chipewyan and Beaver Indian peoples (Thompson 1994, McMillan 1988, Comeau and Santin 1990). Sometimes the Dene are referred to as Athapaskan (Duncan 1989), related by language to groups as far south as New Mexico. The people themselves use various names for particular groups, and both names and spellings can be confusing. The Dene and Inuit peoples had a history of trading, but rarely mixed except in the Delta region at the mouth of the MacKenzie River on the Beaufort Sea (Crowe, 1991 and Clark, D., 1991). Each group maintained a separate co-existence, occasionally warring, until the arrival of the European-based explorers and traders.

The newcomers gave both indigenous groups more reason to co-operate as well as to fight (Crowe 1991). The indigenous peoples openly welcomed the newcomers, and gladly traded what they had for new goods. They welcomed the chance to learn new ways and expected to gain new riches and conveniences. The first wave of newcomers did not stay, they merely passed through, trading with indigenous peoples, and went on their way (Newman 1989, Karklins 1992). This was true of explorers, traders, and whalers until the late nineteenth century.

Settlements grow into communities

About a hundred years ago, non-indigenous people began to stay in settlements in the Western Arctic, assuming positions of authority: first traders and trading posts, then churches (Fumoleau 1973, Marsh 1991, Sutherland 1984), then stores, RCMPolice (Dobrowolsky, 1995), medical, government (Stoneman-McNichol 1983), business, and educational staff. A third, very powerful, cultural group emerged, collectively known as 'white', 'non-native', Euro-Canadian, or 'others' (Economic Development and Tourism 1995).
It was the newcomers who eventually required indigenous children to go to residential schools run by 'white' religious sects, either Roman Catholic or Anglican (Fumoleau 1973, Marsh 1991). These schools were located only in the larger communities (Special Committee on Education 1982), so the children were there for years at a time, losing the influence of their parents, home culture and language (Haig-Brown 1988, Barman et al 1986, Johnston 1988, Jaine 1993). In school the children were taught the ways of the 'whites', but some began a secret cultural exchange with other children in the residences (see M. Igutsaq summary Chap. 3), which may have kept traditions alive. For years, qualified teachers from southern Canada were flown in who did not know the cultures and who barely tolerated the extreme climate. Most were unhappy and left, causing high teacher turnover, continuity problems in schools, and bad feeling among the indigenous peoples.

Today, non-native 'others' still hold most of the positions of authority in all communities, but the power is slowly being reclaimed by the indigenous peoples (Dickerson, 1992, Freeman et al, 1992, Purich 1992). Indigenous languages are being revived: eight languages have gained official status in the Western Arctic, six of them aboriginal (see Figure 2). Now, people from each community, who speak the local languages, are being trained as teachers for at least two years at Arctic and Aurora Colleges (see N. LaFleur Summary, Chapter 3). The isolation of many

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Fig. 2: Eight official languages. (Arctic Tourism, 1996).
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communities means that it is expensive but necessary to provide schooling at the local level (Special Committee on Education, 1982). Non-natives still have a huge impact on the cultures of the North (Maldaver 1993, Trigger 1985, Fisher 1992), but changes have begun to take place.

Although 40% of the population is under the age of 17, most communities cannot afford to provide school past grade nine or ten. So many NWT children still have to go to one of the larger centers, and live in residence away from their families, to complete high school to Grade 12. They find this extremely difficult (see B. Lennie summary Chap. 3), unless they have family nearby. This is one reason for the high NWT drop-out rate in Grade 10.

All three cultural groups now co-exist in various proportions in Western Arctic communities. Some communities are predominately one indigenous culture, but most have a mixture of heritage groups. All groups have been affected by the rise and fall of the fur, whaling and petroleum industries, and must now find alternate sources of income (Aquilina 1981, Berger 1991, Dickerson 1992, Smith 1967). When these industries were thriving between the turn of the century and the 1960s, many traditional hunters and trappers sold their dog teams and went to work in the new wage economy. In doing so, they lost their traditional skills and the ability to live 'on the land' (LaRoque 1975).

Art is now viewed by government as one viable economic alternative to hunting (NWT 1992). The traditional way of life on the land is lived by very few today, although most indigenous people still enjoy weekends at camps 'in the bush' (Maldaver 1993, Hall 1986). I talked with several women who still live in a traditional way (see M. Lennie summary Chap. 3).

The vast social changes occurring with the settling of land claims and emerging political structures have affected all peoples (Frideres 1993, Coates and Powell 1989, Smith 1967). A good education is beginning to be recognized by all as one key factor in coping (Ellis & Bryant,
1990) and is a means to good jobs and regular income. Formal education is increasingly being seen as a way to perpetuate cultural heritages. The NWT has a unique governance system, a concensus legislative assembly rather than an opposition party system. The indigenous peoples are reclaiming power through learning aboriginal languages, signing land claims (Purich, 1992, Indian Affairs & Northern Development, 1984), learning how to function within government structures, and by training aboriginal teachers. Self-government is a fact of the future, and research is in progress on the Inuviluit people's views and fears (see B. Lennie summary Chap. 3).

All cultural groups have recently expressed the need to understand and cooperate with each other more fully to ensure the survival of future generations. A number of regional symbols acknowledge the three main cultural groups. For instance, the logo of the Town of Inuvik shows the housing styles of the three cultures under a midnight sun (see Figure 3). The Great Northern Arts Festival logo symbolizes the clothing styles of all the indigenous peoples of the Arctic, along with newcomers, dancing around an inukshuk under the midnight sun (Fig. 4).

In 1962 a triangular sculpture, symbolic of cooperation between the three cultures, was erected by the Town of Inuvik. It is called The Diefenbaker Monument, which stands in front of the elementary school, formerly the residential school, to encourage intercultural cooperation (Fig. 5). In 1970 the NWT adopted a three-figure symbol of "the North's Inuit, Dene and non-aboriginal cultures living as one North of 60" (Northern News Services, 1993, p. 3) (Fig. 6). A large sculpture of these three figures stands outside the high school in Inuvik.
Artistic Production in the Western Arctic

Most women in non-industrial world societies created articles to be used (and discarded) by their families such as clothing, footwear, or items of household decoration or use (Barber 1994, Chadwick 1990, Weiner & Schneider 1989, Chanda, 1993). They used available materials, which in the Western Arctic included animal skins, bones, stone, wood and tundra plant
materials (Miles 1963). Materials and techniques introduced by European explorers, whalers, and missionaries were incorporated into the traditional aboriginal designs (Karklins 1992), and women became known for, and were very proud of, the quality of their stitches and designs (see B. Ruben summary, Chap. 3). The 'traditional' women's artwork of all three cultures is now interwoven with new materials and techniques, and must be understood in its historic context.

The artistic production of each of the three cultural groups has been influenced by the others as they have developed together in the Western Arctic region over the last hundred years, especially in the Delta region at the mouth of the Mackenzie River on the Beaufort Sea (Duncan 1989). Influences documented in this study include family, historic education and church practices, necessity, changes in society and traditional ways of life, politics and government, various economic pressures including the decline of the fur industry, the Arctic landscape and the climate. These themes run throughout the women's summaries in Chapter Three of this dissertation.

Artistic production is also influenced by gender roles. Indigenous women's art forms were traditionally different from those created by men, and were unsigned. Women originally sewed family clothing as a matter of survival, and individual styles developed slowly (Hall, Oakes & Webster 1994, Thompson 1994, and Hall, Tepper & Thompson 1994). Indigenous men produced small carvings or drawings related to hunting beliefs, or for historical record (Clark, D., 1991). Some early artwork appears to have had other uses or intrinsic value. Now, in a development parallel to the Arts and Crafts Movement in Europe and America (Naylor 1971, The Fine Art Society Ltd. 1973, Anscombe 1991, and Callen 1979) many women living in the Western Arctic continue to make art for family use as well as for sale. Of the women I interviewed for this study, thirty make a major portion of their living through producing artwork.
Many use their expertise also in their teaching of children. Art is now viewed by government as a viable economic alternative to hunting to help provide for families (Dept. of Culture & Communications 1995). This study centers on women who create art now, and their perspectives on education and artwork.

**Rationale and Statement of the Problem**

Three cultures co-exist in the Western Arctic, closely in all communities, and with almost equal populations in the Mackenzie River Delta, including Dene, Inuvialuit (Inuit) and a group generally known as 'white' or 'non-native'. The indigenous groups are, within a generation, being brought from hunter-gatherer societies directly into the technological age without going through an industrial revolution. They are very close to the old ways, which are still within memory of some elders. Many elders were born in an igloo or 'on the land', but their grandchildren live in houses and are using computers in school, and they may never have seen an igloo.

The decline of the fur industry decreased family incomes, and devalued the skills of hunters, who had to find new ways to provide for their families. Residential schools stripped the middle generations of their languages and customs, and now they are trying to reclaim them before all the elders who remember them are gone. The women told me that many indigenous people have become accustomed to government support, and seem to have lost much of their own independence, initiative, languages, self-sufficiency and pride.

The cultural groups co-existing in the Western Arctic are sometimes polarized. They seem to cooperate awkwardly, but are somewhat suspicious of each other, and rarely acknowledge all contributors to the cultural fabric of communities. Non-natives have held most of the positions of power (government, police, education, religion, healthcare, and business) for the last
fifty or more years and are sometimes openly resented. Racism and prejudice are evident in all sectors, but are often hidden and seldom acknowledged. Certain individuals from all groups have gained the respect and trust of the other groups. Now, land agreements are being signed, new political powers and structures are emerging, and indigenous customs like drum dancing are being revived (Asch 1988, Cockney 1991). There is wide agreement that the indigenous people need training to take over their own self-government. The politics of creating a future government for the Western Arctic that is fair to all, causes competition, polarization and fear within a framework of cooperation.

Art is being promoted as an economic replacement for hunting, and the current economic income derived from art-related activities in some arctic communities is rated as high as 50% (Dept. of Culture & Communications 1988). In the midst of all this change, the indigenous women's traditional artwork is relatively constant. It is recognized all over the world as 'art', yet the women who create it are unknown. Their work continues to reflect traditional culture (Duncan 1989), and some excellent artist role models are working in both old and new media. There is also evidence of mutual influence between the indigenous women artists and colonial newcomers. The art of all women seems to relate to their lives in similar ways, and is promoted in several publications as 'arts and crafts'.

However, the women who create the artwork are invisible. We do not know how they learned their artistic skills, how they value their aesthetic contributions to their communities, how they relate to artists of other groups, how they contribute to cultural identity, or how future generations should be taught in all cultures. This time of drastic social change makes the understanding of the cultural groups, and their complex interrelationships, important facets of future cooperation and survival.
The role of art in all co-existing cultures, as well as how women contribute to education, art, and cultural survival, are important facts of history missing in current accounts.

**Major Questions and Themes**

A number of questions were asked of the women who participated in this study. Their comments fall into themes, which appear in the following order throughout the summary of each woman's words. Interview questions were designed to establish:

- Childhood and early learning.
- How and when the women learned artistic skills.
- Influences on their artistic work.
- The kind of artwork they do now.
- How they incorporate new materials and techniques.
- How they learn from other cultural groups.
- The role art plays in their lives, and its meaning.
- Do they consider themselves artists, and their work art?
- How they feel future generations should be taught.

These questions were asked of each woman artist, but not always asked and answered in this order. The same questions were asked of women who are arts organizers and gallery owners, with additional questions on women's images generally, the popularity of their work, value and sales, and how the cultural groups cooperate and influence each other.

**Significance of the study**

This study has implications far beyond the education of a few women living in the Arctic. This region is important as the mix of cultures provides a unique view of societies co-existing in
one region, which are moving quickly from hunting societies into a technological age. The grandmothers who were born in igloos are now learning computer skills from their children. Through listening to their perspectives on their lives and art we share in their fear of change and joy of discovery. By understanding the skills with which they adapt to their changing world, we can also learn not to be afraid.

This study is important for several reasons. First, it provides a way for the voices of women artists from the Western Arctic who have previously been silent, to be heard. Their individual and collective voices are very powerful, as we learn the importance of art in their lives. Their perspectives on how women learned artistic skills, and how and why they make art, will add to the body of research on women's lives around the world. Their stories will bring a sense of pride to women of the region, and beyond. In discussing those issues, the women acknowledge a positive link between their art, education, and self esteem.

This project is important in its examination of mutual influences between three cultural heritage groups. The women artists in this study contribute to their own culture, while appreciating the artwork of, and cooperating with, women of co-existing cultural groups. This study will enhance understanding of the role art plays in cooperating cultures, in resisting assimilation, and in maintaining cultural identity. This study provides clues to cooperation which may be used for positive change in other colonized countries of the world.

This study contributes to the body of knowledge on education in several ways. It examines how the women learned as children and how they learn from each other now. We discover how the women pass on their artistic skills, and how they feel future generations should be taught. This research provides a unique view of the ways indigenous peoples learn, so those ways can be accommodated in tomorrow's classrooms. It discovers new ways that discipline-based art
education can be used in diverse settings. The addition of these voices to existing perspectives, contributes to our knowledge of educational practice, and will foster more sensitive and appropriate art teaching. This study may impact curriculum planning and educational practice in all of Canada as well as in other colonized regions of the world.

This study highlights the importance and meaning of making art in the lives of individual women from a remote arctic region of Canada. Together they provide a powerful collective voice for women artists who co-exist within diverse cultures. This study contributes to a greater understanding of women, art and learning strategies.
CHAPTER TWO: RESEARCH STRATEGIES

This research project is about a particular group of women who create and teach art. It is about women's experiences, it is for women (and men), and it is researched and written by a woman. The focus is on women's perspectives as artists in the present, and their roles as students, daughters, wives, mothers, friends, grandmothers and community leaders in the Western Arctic forms an integral part of each woman's narrative. The research strategies employed in this study were adapted from the social sciences, and are consistent with feminist research methodologies.

Theoretical Heritage

The legacy of history

Writers of history for centuries focussed on royalty, war heroes, and other famous people, most of them men. They dealt with places, religions, statistics, events, buildings, laws, and power struggles, seldom discussing unique perspectives, conflicting points of view or feelings. There were very few accounts of the lives of ordinary people, and even fewer about women and indigenous people, as though they were invisible. Educators acknowledge those earlier historical accounts were biased and the need to rewrite history to include the contributions of these invisible populations.

Diaries or journals of certain periods of time, such as explorers' voyages of discovery, and personal letters saved by relatives or archives, provide brief glimpses into a few individual lives. The diary of Anne Frank is a notable exception: an ordinary girl's life was shared with the world through her own descriptive writing of an extraordinary experience and time. Emily Carr's
autobiographical writings (1941, 1944, 1946) provide personal insight into one woman artist's life.


... the need to make the invisible visible; the desire to provide role models and empower aspirations, the possibility that by setting a number of life histories side by side, we will be enabled to recognize common patterns of creativity that have not been acknowledged or fostered... the undiscovered self is an unexpected resource. Self-knowledge is empowering. (p.5)


Women have written their own memoirs or autobiographies to share with family and future generations (Carr, 1941, 1944, 1946, McClung 1945, Livesay 1991, Berton 1991, McCarthy 1990 & 1991, Blackman 1992). Other women have enlisted help in telling their life


The legacy of social science

Social scientists use observation and description in the process of interacting with populations being studied. This research technique is known as participant-observation. They acknowledge participation in the community, and describe and/or photograph the people, culture and context 'up close'. One advantage of this kind of research on groups of people is that the researcher can talk to individuals and ask them questions in addition to observing their behavior. Participant-observation is one aspect of ethnography, studying culture through the lives of people
living within it, which is discussed in more detail later in this chapter. Each investigative method has its strengths and weaknesses, and the legacy of scientific investigation is still felt in most research today.

The legacy of feminism

This study is not focussed on the groups or cultures sharing life in the Western Arctic, but on individual women's lives. It is grounded in feminist research methodology as explained by Lather (1991):

Feminist researchers see gender as a basic organizing principle which profoundly shapes/mediates the concrete conditions of our lives. . . . The overt ideological goal of feminist research is . . . to correct both the invisibility and distortion of female experience in ways relevant to ending women's unequal social position. (p. 71)

Feminists discuss how far women have advanced toward equality in our societies (Segal 1987, Kaplan 1986). The women included in this study discussed the roles, choices, cares, and struggles, which are central to feminism, but they did not use the term 'feminism'.

This study is consistent with feminist research practices outlined by Harding (1987b). Ethnographic methods are thought to be consistent with feminist goals as they rely upon cooperation, collaboration and discourse. Gluck and Patai (1991) discuss the cooperative and anecdotal way women talk to each other about personal and affiliative issues. Women's interviews, or oral histories, become more like conversations: "What emerges and develops through dialogue are issues--the chaotic and problematic process of two humans thinking and communicating" (Minister 1991 p. 36).

One of the avowed purposes of this study from the beginning was to illuminate the lives of women whose artwork has been known for decades, and to document and add their unheard voices to the written history of the Western Arctic region. Indigenous women traditionally made
artwork as part of their role in the family, and it was therefore their 'work'. The women of the
Western Arctic often use the terms 'work' and 'artwork' to describe what they do. They do not
differentiate it from other forms of work they do; it is all part of their role as individual women in
families and as contributors to the larger community. Now that many women also sell their
work, they have become part of the labor force working for pay, and art has become an economic
activity. The rising awareness of the significance of women's artistic activities in Inuvialuit,
Dene, Metis, as well as non-native cultures, parallels feminism's increasing attention to women's
unpaid labor in the home. This research is based on discourse between women with different life
experiences, in cooperation, collaboration and equality in a shared society. Listening to each
other as Bateson (1989) points out, even to unpleasant memories, helps us understand each
other. As we reflect on our lives and the lives of others, we begin to see ourselves in new ways.

The legacy of art and educational practice

Art education in this century has undergone great swings in practice which has affected
the politics of funding. Dorn (1994) provides a brief history of these movements over the last two
hundred years. In the last century art education has swung from teaching drawing, to child-
centered education in taste and beauty, to art in everyday life, to instrumental learning and
creative expression, to art as a discipline.

Throughout much of written history, art has been defined, valued and written by white
Eurocentric males. The arts of other world cultures were largely ignored (Janson 1969). The
traditional art of women around the world was excluded or ignored as less or unimportant 'crafts'.
Broude and Garrard (1982) explain:

Along with the dominance of a masculine value system in art and art history has often
come a blindness to female experience, or sometimes quite literally, to female existence,
even when the reality of women's roles is well documented by the art of a given place or period. (p. 5)

Broude and Garrard (1982) conclude that for women "art is not conceived as something that is higher, or separate from, life, but rather as a functional part of life itself" (p.13).

Feminism has prompted historians and educators to challenge the patriarchal system and consider new ways to think about art (Pollock 1988, Parker 1984, Chadwick 1990). Finally new histories are being written which include the achievements of women artists (Callan 1979, Blodgett 1985, Nunn 1987, Heller 1987, Weiner and Schneider 1989, Duncan 1989, Thompson 1994, Hall, Tepper & Thompson 1994, Trenton 1995), and reshape art history.

Art education was based on western ideals of 'high art' which was separate from life. Most of women's art was considered craft, and coincidentally was connected to everyday life. A number of teachers and scholars from around the world began to push for a broader approach to art education, including the art of women and cultures around the world (Young 1990, Collins and Sandell 1984 and 1996). Some of these scholars were supported by the U.S. National Art Education Association (NAEA).

This research has been supported by a Doctoral Fellowship from the Getty Education Institute for the Arts. The Getty Education Institute for the Arts supported the research of numerous scholars who focussed on art disciplines: art making, art history, art criticism and aesthetics (Perkins 1994). With drastic budget cuts overtaking schools, Getty supported the fight for the place of art in schools, introducing the term "Discipline-Based Art Education," or DBAE (Getty 1985). They promoted continued dialogue on art education by holding national conferences in 1989, 1990, 1992, 1994 and 1996. Scholars researched and reported on the connections between thinking and art (Gardner 1983 and 1993), seeing, and creativity (Berger
1972, May 1975, Ealy 1995). Other scholars documented new approaches to world cultures in art and art history (Chalmers 1996, Smith 1993), and Irwin, Rogers, & Farrell (1996) point out the unique situation of indigenous peoples. The Getty Institute has also become increasingly committed to art education and cultural diversity.

This legacy of art and education practices extends even to the Western Arctic. Art in schools in the 1960's supported other subjects and had little relevance to the art produced by a student's family. *The Great Northern Arts Festival* from 1989 perpetuated the myth, initially accepting only 'fine art' painting, printmaking and sculpture, excluding most women artists as craft persons until 1994. This was ironic, considering the Arts Festival was created initially by two non-native women (C. Alexander and S. Rose) with the goal of helping indigenous women show their work. Eventually other non-native women created the Yellowknife *Festival of the Midnight Sun*, and the *Western Arctic Crafts Festival* in Inuvik in cooperation with indigenous women, in order that all work by regional women could be shown.

These legacies influence western thinking. They affect the way art is made, taught, bought, and sold across North America as well as in the Arctic.

**A sense of urgency**

As I taught in the Western Arctic I began to hear indigenous people express a sense of urgency in getting to know elders' stories, languages and traditional skills before they are lost. I began to build small research assignments into my classes, so my students would gain the skills of how to learn about another person's life.

While a person is still alive, we can document events in shared lives, talk to others about them, or talk to them directly and record their words. We can even collect their letters, pictures,
articles or writings. A few of the women I interviewed wrote letters that add to the richness of their oral narratives.

Life histories written after a person dies are more difficult partly because the information cannot be validated by them. Family and friends may relate stories and provide photos; documents they wrote, or that were written about them, can be examined, as can artifacts they made or treasured. Most ordinary folks leave few documents and letters other than birth, marriage, taxes, graduation and death records along with a few photos. Personal recollections are more important than lists.

Several recent studies have featured interviews with living women of particular groups, some combined with writings about the women's life experiences (Brant 1984, Allen 1989, Perreault & Vance 1990, Silman 1987, Jaine & Taylor 1992, Rountree 1993, Harrington 1993). In these accounts we hear the perspectives of individual women, from the past or present discussing events or issues in their lives. Their collective voices provide powerful first-hand accounts not just of their own lives, but of issues important to them, of the time and context in which the accounts emerged.

Many of us have begun to recognize the value and urgency of listening directly and carefully to previously unheard voices while they are still in our midst. I first understood this sense of urgency ten years ago, when my sisters and I realized that our mother was dying. We wanted to know more about her life before the Alzheimer's took all her memory. We dug out old photos and got her to tell us what she remembered, and began tape recording her recollections. I wish I had also videotaped her, but at least we have a tape of her voice telling family stories, and albums full of old photos. Her brothers also helped to identify some of the people in the old
photos, but the loss of family information that died with her, prompted even more sense of urgency.

A person speaking for him/herself is very powerful. A person's view is valid as their version of the truth, but may clash with other accounts of the same event. We must remember that memory can be selective, so several accounts are better than one. A range of views provides the truest picture of an event, time or place, which is what this research provides. When oral histories include movement and sound on videotape they become a very rich and accessible inheritance.

**Ethnography**

Ethnography is actually a group of methods, including participant observation and interviews, used by social scientists for studying cultures or groups of people. The word 'ethnography' comes from the Greek 'ethno' meaning race, people, or culture, and 'graphy' meaning the process of writing, drawing, describing, or representing. Ethnography was used by Margaret Mead to study people of 'other' cultures, or 'we studying them' (Bateson 1984).

Ethnography is characterized as initially exploratory and open-ended, involving the researcher in the social context of the culture being studied, using observation and participation in varying degrees. The many descriptions of ethnography provided by noted researchers, also reveal some of the issues. Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) provide their perspective:

For us ethnography (or participant observation, a cognate term) is simply one social research method . . . drawing as it does on a wide range of sources of information. The ethnographer participates, overtly or covertly, in people's daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions; in fact collecting whatever data are available to throw light on the issues with which he or she is concerned. (p.2)
Clifford (1988) describes contemporary ethnography as different from cultural anthropology, in terms of our twentieth-century social milieu:

Ethnography, a hybrid activity, thus appears as writing, as collecting, as modernist collage, as imperial power, as subversive critique. . . . One of the principle functions of ethnography is 'orientation'. . . . Twentieth Century ethnography reflects new 'spatial practices' new forms of dwelling and circulating. Twentieth century academic ethnography does not appear as a practice of interpreting distinct, whole ways of life but instead as a series of specific dialogues, impositions, and inventions. "Cultural" difference is no longer stable, exotic otherness; self-other relations are matters of power and rhetoric rather than of essence. A whole structure of expectations about authenticity in culture and in art is thrown in doubt. (p.13/14)

Tyler (1986) describes ethnography as investigation based on common sense, cooperation, and adaptation to situations of contemporary daily life.

Clifford (1988) argues that modern ethnography can contribute to our understanding of cultures in the process of change, provide perspectives on the effects of so-called progress, and the invention and transformation of cultures through change. He grapples with questions of identity as relational and inventive. "Ethnographic texts are orchestrations of multivocal exchanges occurring in politically charged situations" (Clifford 1988, p.10).

Ethnographic methods require the researcher to 'be there', to be 'on site' or 'on location'. Clifford (1988) discusses the various roles of modern ethnography, voice and authority in studying 'other' peoples in a post-Colonial world.

. . . the questions it raises are of global significance. Who has the authority to speak for a group's identity or authenticity? What are the essential elements and boundaries of a culture? How do self and other clash and converse in the encounters of ethnography, travel, modern interethnic relations? What narratives of development, loss, and innovation can account for the present range of local oppositional movements? (p. 8)

Ethnography can help to answer these questions by going to the source and listening to the peoples within a culture or community. It can adapt to the needs of various groups,
Western Arctic Women Artists

communities, and/or cultures, and allow a researcher to use the tools and techniques which best fit the situation (Hammersley & Atkinson 1983).

The group of women artists included in this study provide insights into life in changing arctic communities through their stories. The focus is on them and their lives rather than on the cultures of the Western Arctic. This study began with an open-ended search for information, and uses a range of ethnographic methods to study the lives of individual women, presenting multivocal perspectives on the education and art of Western Arctic women.

Community support

In the Spring of 1992, when I first contemplated this research, I wrote to a number of people in the Western Arctic asking for letters of support for the project. I received a number of letters back (see Appendix 1), and I was surprised at the strength of the positive response I received. The President of Arctic College, Mark Cleveland, now Deputy Minister of Advanced Education in the NWT, offered College housing during the summers. The Council on the Status of Women wrote saying this research project was long overdue, and Jane Dragon, a Chipewyan school counsellor in Fort Smith who I later interviewed, also wrote a letter of support. Yukon College offered Research Associate status, and a Whitehorse newspaper offered to publish articles I sent them on the topic. The Government of the Northwest Territories Department of Education, Curriculum Division, offered to help publish a future book for use in the schools. An arctic magazine Up Here offered to publish articles on the project. However, the NWT Arts Council turned down my request for research funding, saying they'd like to see the research done, but couldn't help with expenses because it was related to a degree. They said they might consider assisting with publication of a book 'down the road'. I proposed my idea to business people, and
two bookstore owners in Inuvik and Fort Smith said they'd help with publishing a book anyway they could. When I talked to NWT women and my former students, they said "It's about time someone asked us our opinion."

UBC Ethics Review, and NWT Science Institute

In the Spring of 1992, I applied to the University of British Columbia Behavioural Research Ethics Board for permission to conduct the study, even though I had not yet submitted my proposal to my committee. I prepared consent letters with a tear-off portion at the bottom for the women to sign. The letter explained the study to the women, the tear-off portion for my use had a consent statement and a place for them to sign their name, address and date. I wanted to take advantage of the opportunity to work in Inuvik that summer, and UBC faculty advised me to 'go and collect everything you can'. I was already in Inuvik when I received a conditional permit from the Ethics Board. The original permit stated I was to ask permission of local Band Councils before talking with any women.

I talked with Bev. Lennie, an Inuvialuit former student about it (later interviewed), and she wrote a letter to the UBC Behavioural Research Ethics Board in support of my study. She explained that the Western Arctic is different from the situation in southern Canada. She firmly explained that in the Arctic there are few reserves, that in Inuvialuit communities there are no Band councils, and that the indigenous women can speak for themselves or say 'no' quite well, so permission from male-dominated councils, where they exist, is not needed in this region. After a few weeks the UBC Behavioural Research Ethics Board granted permission for me to pursue the study in Inuvik, interviewing women over a period of three years.
The Science Institute of the Northwest Territories also required that I apply for a research licence, and that I report to them on my research activities each year. Beginning in 1992, I applied for a NWT Research licence under my former married name Delisi and was granted permission to interview women in the Western Arctic both in 1992 and 1993 in the Fort Smith and Inuvik regions (see Appendix).

However, in the third year, 1994, the Science Institute regulations changed, and my permit required me to write to all small communities I wanted to visit, and ask permission of the mayor to talk to certain named individuals. So, I wrote to Aklavik, Fort McPherson, Arctic Red River (now Tsiighetchic), Tuktoyaktuk, Holman and Paulatuk, asking if I could visit, including the names of resident women I wanted to talk to. Only Tuktoyaktuk replied and granted permission, so I was not allowed to travel to the other communities and talk to more women as I wanted to in 1994. However, I had already talked to a number of women from these communities in the previous two summers, either while I was visiting there, or while they were in Inuvik. The Town of Inuvik is the regional center for shopping, sports events, medical and dental visits so families are always coming in and out from outlying areas. I could talk to people I already knew while they were in Inuvik. The airfares to communities like Holman and Paulatuk are very high, and I could not afford to go there. I was limited to the women I could talk to in Inuvik, and with the added help and contacts of my former students, I was able to arrange to talk to many women while they were in Inuvik.

Ethnographic research in an arctic setting

The women included in this study provide multiple views of life as individual women artists living in the Western Arctic. They were chosen generally on the basis of recognition as
artists (or arts teachers/organizers) either by their communities, or through selection by their home communities to participate in two arts festivals in Inuvik, NWT: The Great Northern Arts Festival, and the Western Arctic Crafts Festival. The interviews were recorded on video and audiotape to allow the women's voices to be heard individually and directly, and to assist later study on the above issues. Supporting documents such as notes, letters, newspapers, booklets, government publications, pictures and archival materials were also gathered, and used to provide background information and documentation.

The primary sources for this research project were approximately thirty women artists. Secondary sources were approximately 15 women who were arts organizers and teachers. In all, I talked with more than 45 women, representing fairly equal numbers from the three main cultural heritage groups: Inuvialuit, Dene, and non-native, with a few Metis, and a few Inuit from the Eastern Arctic. Many of these women I saw every summer for five years. Others I formally interviewed only once, but I saw them in town, talked with them informally, and kept notes on changes in their lives.

A participant observer

In Chapter One I explained how in 1992 I went to Inuvik by way of Fort Smith and Yellowknife. Once in Inuvik I felt the pull between the stances and roles of participant, observer, tourist and respectful visitor. I was hired to work at the Festival so I was a participant working within the community, which also gave me an introduction to all the artists. I was able to observe people and activities unobtrusively in my work with the Festival, while I was not actively doing research. I was asked to document the Festival on video for the Festival Board, so my videotaping had a dual role, and sometimes I had to choose which would predominate. At least
one woman was confused by my asking her for an interview; she thought it was for the Festival. At times language was a problem in understanding the artists clearly. I walked everywhere, which allowed me to observe the community in action, even though I was bothered by blackflies and mosquitoes.

Observation: The Pokiak River Festival

In 1993 Bev and Johnny Lennie took me with them and four of their children in their boat over to Aklavik to the Pokiak River Festival. Aklavik is an old traditional community with a mix of Dene and Inuvialuit peoples, and is across the Mackenzie delta from Inuvik. Along the way we stopped at old campsites and saw log homes and boats disintegrating in the elements. I felt the sense of history and an urgency to get these sites documented before they were completely gone. After six hours in a small outboard boat, we approached an island with a big open space where many boats were tied up. We could hear music playing and saw smoke rising from fires. We could see canvas tents set up all round, most of them were open and elders were sitting inside visiting or playing cards, while other tents had food cooking. Children were playing all around, and everyone seemed happy and relaxed.

I was aware of maybe a hundred people, almost all indigenous, and I was a stranger, one of perhaps five non-native people there. I felt very 'out of place' and that I stuck out, so I stayed close by the Lennies, who knew everyone and greeted them warmly. I felt that I was accepted as a stranger as long as I was with them. As we walked through the tents I noticed that most of the elder women wore kerchiefs on their heads, and traditional decorated parka covers. Some babies were dressed in traditional parka covers too, but the middle generations of people all wore store-bought clothes. The only sign of indigenous traditional clothing was in some of their footwear,
mukluks with rubbers worn over the soles. We all went to watch the dancing. A country band from Edmonton began to play a limbo, and everyone from grandmas to little kids lined up to try to wiggle under the bar. The mix of cultures and generations was astonishing to me. Dene and Inuvialuit people in parkas doing the limbo to a country band, on an island in the middle of the Pokiak River north of the Arctic Circle! I wanted so much to videotape, but it seemed disrespectful when I was their guest at what seemed like a large family gathering.

When the Lennie's oldest daughter, Crystal (age 15), asked if she could use my video camera, I said 'sure'. I showed her how to work it, and she spent the next two hours videotaping things I felt I couldn't. The subject of her footage was different from what I would have captured, and provides an 'insider' perspective. Later we visited Bev's folks in their house in Aklavik, and I took lots of photos of the kids and family there. The conflict I felt was between my several roles as a participant. The Lennies had taken me along as their friend, so it was okay to observe, but not to behave like a disrespectful tourist. I took photographs with my good camera and natural shots of the Lennie family together, and of children (see fig. 7).

Observation: A Mackenzie Delta Cabin

On the way back from Aklavik, Bev's parents followed in their boat, and we all stopped at a cabin owned by Johnny's Uncle Sam and Aunt Margaret Lennie. It is about 20 miles by boat from Inuvik, with no electricity or plumbing, and they live there year round. They bring tourists out from Inuvik to experience life on the land, cook them a meal and talk about traditional ways. Again I felt the conflict between my role as a guest and a researcher. The men went off to check the fish nets, while Margaret showed us their new metal storage shed, her sewing projects, and
The researcher in me wanted to take pictures and video, but as their guest I couldn't. Later as we were sitting inside their cabin, Margaret made bannock and tea on the wood stove. Then she showed us some fifty-year-old photos that someone had sent her to help identify people. The women talked and laughed while the men talked about other old times and ways. I wanted to tape it, so I gave Crystal the video camera, and she shot footage that I could not take myself. These two observations will be used as examples in the following discussion.

The techniques of ethnography in practice: participant and/or observer

A brief discussion of the various techniques used in ethnography will show how it is used in this study. The variation between the two terms participant and observer runs from extremes of 'complete participant' to 'complete observer', with many situations in between. The attitude
and role of the researcher can be fairly involved or fairly detached. Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) state that "Everyone is a participant observer, acquiring knowledge about the social world in the course of participation in it" (p.106). Alexander says:

To discuss participant observation and ethnography together is to recognize the substantial overlap between the two. Participant observation is a group of methods that stresses observation in the setting, informant interviewing, respondent interviewing, document analysis, artifact analysis, and informal counting of events. (1982 p.63)

The women included in this study were all participant observers of Western Arctic society, providing their perspectives on their lives and the community from their unique vantage points. As the researcher asking questions, I was also a participant observer with another unique perspective.

Observation: frames and lenses

One of the key ways ethnographers collect information is by observing and taking notes. An early form of noting observations was by drawing diagrams and pictures of a site. The researcher is an integral part of the research--it is s/he that frames the process and has to 'take note' of what is important. Berger (1972) says "... the way we see things is affected by what we know or what we believe. ... we only see what we look at. To look is an act of choice." (p.8) All that we see cannot be noticed, however, so we make further choices in deciding what to note or observe. Once something is noticed visually, then it must be described using language and writing. Thus, a number of frames have already filtered and focussed our vision before we begin to actually write something down.

The same is true of taking pictures. Both still photographs, movie film and video provide greater observational power than taking notes and drawing pictures. They can also be analysed from different perspectives once the researcher is 'back home'. Still the researcher is holding the
be impolite for me to take video, while Crystal Lennie, a member of the community, took the camera and easily took video footage. However, what she pictured was somewhat different from what I would have captured. She got her friends laughing and making faces for her, but also captured images of parents and grandparents I could not approach. I found the video camera an invaluable tool for getting data related to the interview and setting, and also used it in later study of both the women and their context.

Description: frames of language and point of view

The note-taking and documentation of ethnography are detailed and time-consuming, even with the assistance of modern tools, but again, all information is framed by the researcher. When researchers get to a new place and look around, there are many things to describe, and it is hard to know where to begin. Most ethnographers start with notes about place, date, time, their impressions, how they got there, etc. These very notes use words symbolizing meaning in a
impressions, how they got there, etc. These very notes use words symbolizing meaning in a particular language, so they are limited by the vocabulary and writing skills of the researcher even before the first word is written. One researcher might describe events and conditions quite differently than another. For instance, what do we mean when we say 'it's hot and humid'? Compared to what? Hot and humid are relative terms. When artists came to Inuvik from the high Arctic they said Inuvik was 'too hot', but people from Vancouver said it was 'light and sunny'. People's past experience frames their description of conditions. Most visitors to Inuvik comment on the midnight sun, the flies and mosquitoes, while local people hardly notice these things. Geertz (1988) gives a good example of how the researcher frames description in the process of 'being there' in the field:

The highly situated nature of ethnographic description--this ethnographer, in this time, in this place, with these informants, these commitments, and these experiences, a representative of a particular culture, a member of a certain class--gives to the bulk of what is said a rather take-it-or-leave-it quality. "Vas you dere, Sharlie?" as Jack Pearl's Baron Munchausen used to say. (Geertz, 1988 p.5)

When 'we are there', even before we begin writing or filming, our descriptions have already gone through several filtering frames. When I was visiting the Pokiak River Festival and the fish camp with the Lennies, I was experiencing the visit through my cultural frame as an outsider. I was not born there, and people did not know me. I was a stranger, I did not know their customs, and I felt like I stuck out. I was fascinated, but both my past experience and my feelings framed how I perceived and described things, even where I pointed the video camera.

New tools of observation and description

In the last century a number of new tools have been invented which enhance the observation of the ethnographic researcher. The still camera was first used about mid-nineteenth
century. Film without sound has been used to assist observation for most of this century, and with sound for several decades. Audio recording in various forms has been used for several decades and provides a reviewable audio record, capturing all sound, both what you intend to record—a person's voice—and that which you do not.

Some of the film equipment is heavy, clumsy and requires electricity. The innovation of a small video camera with a battery pack has overcome many of these limiting factors. The video camera is especially useful in capturing 'thick description' because it records an interview both visually and with sound as the person speaks. It records facial expressions, hand gestures, vocal inflections, accents, close-ups of working techniques (summaries of M. Lennie, B. Ruben, J. & B. Trennert), and captures background sounds, activities, and surroundings. It can capture an entire interview in a foreign language along with the translation for later study (summaries of P. Ugyuk, and M. Aklukjuk). New technologies, including electronic devices that record both visual and sound images, like the video camera, enhance the observational skills of a researcher, and can also assist in learning new skills.

Goldman-Segall (1991) points out how the video camera can serve as instructor for the researcher. She states that when she began her research, the camera helped to define the project:

By having to decide when to turn the camera on, what to videotape, how to hold the camera, and most importantly, how to respond to the children with this invasive tool in my hands, I defined the scope of the project. . . . Even in those early stages of videotaping, I produced results that I had not been able to produce using fieldnotes and audiotape recorders. . . . Daily I would view both the content and the technique of my shooting. This combination of instant self-instruction and feedback . . . taught me how to look at my research environment without prejudging it, how to see what was worth filming and what was not. . . With the camera, I could better respond to what the environment told me to record. (p. 476)
The new tools of video and audio tape overlap and have added greatly to the researcher's ability to observe both visual and auditory 'actions', but they require additional skills. Mead (1974) more than two decades ago questioned why there was still a tendency for researchers to use written words instead of new visual aids to observation, and suggests possible answers in the very nature of cultural change:

Much of the fieldwork that laid the basis of anthropology as a science was conducted under conditions of very rapid change, where the fieldworker had to rely on the memory of the informants rather than upon observation of contemporary events. The informant had only words in which to describe the war dance that was no longer danced, the buffalo hunt after the buffalo had disappeared. . . . Another explanation has been that it takes more specialized skill . . . to photograph and make films than it does to set a tape recorder going or to take written notes. . . . I believe the best work is done when filmmaker and ethnographer are combined in the same person. (p.5)

Using a camera, tape recorder, or videocamera along with notes still means that what is 'shot' is framed by the researcher. These devices, valuable as they may be, cannot capture everything that is going on. We point the camera in one direction, and we don't see what is going on behind the camera, nor can we leave the camera running indefinitely. Choices of what to notice and observe naturally have to be made.

Goldman-Segall (1991) relates a number of details of camera technique for getting into the center of the action in an intimate way, including holding the camera on her hip or lap to ensure eye-contact; holding the camera close to the centre of action; following activity with the camera to recreate reality; recording a whole interaction; and providing contextual footage through stepping back and panning the whole scene.

According to Geertz 'ethnography is thick description' (1973), and using photographs, film, and/or video can capture a great deal more than can be humanly noted by writing it down. These tools can be used to assist the researcher in building the 'thick description' that
characterizes good ethnography, but they do not reduce the conflict between roles. Overlapping sources of information reinforce each other, and provide description from several points of view.

Interviews

Interviews may take many forms, from unstructured conversations to formal structured ones. Each requires a different attitude and style of responding and questioning. Interviews are used widely in ethnography to gather information from various people and points of view. Every person has an individual point of view, so interviews tell us about the person as well as their ideas and perspective.

Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) point out that in ethnographic interviews the agenda is not set in advance. The issues to be covered may be listed, but the style of dialogue, questions and answers, may vary greatly within an interview. The role of the interviewer may at times appear to be quite passive, but active listening is required.

The interviews for this study were quite varied. Some were long and full of quickly-stated, detailed information, interwoven with life experience and events. Others were shorter, or constrained by language, or the time or place we found to conduct the interview. I had a set of general topics in my head that I wanted to discuss, and I talked to the women about them briefly when I set up an appointment for an interview. We reviewed them again before we started as the women signed the consent form. Sometimes the women told me their life stories without much prompting. Other women needed prompting so I asked a lot more questions.

Finding a quiet place to talk

During the festivals it was hard to find a quiet place to have a conversation, so some of the interviews have background talking and noise. We sometimes had to record in the midst of a
busy room full of people. Sometimes we found a quiet place away from crowds for awhile, and then we had to go out on the festival floor to look at the artist's work while they talked about it. We tried to arrange this in the morning before the festival opened, but mornings were also my time to conduct the artist seminars for the Festival. Again, there was a conflict of roles. Some of the interviews were conducted outside on a fire escape or stairs (E. Klengenberg) which was quiet until a big truck went by, or a rock band began tuning up (M. Igutsaq), or the wind or rain began to blow, or the bugs found us. Many were difficult to hear when I was transcribing.

One interview stands out as an example of the difficulty of finding a quiet place to talk. I was to talk with Mary Trimble in her sister's home in Inuvik. When I first arrived there seemed to be nobody else around besides Mary. I learned later that the children had been sent upstairs to their rooms to 'play quietly'. Mary was quite nervous at first, but relaxed as we talked. By the end of an hour, I could see in Mary's facial expression that something else was happening behind me. I noticed her eyes go to the stairs or to the couch. I kept the camera on her but turned around to look, and I saw that several children had crept down the stairs, and were sitting quietly both there and on a couch across from us, behind the camera. They listened intently to what their Aunt Mary had to say, and seemed fascinated that I was videotaping her. At the end of our conversation, I turned the camera around and caught the faces of half-a dozen children before they scurried away.

The children were an invisible part of the story, seen only in the concern on Mary's face which may have affected her remarks. The activity behind the camera reminded me that as the one holding and pointing the camera I was framing the story. Each interview I did made me more aware of what and how I was situating the women, and I tried to just get out of the way and
let their sharing of cultural expertise predominate so the focus was fixed on them, and I could learn.

Interview techniques

In my interviews with women artists in their homes, I wanted to show them I was truly interested in their work. I was friendly, brought cookies, and drank lots of tea with them. At our pre-interview conversation, I asked their advice about the time frame and we discussed the general topics. I tried to put them at ease, and I listened intently. I was certainly aware of the power imbalance: I was the teacher, the Festival official, the researcher—which meant that I had to be extra careful not to exploit my positions of power. I was also 'white' or non-native, and was a college teacher, so some women were suspicious of me at first.

However, as a mature woman with a rounded figure I presented a motherly or grandmotherly image, so my age and size helped me to fit in, and relate to many women, especially elders. Many women asked me if I had children, and they seemed to relax when I told them about my daughters. I learned to take my sewing and beading with me to interviews, and asked the women's advice, because I was struggling to bead a pattern I had created. Some of the women laughed at my attempts, and they took pity on me and showed me how to do it. That immediately put me in the position of student, and helped to throw the balance of power in their favor. Only two women refused to be interviewed.

When we were finished, I made sure to thank the women for their time and cooperation. I promised them a copy of the tape, and to keep in touch, but didn't promise anything quicker than I could deliver. I am not sure they understood how long it might take. Outside, I took contextual footage. When I got home, I wrote notes in my notebook, and taped the permission
slip to it. Later I reviewed the tape and made notes. I carried my videocamera, other cameras, and notebooks with me everywhere.

Technical skills of videotaping interviews

I felt conflicts of role in videotaping, was I a friend, a camera operator, a technician or an interviewer? I tried to make the camera as unobtrusive as possible and still make sure it was working. Sometimes we set the camera on a table or a book and just let it run, but then I was not in control of the picture. A tripod is helpful for long interviews, to relieve the researcher from holding the camera, but control is also lost. If a woman wanted to show me details of her work, or demonstrate a technique to do something, I kept the camera in my hands so I could zoom in on the detail of what she was showing me. I asked advice and tried to encourage an atmosphere of collaboration. When we were seated at a table, I tried to hold the camera steady on my elbow, but sometimes my arm went to sleep during an interview. I focussed the camera and then tried to hold it in place, while looking around it to maintain eye contact.

Interviews conducted at the Festival site were quite different. In this public setting, people walked in front of the camera, or shouted close by. The videocamera records everything that is happening around it, while the lens is focussed only in one direction. So the possibility of a lot of unwanted sound coming from unseen sources is very real. These sounds can be louder than what the camera is focussed on—so an external microphone is useful. Written description may also be necessary, especially if the sound is not clear on the videotape. Using the two techniques together, can help to cover all situations. Keeping a notebook and permission letters handy is also useful.
In videotaping interviews, there are many skills required of the researcher—physical skills like juggling the camera while remembering what questions to ask and being mindful of the needs of the person being interviewed. The researcher needs skills in language, speaking, writing, multiple meanings, and ethics, besides the instinct to know when things are right or wrong, a curiosity about people, and a genuine interest in the welfare of others. The skill of using a videocamera can be developed.

The interview is a valuable method of collecting diverse perspectives on a range of subjects. It can follow a number of formats from collaborative to conversational. The video camera is a valuable tool for getting both sound and visual thick description.

Collection of documents and artifacts

Ethnographers collect documents for later study to also help round out the picture or to fill holes in the complete information when the researcher is 'back home'. These documents may include (and certainly did for this study) local newspapers, tourist publications, programs for events, letters or diaries, writings about old photos and the photos themselves, government reports, brochures about festivals, schools, cultural events, committee decisions, town rulings and bylaws, and sports and community events. Depending on the focus of the research, some or all of these may be very useful in providing other views on what is being studied. Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) advise that one cannot just use this material without being conscious of its source and purpose:

... official documents and statistics should be treated as social products; they must be examined not simply used as a resource. To treat them as a resource and not a topic is to trade on the interpretive and interactional work that went into their production... (p.137)
Collection of artifacts is also necessary, and can provide valuable information about people and their culture. These might include various kinds of artwork, tools, clothing, toys, books, or other items used in daily life. Both documents and artifacts help provide background.

For this study, I examined the artwork of the women and tried to buy one piece of artwork from each woman I interviewed, but found it impossible on a student budget. However, I did collect a number of artworks from the women, which illustrate both their perspective and growth. For example, Sue Rose showed me a realistic painting done five years before I first interviewed her. It is of an Inuvialuit woman cooking on the beach in Holman. Two years later I photographed her standing in front of an exhibit of her new work which was semi-abstract, incorporating beads and rocks. Last year her work was completely abstract. How could I choose which would best exemplify her development as an artist? I first bought the realistic one which showed the influence on her work of the lifestyle of the Inuvialuit community in which she lived. The semi abstract work showed the influence of northern materials beads, quills and stones. These artifacts add a lot of information to the verbal account of Sue's life.

Validating women's words

I asked myself continually how I was hearing and understanding the voices of the women included in this project. I first transcribed the early interviews exactly as they were spoken, and sent two copies back to each woman for checking and correction. I wanted to ensure that I understood what they had said and meant. One copy was for the woman to keep, the other was for her to correct and send back in a self-addressed stamped envelope. Most of these copies were not returned to me. A few copies did come back with a few corrections of names, and I made the suggested changes.
Some women were offended at the way the speaking looks when it is written out as they spoke it, and Ruth said it made her sound 'like an ignorant Indian!' Some women wanted me to correct their English, and I made minor changes to make the meaning clearer, but I did not change sentence structure. I chose not to edit the transcripts into a single standard English form, because then it would have been my style, my words, and not theirs. The women were not equally comfortable speaking in English, or familiar with this conversational form, which results in some unevenness in both style and quantity of words. However, I believe what comes across here is more true to the speakers: the words, the idiom, the order and manner is theirs. They are individual women, describing different lives, experiences, families, and artwork. Any unevenness of articulateness and implied power is unintended. Some women demonstrate their power by speaking with just a few words, others use many words, I chose to honor their uniqueness.

In order to focus on the essence of each woman's comments, with the permission of my dissertation committee, I removed my questions from the transcripts. The intention was to remove my disruptive questions, and let the women's accounts flow as complete uninterrupted stories. There is much debate in the methodological literature about the authorial voice. Some writers would say that taking my questions, or my voice, out of the transcript simply hides rather than eliminates the power of the editor. The purpose, however, in taking out my questions was not to hide myself or my role as editor, but to allow the women's voices to be heard in uninterrupted form. I acknowledge that I moved sections of text around somewhat within each summary in order to convey the chronology of each experience in a similar order. I was careful not to change words or meaning, but I did eliminate repetitious comments, statements about personal matters, and comments the women wanted to make 'off the record'. The summaries
have therefore been edited to some extent, but I was very careful not to alter the meaning or the sense in which a statement was made.

Analysis and writing

When I began analysis of the notes, interviews, and documents I collected, questions of point-of-view, language, style and inclusion/exclusion emerged. One of the most important is, who is really speaking? Clifford & Marcus (1986) say:

The writer's 'voice' pervades and situates the analysis and objective, distancing rhetoric is renounced . . . . In classical ethnographies the voice of the author was always manifest . . . . At best, the author's personal voice is seen as a style in the weak sense: a tone, or embellishment of the facts. (p. 12/13)

Geertz (1988) discusses the issue of the author's position in Works and Lives:

The question of signature, the establishment of an authorial presence within a text, has haunted ethnography from very early on . . . . Finding somewhere to stand in a text that is supposed to be at one and the same time an intimate view and a cool assessment is almost as much of a challenge as gaining the view and making the assessment in the first place. (p.9/10)

It is impossible to separate the researcher or author from the report of her research. They are her observations, her notes, her views, her photos, and her words and style that form the summary conclusions about the work. However, with the cooperation of those interviewed, a researcher can commit to allowing all the individual perspectives to be heard, and one way to do that is to include minimally edited summaries or text of each woman's words, presented in the conversational form that is comfortable.

Ethical issues in ethnographic methods

Some important ethical questions run through ethnography which need to be clarified, though there are no easy answers. Ethics can be loosely defined as a system of moral principles or rules of conduct with respect to a certain class of human actions or a particular group or culture,
or the moral principles of an individual. There is more than one understanding of ethics, so the ethics of other cultures also require research. We must ask 'Whose ethical principles must we follow--theirs or ours?' How do we find out what the ethical principles are? It may not be easy to find out what theirs are, and we cannot assume that all our ethical principles are the same. We dare not presume that all of us basically follow a 'Christian code of ethics' based on the biblical ten commandments and the 'golden rule'. Can we simply respect the human rights of each other when there are cultural differences in interpretation and practice? What are those basic human rights?

Karl Heider (1976) said, "In science, the end cannot justify the means: results are only as sound as the methodology which produces them" (p.16). Likewise in using ethnographic methods, the end cannot justify the means, so we must be aware of ethical considerations every step of the way. What an ethnographer does is loosely structured and based on trust, so the ethics of the researcher are of utmost importance. Patai in Gluck and Patai (1991) comments on the ethics of the interview:

... many of us sense that ethics is a matter not of abstractly correct behavior, but of relations between people. The personal interview is, therefore, a particularly precise locus for ethical issues to surface--unless, that is, we are busy (as indeed we often are) supressing our awareness of those issues. (p. 145)

There are times when ethical questions will be difficult to answer and will require more research, or at least delicate handling. For instance, in my interview with Margaret Lennie, she told me that Inuvialuit people believe they have to know a person really well before they can ask questions of them. In a flash of ethnographic insight, I realized that I had already conducted forty or more interviews and asked many questions without being aware of this belief. So there I was, sitting at her kitchen table as a perfect stranger, asking loads of questions, which was not
acceptable in her culture! I resolved to keep further questions to a minimum. But how would I be able to conduct research without asking any questions? There are ways and I resolved to discuss major topics ahead of time, and then allow them to comment freely. Some probes helped to keep the conversation focused, and added other interesting information. Other specific ethical issues raised in the course of this study are discussed below.

**Framing the picture**

We have to keep asking ourselves 'What are we leaving out?' 'Who are we leaving in?'

The interview with Mary Trimble is one example:

The ethnographer’s concern is always for context. One’s focus moves constantly between figure and ground—like a zoom lens on a camera—to catch the fine detail of what individuals are doing and to keep a perspective on the context of that behavior. (Wolcott, 1988, p. 203)

When I interviewed other women in their homes, I wondered if I should get a close up of the woman, or a wider shot that included her house and children or grandchildren? The latter would make a ‘thicker description’. A few women voiced apologies for untidiness, which led me to suspect they might be embarrassed by the condition of their houses, or by the way their grandchildren were dressed. I became more sensitive to these issues, was I embarrassing her? Would I be showing her at a disadvantage? Was I constructing her thoughts, or being inconsiderate? Was it gift enough to bring cookies? Or was that my construction of social customs?

When I visited the Lennie’s cabin, I wondered if they minded if I caught them on video cleaning or smoking fish, their stories, or their talk about tourists. How do I as researcher, who at that moment is her guest, accommodate her values and respect her rights? These are not easy issues to resolve, but researchers must be aware and consider them.
Confidentiality

A related issue is that of confidentiality, which is impossible if a person's face is to be seen on camera. There are ways to protect the identity of informants if that is necessary, but it was not an issue in this study, as they all agreed to be named. Sometimes women would not tell me things until I assured them that nobody would know they said it and so I removed that part from the summaries. Audiotape has more possibility of confidentiality, but even then voices can be identified. In the case of this project, the women made their comments openly with the understanding that their knowledge and words would help future generations. There were two women who did not want to be videotaped, so they talked to me on audiotape only.

In asking women's preference or wishes, I risked not getting their cooperation at all. However, if my need for their inclusion in my research was more important than their right to refuse, then I would be exploiting them. These are not easy issues to resolve, but we must ask these questions to raise our awareness of ethical considerations. When I told the women what I was doing, one replied "It's about time someone asked our opinion", and most were happy to contribute their thoughts.

Objective, subjective, bias and inclusion

The above words raise thorny ethical issues. The term 'objective' means unbiased, not affected by personal feelings or prejudice. The term 'bias' connotes outlook, and implies intentional distortion, slanting, or prejudice. 'Subjective' lies between these two terms, meaning individual, personal, or emphasis on personal moods, attitudes, and opinions. Does this mean that all research is subjective or biased? Anthropologists have been grappling with this question for many years, and Mead (1974) suggests:
The hazards of bias, both in those who film from their own particular framework, and in those who see their own filmed culture through distorting lenses, could be compensated for not by shallow claims of culture-free procedures, but... by the corrective of different culturally based viewpoints... The oft repeated argument that all recording and filming is selective, that none of it is objective, has to be dealt with... The camera or tape recorder that stays in one spot, that is not tuned, wound, refocused, or visibly loaded, does become part of the background scene, and what it records did happen. (p.8-9)

While videotape and film help the researcher capture 'truth' of reality, they are only partial truths because they are only partial pictures. Does that mean researchers must buy many cameras and point them all in different directions? Store and bank security systems now are doing exactly that. Mead's suggestion to correct natural bias is positive: getting a range of opposing or contradictory points of view. Goldman-Segall (1991) asks questions about the subjective view:

Why is point of view so often excluded from informing us about the subject under investigation? Why have we researchers tended to adopt models for doing research that do not incorporate the personal, subjective, and interpretative approach?... Research could benefit by acknowledging the intimate relationship between the seer and the seen or between the observer and the observed... video recording for research purposes cannot be without point of view. (p.474)

Leacock (1976) discusses film-oriented ethnologists who tried to be objective in observing and recording events using video and film:

The rules of this game are often very strict: never ask a question; never ask anyone to do anything; never ask anyone to repeat an act or a phrase that you missed;... If the same people film the material and edit it, the results can be summarized as 'aspects of the observer's perception of what happened in the presence of a camera.' (p.144)

Experts seem to agree that even the most 'objective' type of research, using a video camera on a stationary tripod in a corner of a classroom, still has an obvious point of view. How can we ensure that our perspective does not dominate those that we are observing? One suggestion is to get a multitude of different viewpoints on the same topic, which is what I chose
Another ethical issue has to do with inclusion: who should be included or excluded? I wanted to talk with recognized women artists, and I obviously could not afford to talk to every woman in every community. The 'recognition' criteria included selection for Festival participation, several recommendations from community leaders and economic development officers, and/or several references from other artists I spoke to. I had to make a decision to include as many established women artists as possible, to try to find a balanced number from each cultural group, and a sampling of ages, experience, and artists working in various media.

The first summer of my research in 1992, on my second day in Fort Smith, I was walking down the road when a woman stopped to give me a ride. She was a French businesswoman, and said she had heard that I was recording histories of women in the arts. She cautioned that I must not leave out the white women, that white women had made a long and often costly personal contribution to the community and the region. She said that sometimes the indigenous peoples, in their drive to take their power back, ignored the role of the white people in building communities. I was surprised that she knew who I was and what I was doing, and that news travels so fast.

I thanked her and thought about her suggestion to include the contributions of people from 'other' cultures who helped build towns and the region. Her comments helped shape this study, as I saw continuously the substantial contributions of non-natives, and that they are an important influence in Western Arctic society. As a non-native woman, I would be studying the 'other' if I only examined the lives of indigenous women. I felt my research would have more...
balance and validity if I examined the lives of women in all major cultural groups sharing life in the Western Arctic.

If we admit with Goldman-Segall (1991) that there is no such thing as objectivity in ethnographic research, we can at least be aware of our degree of subjectiveness. We must also communicate our point of view both to our collaborators and to our audience. As a 'white' or non-native woman, I tried to be as 'objective', open-minded, empathetic and respectful as possible to all the women I interviewed. I wanted to learn, and like Cruikshank (1991) I am grateful to all the women of this study who were my teachers. This is one more example of the ethical issues researchers must be aware of--constantly questioning the motives of our research and the reasons for our personal involvement.

Voice, authorship and signature

There is a great deal of discussion on the issue of voice both within feminist research (Harding 1987b, Lather 1991, Bateson 1989, Gluck & Patai 1991) and without (Clifford & Marcus 1986, Geertz 1988, Clifford 1988). We recognize that in research on humans, the 'voices' in our research interviews are either shaped by, or are framed partly by our own intentions or questions. Clifford and Marcus (1986) suggest one way to allow the voices of informants to be heard:

Once informants begin to be considered as co-authors, and the ethnographer as scribe and archivist as well as interpreting observer, we can ask new, critical questions of all ethnographies. However monological, dialogical, or polyphonic their form, they are hierarchical arrangements of discourses. (p. 17)

Voices speak through symbolic language, idioms, and dialects, which are often connected through regional understandings. For three women, however, an interpreter was needed because the women did not speak English. Their words appear here in English, as they were translated on
camera. There are measures also to allow the voices of informants to be heard through co-authorship, video and audio recording. A researcher cannot assume that s/he will understand even if people speak the same language, so an explanation may be required. There are gender and class issues here too, as some topics will not be translated the same way by members of the opposite sex or a different class. One possible solution is immediate translation on camera during an interview, which takes twice as long, but the evidence of both versions is on a tape that can be studied later. I videotaped two interviews that were translated from Inuktitut on camera (M. Akulukjuk and P. Ugyuk).

The way in which written accounts are bound by language is discussed by Lather (1991):

Language is delimitation, a strategic limitation of possible meanings. It frames, it brings into focus by that which goes unremarked. . . . I am keenly aware that I write in a time when the formerly unsaid/unheard are becoming increasingly visible and audible. (p. xix)

Lather also discusses the humanism of the interview as a research strategy "constructing meaning through negotiation with research participants" (1991 p. 110), which would give them control over their voice. In this research project, I was adamant that the voices of the women themselves be presented as closely as possible to the way they spoke, hence summaries of their words are presented in Chapter Three. I feel they speak eloquently for themselves, that the resulting polyphony is much more interesting and natural than anything I could ever say. I did ask some questions and I pointed the camera, so I framed their comments to some extent.

Another ethical issue related to the above, is that of authorship of the research or the summary report. When the project data gathering is complete, the researcher is faced with analyzing the documents, notes and interview tapes s/he has collected. At this point decisions are made about what to quote, paraphrase, include, exclude, and how to put it all together.
Geertz (1988) discusses creative authorship, describing Malinowski's work in New Guinea as a "free form collage" and work by Evans-Pritchard in Africa as "magic-lantern ethnography":

The main effect, and the main intent, of magic lantern ethnography is to demonstrate that the established frames of social perception, those upon which we ourselves instinctively rely, are fully adequate to whatever oddities the transparencies may turn out to picture. (p.64)

If the people seen by the above 'magic lantern' are considered 'oddities' then the voice of the researcher is being heard not that of the 'subjects'. The judgement of the 'author' must be consistent. The author's 'signature' acknowledges subjective force in shaping the research process, and appears as an essential part of an ethical research project. Kuhn (1990) in *Women in Film* says "Ethnography lies in the eyes of the beholder; an ethnographic reading interrogates both the ritual being represented and the ritual of its representation" (p.138).

**Issues of power**

The last ethical issue raised in this discussion is that of power. We discussed the role of the researcher (or film-maker) as having the power to include or exclude, to frame, to use certain kinds of technical assistance, tools, etc. Facts of position affect research by impacting on the researched. Patai (1991) discusses research on women:

When academics do research with women of races, classes, and cultures different from their own, a common experience is that they are perceived as more powerful than the people they are researching. This no doubt proceeds from the quite accurate appraisal on the part of the people interviewed that the researcher has greater access to all sorts of resources, from material goods to local officials. (p. 143)

What power does the community or the informant have? The simple answer is they have the power to say 'no'. They do not have to be included, photographed, or interviewed, and an ethical researcher will respect their views. The UBC Ethics Board and the NWT Science Institute Research licence are concerned about exploitation of peoples in societies that do not use
the word 'no' very much in their vocabulary. In fact several Inuit women said that they do not say 'no' in their communities. For these people, especially women, the concern over the power to say 'no' is very valid.

At the Festival we witnessed unethical researchers who, without a research licence, posed as news media in order to get stories with photographs. The material taken away could be used anyway s/he chose, without the subject's knowledge. The indigenous artists, especially those from small communities, were quite wary of strangers asking questions. It is largely a matter of trust, and ethics. The women sharing their life experiences also can control the results. I asked them what they would like done with a copy of the tape and transcript? Sent to the NWT archives, to their community library, or just to them at home? Most of the women said they wanted the tape sent to them at home.

Even with a consent form, what assurance does the participant have that his or her voice or photo will be used in the way stated? The letters of consent explaining a study often give the respondent a chance to back out at any time, along with the address and phone number of the researcher and the sponsor or advisor's name. The participant is protected by the wording of the letter, and the signature on the consent form detached from the bottom of the letter and kept by the researcher, but the researched may not be aware of their rights. Cece McCauley said to me "I'd better not see this on TV!" An unethical researcher could conceivably use the material in some other way if s/he chose, without the subject's knowledge, but s/he would be liable to legal action. Gluck (1991) speaks of her first intention to give women a voice through her research, and later used their comments for advocacy on their behalf:

My interviews with women were guided primarily by a commitment to give them a voice---or rather to make their voices heard---now I was going to be using those voices much more deliberately to advocate on their behalf. . . . The oral history became, then, both a
personal account defined by the narrator, and a historical document that was shaped by my intervention. (p. 206)

Whose voice is being heard? Does Gluck have the right to advocate on behalf of women who confided in her, when they themselves may not perceive the need to speak up? In most research there is an uneven balance of power that is felt by both subject and researcher. It is a matter of integrity on the part of the researcher, and of trust on the part of the participants. In this study, some of the women had been my former students, but the power imbalance of the student-teacher relationship was long past. They too had become teachers, and when we saw each other on the street in Inuvik, we were more like old friends who had shared some common history. They seemed to respect me for doing the work of this project, and willingly participated. Some said they knew the research needed to be done on the women of this region, and a few even said they wanted me to tell people about them and their cultures 'down south'.

Empowering new views and voices

How do we accommodate questions of power in ethnographic research projects? Lather (1991) comments that "An emancipatory social research calls for empowering approaches to research . . . that enables people to change by empowering self-reflection and a deeper understanding of their particular situations." (p. 56) Harding (1987b) suggests that the researcher must place him or herself squarely on the critical plane:

That is, the class, race, culture, and gender assumptions, beliefs and behaviors of the researcher her/himself must be placed within the frame of the picture that she/he paints . . . a real historical individual with concrete, specific desires and interests--and ones that are sometimes in tension with each other . . . to swing around the powerful lenses of scientific inquiry so that they enable us to peer at our own complex subjectivities as well as at what we observe. (p.29/30)
Cruikshank (1991) discusses how the women she interviewed became her teachers, how they helped to shape her understanding and even suggested she use audiotape to allow their voices to be heard, and help her 'get it right'.

... elders talked about the continuing importance of words. They insist that people still make use of long standing traditions to think about life. Oral tradition does not simply tell us about the past; it continues to provide guidelines for the present and to lay the foundation for thinking about the future. A book inevitably reflects the experiences of the person who actually writes it. While I bring particular questions to research, my perspective inevitably reflects what I have learned from my teachers, most of whom are from the southern Yukon, and... are women. (p. 8)

This research project on Western Arctic Women Artists resulted in a number of women reflecting on their own lives and learning. Several women thanked me for provoking thought and helping them to see their lives in perspective. These women shared personal stories, and they were my teachers; they are the experts on their art and lives. I was always aware that while I had more years of schooling than most of the women I was talking with, they knew more about their art and culture. I genuinely wanted to learn from them.

The position of researcher as student is suggested by Lather (1991):

Reciprocity implies give and take, a mutual negotiation of meaning and power. It operates at two primary points in emancipatory empirical research: the junctures between researcher and researched and data and theory. (p.57)

Negotiation can imply a power struggle, but that is not intended here. This research is about the women of the Western Arctic, so they have the last word. When I was back home after a summer of work and interviews, I prepared a copy of the videotape for each of the women, and was excited to send it to them. I was surprised when some women did not want to see it. They seemed embarassed, and Sue said 'Oh I don't want to listen to myself blather on about myself for hours', and she said she didn't want the tape. Other women didn't want to see the transcript, and others may not have read the summary. These women may have felt they shared
too much, or that I was now far away and not part of the on-going community. Other women reacted much differently—they were proud of their stories, sent back copies with comments, and said these stories would be passed on to their children. Several women asked for copies of the video footage to give to their children. I told all of the women that I appreciated their perceptive comments about their lives, their sharing thoughts and taking the time to talk with me. I felt we were almost friends—we had shared some very personal experiences with each other. Patai (1991) talks about Oakley's experience of interviewing women:

The model of a distanced, controlled and ostensibly neutral interviewer has . . . been replaced with that of sisterhood . . . an engaged and sympathetic interaction between two individuals united by the fact of gender oppression. Oakley believes that the outcome is not merely a better research process, but also better research results. (p. 143)

Bateson (1989) offers a way for both researcher and subject to learn from the experience of the interview--through providing an opportunity for insight into their own lives.

The study of lives becomes an increasing preoccupation. This is especially true now for women . . . Women today read and write biographies to gain perspective on their own lives. Each reading provokes a dialogue of comparison and recognition, a process of memory and articulation that makes one's own experience available as a lens of empathy. (p. 5)

Many experts have used words like cooperative and collaborative, to imply a new direction for future ethnographies. One way to counter the balance of power suggested by Collier and Collier (1986) is 'inside out' --giving the cameras to participants, and letting them shoot what is important in their community. When participants help with the editing and/or control the entire process, they indeed have a bigger voice, and therefore more power over how they are seen. I witnessed this when I gave the video camera to Crystal Lennie, and some of the other women might also have taken the challenge of using the camera themselves. Some women would also have refused, as they were simply not interested.
Some indigenous people in the Western Arctic expressed the feeling that they were being exploited generally by research. They seemed to feel that some ulterior motive was involved. In this study, the women knew it was my project, and was contributing to my Ph.D. degree, and only two women refused to be interviewed. Some of the non-native women, who I thought would be most understanding of research (my bias) seemed the most suspicious of the process. Some of their lives changed drastically during the years of this study, and in recent times they seemed embarrassed that I caught their ideas from a time past. I asked the women for an update each year and did some follow-up interviews.

This project is both responsive to people and adaptive to new situations. It allows new voices to be heard, and exposes a range of views. It reflects the frame of the author and researcher: I am a non-native woman from a protestant family, a mother of two grown daughters, a seamstress, an artist, a teacher, and a student. I am genuinely interested in learning about the arts of the Western Arctic: traditional and other arts, cultures and practices, from the women artists who live and produce art in the Western Arctic, and who influence each other and whose lives are interwoven in the process.

In conclusion, this study is not an ethnography—it does not focus on the cultures of the Western Arctic although they are part of the discussion as perspectives from which the women speak. This study uses ethnographic methods to make visible and audible the artistic lives and education of individual women who share life in Western Arctic communities.
CHAPTER THREE: INTERVIEW SUMMARIES

The women artists included in this study were visited either in the Fort Smith area, or at the Mackenzie Delta Festival sites in Inuvik and Aklavik, or in Tuktoyaktuk, or in women's homes. I could have talked to many more women artists, but it was not physically or financially possible. These women represent the variety of views, cultures and art media present in the Western Arctic today.

Most of these women talked about their artwork as a part of their lives. They told me about their parents, their siblings, their marriages, their work, their education, their cares, their experiences on the land, with their artwork woven around it. Many found it difficult to talk about themselves or personal feelings, and especially to express what art meant to them—the importance of art in their lives. But the pride in their work comes through as they talk about the care they take in producing their work.

I was part of the community and part of their lives in a small way, as I worked at the Festival or at the College. I was certainly a participant observer, sharing in the daily lives, joys, and troubles of the women I talked to. Living in Inuvik and Fort Smith over seven years, I was able to become somewhat familiar with the region, its residents, its political structures, and the women in this study. I often met these women on the street, or at the store, or we visited each others' homes.

This research project on Western Arctic Women Artists used the videocamera extensively to assist with observation, description, recording interviews, and even interpretation of language. Some use was also made of audiotape and two 35mm cameras. The researcher conducted the interviews, held the videocamera, and took all photographs with the exception of
a few photos for which photo credits are listed. The resulting ethnographic narratives are both exciting and enlightening, and are arranged alphabetically by last name. If we pay close attention and learn to listen, we will begin to understand and see through their eyes, and see our own lives in new ways.

Women whose interview summaries follow:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Charlene Alexander</td>
<td>Inuvik</td>
<td>non-native Arts festival co-founder &amp; Executive Director, school/community photographer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rosie Archie</td>
<td>Aklavik</td>
<td>Inuvialuit Traditional seamstress &amp; fur designer</td>
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<td>Jane Dragon</td>
<td>Ft. Smith</td>
<td>Chipewyan Traditional seamstress, trapper, school/community counsellor/teacher</td>
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<td>Christina Felix</td>
<td>Tuktoyaktuk</td>
<td>Inuvialuit Parka designer, factory owner, &amp; creator of 'delta braid'</td>
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<td>Mona Igutsaq</td>
<td>Taloyoak</td>
<td>Inuit Traditional seamstress, women's co-op organizer &amp; manager</td>
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<td>Elsie Klengenberg</td>
<td>Holman</td>
<td>Inuvialuit Stencil printmaker &amp; carver</td>
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<td>Lillian Kristensen</td>
<td>Ft. Smith</td>
<td>non-native Weaver, gift shop owner, &amp; animal shelter founder</td>
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<td>Nancy La Fleur</td>
<td>Hay River</td>
<td>South Slavey Moose-hair tufter &amp; language teacher</td>
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<td>Beverly Lennie</td>
<td>Inuvik</td>
<td>Inuvialuit Seamstress, teacher, arts festival coordinator &amp; Board member</td>
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<td>Margaret Lennie</td>
<td>Inuvik</td>
<td>Inuvialuit Traditional seamstress &amp; tourist guide</td>
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<td>Mary Ann MacDonald</td>
<td>Ft. Smith</td>
<td>Metis Traditional seamstress, beadworker &amp; tufter</td>
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<td>Laurelle Macy</td>
<td>Hay River</td>
<td>non-native Painter &amp; art teacher</td>
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<td>Cece Mc Cauley</td>
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<td>Lena Olifie</td>
<td>Holman</td>
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<td>Janice Rahn</td>
<td>Inuvik/Montreal</td>
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<td>Sue Rose</td>
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<td>Bertha Ruben</td>
<td>Paulatuk</td>
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<td>Lorna Storr</td>
<td>Aklavik</td>
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<td>Agnes &amp; Mona Thrasher</td>
<td>Quesnel/Yellowknife</td>
<td>Inuvialuit</td>
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<td>Vicki Tompkins</td>
<td>Yellowknife</td>
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<td>Julia &amp; Brendalynn Trenner</td>
<td>Hay River</td>
<td>Inuvialuit/Mix</td>
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<td>Mary Trimble</td>
<td>Inuvik/Nanaimo</td>
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<td>Peeteekootee Ugyuk</td>
<td>Taloyoak</td>
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<td>Margaret Vittrekwa</td>
<td>Fort McPherson</td>
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<td>Ruth Wright</td>
<td>Inuvik</td>
<td>Gwich'in</td>
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Founder/First woman Chief Inuvik Native Band, businesswoman & seamstress
Traditional seamstress, & musk-ox wool spinner
Printmaker & art teacher (doctoral student in art education at Concordia)
Painter, graphic designer, Arts festival co-founder & Board member
Traditional seamstress & land claims negotiator
Traditional seamstress, baby belt beadworker, & teacher
Painters & Igloo Church painter
Painter, Arts festival founder, art teacher & tourism trainer
Moose & caribou hair tufters
Traditional seamstress, painter & carver
Traditional seamstress & creator of the 'packing dolls'
Traditional seamstress, language & cultural teacher
Papermaker, sculptor, Arts Festival Board member
Western Arctic Women Artists

Cultural Group represented:

Inuvialuit 11
Gwich'in/Slavey (Dene) 6
Non-native 6
Inuit 2
Metis/Mixed 2

Communities represented:

Aklavik 2
Ft. Smith 3
Ft. McPherson 1
Hay River 4
Holman 2
Inuvik 8
Paulatuk 1
Taloyoak (Spence Bay) 2
Tuktoyaktuk 1
Yellowknife 1
Southern Canada (at least part of the year) 3

Women whose interviews were taped but not summarized here:

Effie Blake, Ft. McPherson Gwich'in
Cultural teacher

Malaya Akulukjuk Pangnirtung Inuit
Drawer (deceased)

Martina Anoee/Bernadette Irksuq Arviat Inuit
Dollmakers--sculptor--throat singers, artist/apprentice-interpreter

Mary Bryant Yellowknife non-native
Art gallery manager, watercolor painter

Myrna Button Inuvik non-native
Stained glass, pottery, watercolors

Susie Evyagotailak Coppermine Inuvialuit
Traditional steamstress/teacher

Mona Felix Tuktoyaktuk Inuvialuit
Traditional steamstress, creator of "Ingamo slippers"
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<th>Name</th>
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<tr>
<td>Dora Jones</td>
<td>Ft. Smith</td>
<td>Singer, former Aklavik residential school worker</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mary Kendi</td>
<td>Aklavik</td>
<td>Traditional seamstress</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sarah Kuptana</td>
<td>Sachs Harbor</td>
<td>Traditional seamstress</td>
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<tr>
<td>Joyce Majeski</td>
<td>Whitehorse</td>
<td>Biologist/printmaker</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sandra McLeod</td>
<td>Inuvik</td>
<td>Craft festival organizer, sewing shop owner, seamstress</td>
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<td>Terry Norwegian-Sawyer</td>
<td>Tsiigehtchic</td>
<td>Traditional seamstress, women's organizer</td>
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<td>Pat Stacey</td>
<td>Yellowknife</td>
<td>Painter</td>
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<tr>
<td>Agnes Sutherland</td>
<td>Ft. Smith</td>
<td>Grey nun, biographer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gina Sydenham</td>
<td>Ft. Smith</td>
<td>Museum curator</td>
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<td>Mary-Ann Taylor</td>
<td>Tuktoyaktuk</td>
<td>Carver</td>
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CHARLENE ALEXANDER
Non-native Photographer & Great Northern Arts Festival Co-Founder
Inuvik, NWT

Fig. 9: At the end of the 1992 Great Northern Arts Festival in Inuvik, Irene Avaalaaqiq, left, Charlene Alexander, center and Effie Arnaloaq, right, are saying goodbye. Irene is an applique artist, and she and Effie are both carvers from Baker Lake, NWT.
CHARLENE ALEXANDER
Inuvik, NWT.

This is a summary of Charlene's own words and comments from three interviews over three years videotaped in July, 1992 & August 1993, just after the fourth and fifth Great Northern Arts Festivals concluded, and in October 1994.

Part One: July 31, 1992, at end of the fourth annual Great Northern Arts Festival

"I'm the founder and Coordinator of the Great Northern Arts Festival which just finished its fourth year. It always runs for ten days, usually the last ten days in July, always starting on a Friday and always ending on a Sunday."

Childhood and early learning in art

Charlene grew up "all over Canada, and then Germany. I think people are born with a love for art. I think if you're born with ... some kind of a talent then ... I take after my grandmother in terms of my painting talent, so that was just the beginning of my painting. When I was growing up I thought I was going to be an artist, I was going to be a famous painter. My parents weren't great art connoisseurs, and they never took us to galleries or museums." Charlene's parents encouraged her, and she was "doodling all the time, and drawing and painting. But I had a talent and wanted to take painting lessons, so I took painting lessons, and from there went into art school. They definitely didn't discourage me, when I went into art school it was fine, whatever we did was fine. I took painting lessons when I was ten or twelve, and was always doing something ... with the arts. I took it quite seriously when I was in high school, ...and I didn't take any courses outside of school, and went directly into art school."

Art School

"I took one year of fine arts at Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, and realized that, I was not a bad painter but, I wasn't great. ... My first experience with abstract art was in art school, before that I was
painting nice little landscapes, sunsets, log cabins. I'd also taken a basic photography course when I was at art school, and really enjoyed it. I found it less frustrating than painting. So I ... studied photography for four years, [in] Toronto, [at] Ryerson. I'd always played around with photography and really enjoyed photography. . . . and Photography school really opened my eyes too, and that's when I started doing my nude photography."

Photography in Inuvik

"I moved to Inuvik after I graduated. I had always wanted to go to the North. I was living in Vancouver, and I took a year off school, ran out of money and stopped to work, and saw an ad in the newspaper for a job in the Mad Trapper Bar [in Inuvik], so my girlfriend and I both applied and got the jobs, and so we came." After awhile Charlene began working at a gallery.

"I purchased studio equipment from the people who owned the gallery. They had a gallery/photo finishing/framing and studio at the time, and they decided to get out of the photography end of it. But this town is not big enough for a full-time photographer, so they approached me and said 'why don't you become our manager for a year and after that we'll talk', about me taking over the business, which never happened. . . . So I started my own photography business. But photography in a small community is not really very creative. I was doing school pictures, and very straightforward family portraits, and after I got the hang of it, it wasn't very creative. I had been here a year, but I had spent two summers before that up here. After a year I . . . started the Festival, and I ended up having to quit [work] because the Festival was so much work."

Arts Administration

"And now I'm back in fine arts, but as an administrator. Six years ago I had a show for three women from Holman--Mary Okheena, Elsie Klengenberg, and Agnes Nigiyok, and Elsie was the only artist who could attend the exhibit. It just so happened that she was in town. I was working at a gallery at the time, and realized that their work was showing all over Canada, and they'd never had the opportunity to attend one of their own exhibits. And talking to Sue Rose, who had lived in Holman for eight years, [I] realized that the
artists in the north get very little opportunity to exhibit their work with other artists and... to experience that exchange of ideas.

So we decided to have a show the following summer for about eight artists, and went to the government to see if we could get some funding... And they said 'well if you make it a territorial event we can help you even more.' So we originally were just going to do a regional thing, but heck, they were going to give us more money so, why not make it bigger? Then... the word 'festival' came to mind. As soon as that word came to mind, all kinds of ideas just [came], workshops, demonstrations, entertainment. I think I was always the driving force, but [Sue Rose] had more experience in the arts and more experience in the North. So I relied on her knowledge... I guess I was just in the right place, in the right circumstances, and I love starting with nothing and creating something... I think we had thirty-five artists, [in] 1989."

Creativity

"The Festival is very creative. Every day it's building something. There's a big people aspect. The response was incredible. Right away, it was 'God this is a great idea. This is what, not only the artists, but this is what this community needs'. And after the second day of the Festival people were saying 'is this going to become an annual event?' The first year was so easy, it's like 'yes of course--this is so much fun, of course I'll do it again.' And it still is fun, but now it's become an entity. It's no longer just this little thing you pull off each year. It's like running your own business, there's a lot of work and dedication that has to go into it. I think in the first couple of years it was a local event that we just kind of pulled off. But now it's becoming, like I said, an entity. It's becoming a national event that needs to be treated very seriously. It's becoming important for the artists."

Personal meaning

"What does it mean to me? Well, it's a great accomplishment. Seeing that it's really helping artists, ...it's very satisfying to do something like that. People don't understand at all how much work it is. Even people that work closely with me don't understand. By the end of the Festival [the artists] do, I think. Maybe they go away and they forget. It's been very consuming for the last two years. I don't have a life outside of this
festival. I'm taking it a day at a time and learning a lot. I think that if I had a lot of experience, before the Festival, ... I had no experience in marketing, or I never really had my own business. ... I did little small photography stuff, but, because it's growing and it's so young it's like every minute of the day is Festival. You know it's just constantly going through my mind, wondering how can we improve this, and how can I change this. And then you look to the future and think well, where could the festival go, and how could it get there. Besides I'm in charge of every aspect of the festival at this point, and it's very consuming.

The Great Northern Arts Festival

The first year the Festival was run by "myself and Sue Rose, we were both volunteers the first year together with [other] volunteers. We made a $16,000 profit the first year. Actually we ended up paying ourselves $3000 each. And with that money we also went to a conference on managing festivals. The rest went into the bank as seed money for the next year."

But the following year the Festival "lost $15,000, I think. But that figure didn't include the salary I didn't get." A Festival Board was created "at the end of the first year, but the board was never very active. The second year, I put in the budget for my salary, I think I put $14,000. And I remember sitting there and thinking 'It really is a lot of work, maybe I should put something a little more tasteful in the budget [for] sweat equity.' I remember hearing 'sweat equity', we have to show that we're putting our part in. So the second year I made $7000 I think. I ... worked part time all year and then in February quit my job to work full time on it. I worked more than full time, time and a half, and from that point on it was full-time. I waitressed in the evenings and I took days off here and there to do photography, but every single day I worked on the Festival. All year. When it's all over and there's no money, and you've already committed yourself to the next year, you just have to keep going."

A community event

"I feel [the Festival] is at a turn-around point. That it got a lot of recognition with the various gallery owners here. ... It's very well recognized now. ... The Gwich'in have to get more involved, and the Inuvialuit
have to get involved, and then the Town [of Inuvik] has to get involved, they've been just letting it happen for the last four years without helping."

Personal costs

"I'm at a stage where my head is full I guess. Besides the fact that I'm not making any money and I can't live anymore without money. My head is full, too full of details, it's like when your computer gets full, it can only hold so many files. Well my brain, right now is like a computer the hard drive is just about full and it's time to buy another hard drive. Maybe two hard drives.

The cost to me? Ulcers, gray hair! ... I don't feel like I have a life anymore. I'm the festival, yeah. I can't shut it off, because, like I said, there's just too many different aspects to it to worry about, and I'm worrying about them all. I don't go on holidays, and my truck doesn't work anymore, and I can't afford a new truck. I don't have a vacuum. I mean, it's just, I can't even have a relationship anymore. I don't have anything to give in the relationship because I'm so consumed...

Can I go through another year without a [livable] wage? I don't think so. I know that if I did hang in, like next year, I'm sure that all the problems, or a lot of the problems, would be solved by next year..."

Part Two: August, 1993 At end of Festival #5

"I feel really good. This is the first year I've had any energy left at the end of the Festival. I feel good about what happened at the festival, and am already looking forward to starting the next one. ... Having staff, having help, and support, like for example, your help, your experience with education, and being able to give up, for example, the seminar sessions, having staff was definitely the biggest help, and a board of directors who were behind me. They weren't there as much as they should have been, but they were still there. I see that [what] you have to do mostly is people work, and they don't teach that in art school, or the organizational part either. That is something else that I think people are born with. I have a feeling that this is what I'm destined to do. I'm sure of it. My artwork wasn't a driving force in my life like this is. I really enjoyed my photography, and painting frustrated the heck out of me. I mean I was good, but I wasn't driven."
I've learned this [festival work] outside of school. I mean I was in photography school... which, I guess contributed. I learned about art and, freedom in art.

**Cultural differences, art and craft**

"In this region we have the Gwich'in. At this Festival we had only one Gwich'in artist, and I'm hoping the festival is regenerating the arts in this region. I don't think that it represents the Gwich'in, [who] do more crafts than the Inuvialuit." The Festival began by being limited to fine arts. "Each year for the first three or four years we highlighted a craft: jewellery, tapestry, but I don't consider them crafts. But it's such a fine line. And I think that the jewellery that we show at the Festival is fine art jewellery, they're all individually done, I mean, they're no different than the carvings. You know some people repeat bears, well, people can do that with jewellery as well, [such as] inukshuk earrings. I guess I'm not so concerned with restricting it to fine art..."

A Gwich'in woman suggested that the Festival create a special corner for each of the cultures of the region, providing some historical background for tourists and visitors. "It would definitely add to the Festival... because then the Gwich'in would be more represented... what Brendalynne Trennert is doing, moose-hair tufting—is considered a craft, and is now turned into an art. She is doing pictures which are moose-hair tufting...

If I was a native person, most of the funding would come easier. Even if a native person was organizing, there are people who just don't understand the commission. In terms of involvement of the Inuvialuit, if I was native, if I was Inuvialuit, they would have been a lot more involved by now. I find the people really stick together by region, which has a lot to do with the dialects. I remember the first festival, we planned this very typically southern white banquet, and we don't do that anymore. It's not necessary, they just felt uncomfortable. We had this big dinner and tablecloths and wine glasses, you know, a banquet, and everybody just sat there. I think I've learned a lot, so we don't do that anymore. We have barbecues and outdoor activities. I think there's a lot of friendships made at the festival.
Another thing, we're now more accustomed to the fact that, [artists] say 'yes' they're coming, and they'll change their mind at the last minute. The fishing's good, the weather's good, and they don't want to leave their home communities. That's just the way it is. And . . . Inuit people don't say 'no' . . . I don't get as frustrated any more, I can almost sense through the conversations that I have with them if they will come. If everybody showed up that I originally booked, we would spend $65,000 for travel instead of $45,000."

Festival influence on Northern art

"I think the most important thing is what it is doing for artists in the North. It's sort of opening doors for them... I'd like to think the Festival gives them the opportunity to become true artists. They come here, after selling to co-ops for their entire artistic life, and hardly ever going to exhibits, [and] it gives them the opportunity to see what art can be . . . bringing people [together] or organizations, [to] give them room for freedom of expression.

Art is, art should be, a reflection of society and life, and I'm hoping the Festival gives them that opportunity. I can't see it really changing, the funding is going to divide [with Nunavut, but] I'm sure there's going to be ways around that."

Educating artists--offering opportunities to learn

"I think I'm so busy thinking about the organizational side of it that I don't always see a lot of the interaction that goes on. . . I was going through my mind and thinking about some of the interactions that took place. For example Trudy Gilbertson, who has always worked in wood decoys, she now is crazy about soapstone carving. And Bertha Ruben, who has been limited to wall-hangings, I don't know if she ever sat down with Brendalynne, but until you get to try something . . . Most people just don't order up supplies to try a new thing. . . . Thomasie from Pang, a master stencil printmaker, has never had the opportunity to paint, and he painted here. . . . I definitely see that that's an important part of it, just trying to open some doors in a sense. It's neat to see them, artists that come back time after time and see some of the new things that they're trying out. That's how artists learn . . . by copying other artists' work."
Art education in the schools

"I don't know much about the art programs, but the schools don't have much funding. I know in the communities they don't have art teachers, just in the big communities, in high schools. The funding has been cut back so badly that, here they have a press at school and they don't use it.

To begin with, I'd like to see them taught more basics. I think if they had a stronger background in just the basics... it would give them more freedom to try new things, and just the ability to try new things. . . . The majority of them don't know the color wheel, they never had any training in perspective, that's why so much of the art is two dimensional. There's nothing wrong with doing two-dimensional art, but I think it would be better if they had a background, if they at least knew how to do it, then they would have the ways to do two dimensional or three dimensional. . . ."

Gender differences

"... I'm just thinking of June's [Ohokak form Coppermine] work, she depicted family life, [and] Ragilee, [Piungituq from Clyde River] a father and child and drummers. Men usually depict hunting. Elsie's work always depicts camp life, family life, yeah, it seems that women depict family life, their roles, and men depict their roles, hunting and. . . . Women are better at this kind of thing [organizing festivals] . . . because they're more maternal, better organizers. I'm trying to think if this was organized by a man how it would be different—he'd be paid better! . . .Women care more about community."
Fig. 10: Charlene Alexander going over sales figures at the Festival site, 1994.

Fig. 11: The artists of the 1994 Festival gather in front of the Igloo Church, Inuvik.
Personal plans

"The close future? Holidays! I don't know . . . I'm going to have a hard time leaving the Festival. I think I see myself owning an art gallery, and then being able to be more selective about artists, at that point deal with mature artists, artists who I think are good artists. It's going to be pretty hard to beat this Festival. For five years now I have had the freedom to be as creative as I want and to try things, and experiment, and just do whatever I wanted. I just can't imagine . . ."

I said to Charlene, "The terminology you just used has to do with what you're telling the artists--to be creative and experiment--and you are doing that, but with the festival. So has the festival become your artwork?" She agreed.

Note: The following year, July 1994, after another successful Festival, there were more changes, more new things. There was more involvement from the Board, but there was a fair amount of tension between the Board and Charlene. Charlene received a letter from the Board in September stating that her services were no longer needed or affordable. She was stunned, hurt, and very upset. She had been fired by her own creation! Charlene and Brian came through Vancouver on their way back from a holiday in Thailand, and I interviewed her in a restaurant at Granville Island.

Part Three: Oct. 1994 after Festival #6

"In my opinion it was a really successful Festival. Administratively it went very smoothly, the artists were all very good participants, they were organized well enough that they were able to get involved with what was going on with the exception of the workshop program. I didn't get a printed program of the workshops early enough, so people didn't know what was going on. There was confusion, and the artists commented on it as well. It wasn't very well organized. But I find that I struggle with the public side, the demonstration side of the program and the artists and the educational side of it. It seems like every year either one or the other suffers."
But the artists still spend all their time working together and really benefit from that. There has to be a balance between the structured workshops and the things that just happen on their own. Like there's got to be the time and the space and the privacy for the stuff that just happens on its own. Some of the artists that need a bit of color theory, if you point out to them that that workshop is coming up, and talk them into taking it, they'll usually take it. It's usually really good for them. Looking back, the educational side of it has got to be taken more seriously, someone needs to just focus on that part of it."

Charlene's role as Coordinator

"I thought it was better organized, less fun! Every year it becomes more like a job--my position. For me it becomes less fun, because I've become less involved with the artists, more involved with being a supervisor. Generally, I would say that it was the best Festival yet. The artists worked very hard, they worked non-stop throughout the event, [and] they showed up for seminar sessions. They were eager to learn this year. I think the public program as well, there was always something going on, and having the printed program there [helped], films going on all the time, slide shows, demonstrations. I think the program was well-balanced this year. The public couldn't say enough good things about it this year."

Personal changes

1994 was different for Charlene because she and Brian Crist were planning an April wedding. "It made me realize that I have to be able to give some time to my personal life. Although I work very long hours and he was very cooperative this year, and I know I couldn't put him through it every single year. Having him there was a sense of security for me. Someone to lean on, he really helped. . . . If there was a money crisis at the end, [I knew] he could carry me for awhile until I found another job. Not that I want him to support me, but if there was a problem. . . ."

End of an era?

"I always thought that one day I would just have to move on to other things in my life. It's a sense of relief that I don't have to carry all this stress around. . . . I'd like to eventually be on the Board. . . . I don't want
to be involved for a year. . . . Was the sacrifice for the Festival worth it? Yes and no. Thinking back, if I'd stayed in photography, doing school portraits etc. I'd have been very unsatisfied. But I learned a lot, I met a lot of artists. I don't have any regrets, I'd do it all over again. I wish I was free of all the debts that I have, it's going to take me awhile to finish paying off my student loans, they should have been paid off five years ago."

New Challenges

"There could be a really huge void in my life right now. But what I'm going to do with this creative energy I have is to get a little bit more training in some of the areas I'm lacking, so that I can go on and open a gallery. I wish I had a little bit more knowledge on how to organize educational seminars, business management, finance, team building, team spirit, supervising staff, planning. . . take some business courses, finish my photography degree, I just need a few electives. I think I can still do it. What I want to do with my creativity, [is] help other artists.

I guess I don't consider myself an artist now. I feel I'm more of an administrator. I think I'll probably always dabble in photography, but not take it seriously. In the next year, I want to go back and catalogue all my work, organize it. Maybe I'll become inspired again. I've got some projects that have been on hold, like an Inuvialuit elders photo album, it's sort of at the back of my mind to maybe get back into . . . I don't know. I haven't had any time for six years, I want to be involved with Northern art in some form or shape.

I have really mixed emotions about the Festival. I haven't put everything into perspective. Talk to me in a year. Future plans? Marriage in April and pregnant by July! I get a little nervous that, after the excitement of the Festival, I'm going to get bored really quickly. Brian doesn't think I'll be able to sit still for very long. I know how to access funding, and Brian wants me to do a picture story of Ravens, but they are hard to photograph--they're all black."

Influence of the North

"Artwork is just so exciting, and pleasant, it's like walking into a house where people have no artistic sense, and the artwork is hung really high on the wall and it's really ugly, and you feel uncomfortable. And then you walk into another home and that person has a sense of color and design, and you just feel like you've
walked into sunshine as opposed to rain. [Art] is not just to decorate, [it's like] seeing things through someone's else's eyes.

The Western Arctic carvers know how successful the Eastern Arctic work is and what sells. So they are starting to copy the styles. The Gwich'in are starting to use soapstone now, . . . [carvers] who never come to participate in the Festival but come to observe, and then you see their work out on the street, and you see bears like Lydia's [Qayaq from Clyde River].

"For me, part of it [the appeal of the North] is the landscape, it's really open, clean, I always feel like I can breathe. Being in Vancouver, it's like closing in on me. But when I first come to Vancouver I look around at all these beautiful art shops and I get very excited, and I wish I could walk into them any day. Then I think I wish I was back home where I don't have all these options, I can't afford to buy them all anyway, life is so much more simple back home [in Inuvik]. It's a more leisurely pace. Most people are drawn to the North because of the people. Especially in the North, those people are so real. We women are the organizers, the helpers, it's just part of our nature.

Notes: Brian and Charlene were married in April 1995. In late November, a lot of concerned people attended the annual meeting of the Festival Society, and voted in a whole new Board. Bev Lennie, Charlene, Brian, Ruth Wright, Sue Rose and I were all nominated to the Board, and many others who believed in the Festival. The old Board was essentially voted out of office. We came away from that meeting in shock, but feeling elated that we had so easily taken back the Festival.

July 1996: The Great Northern Arts Festival was a success with Bev Lennie as the first indigenous coordinator. Charlene was appointed to the NWT Arts Council. She had her baby a week before the Festival began and came to the Festival site with the baby every day. Sue Rose helped teach and exhibited her new work. Ruth Wright was due to deliver her baby any minute, but it waited to arrive until August 3.

Since Fall 1996, Charlene has been doing some of the administrative work on contract, and a dual coordinator has been hired full-time for the 1997 Festival. Charlene told me she is glad people who care are taking over because she still cares about the Festival but it is time to move on and take care of her family.
ROSIE ARCHIE
Inuviluit traditional seamstress, fur designer & sash weaver.
Aklavik, NWT

Fig. 12: Rosie in her home in Aklavik in June 1993, holding one of her wool applique wall-hangings.
This is a summary of Rosie's own words and comments from an interview videotaped on July 24, 1992 at The Western Arctic Crafts Festival in Inuvik.

**Childhood learning**

Rosie learned to sew "I guess when I was very young. I only started sewing when I became a teenager. I was learning from my mom and my aunt. So I'd say I watch my aunt and my mom, and others. There was nothing like that [in school], there was nothing like that. I think, at the time too there might be few [women sewing] that I've seen, but I wasn't really interested until I got older."

**Working in the fur Shop & at home**

"That's when I start working, well, before I start working in [the] fur shop, [The Fur shop in Aklavik] that's in '69. And from there, I worked there for thirteen years. [We learned] to work with fur mostly. That's what I did. We made garments--coats, long coats, all kinds of fur parkas, mukluks and mitts, and hats." They were sold "all over. Even right now I still do that." The fur shop belonged to someone else, so "I start my own place [of business] even right at that time, right in '69. I start with dolls, mitts, mukluks, whenever I got the fur. The only problem was getting the fur, it's kind of expensive."

Rosie didn't trade with trappers, so she had to get fur commercially tanned from the South, which is expensive. "But then they were already tanned. It's mostly ... the most that I do is ... little stuff, like dolls and that."

**Working at home**

"I didn't have my own shop, I just do it out of my home. I did extra work beside working at the shop. Whenever I get orders I would do it at home. 'Cause at that time, I work for few years, and I got a fur machine through the fur shop. From there I started making stuff." The fur shop had taught her new ways to sew large
items like parkas, and she used that knowledge also at home. "Right now I do different [things], my own ideas, how to make new things, different ideas."

Sewing with other women

At the craft sale in 1992 the women were working at a large table on one side of the room, and some were sitting on the floor, while children and grandchildren played around them. They were talking and visiting while they worked. (Fig. 13).

Rosie had several tables full of fur pillows, Metis-style finger-woven wool sashes, muskrat slippers with fox trim, mitts, wool applique wall-hangings with scenes of traditional life, dolls in several sizes dressed in traditional dress, several kinds of fur parkas hanging up for display, and also some small little souvenir dolls.

"Once you start doing something like crafts, like these ladies here sitting here together, working every day, you're sewing all the time. Once you start your arts and crafts, you want to do it all the time. Whenever you're sitting around . . ., like me . . . at home, I would just sit and watch TV and just do my crafts. . . . I just watch TV, or listen to radio, and sew [at the] same time." Rosie has had several other women working with
her to sew orders. "There were two other ladies with me sewing this Spring. They are good. Rhoda is the one that's been working with me, she's really good, she's the one that sewed these parkas together."

Sewing to order

"But then I always try to not take too much orders, I do take orders, if I can make it. But if I don't have the fur, I always tell them to wait. I get the furs from Edmonton--Belcourt--and Winnipeg Furs. I hardly get anything locally, because they're too expensive. Sometimes if I'm short a piece of lining or a little bit of fur, then I go to Northern stores and get some. From here, that's what I do. I get a few things here when I come to Inuvik, because we don't have it in Aklavik. Like right now I picked up some wool that I could use for my dolls."

Dolls

Rosie dresses her dolls traditionally, "... Putting mitt strings on them, mukluks on them, it's just like the ordinary [clothes], I always try and make them like dolls that I made. And the color, I know what color sells good. I guess I would know what sells good now, because I do my arts and crafts. But I never try to make just that stuff, I like to make little of everything. If I have time."

An artist?

Rosie is not sure whether she is considered an 'artist'. "I don't know, I guess everybody is who does things like that. You know, when you do things like that, and you start... your ideas, new ideas and that, when they sell... and people like it, you really feel good about it." Rosie is recognized as one of the best, and most accomplished fur seamstresses in Aklavik.

Teaching the next generations

Rosie says the young people are "not that interested [in sewing], not really. Because sometimes we tried teaching them, and they [are] just not interested. Some are, older ones, but younger ones nowadays, they [are] just not interested. They try, even my own daughter, she's not interested in sewing. No patience."
They should be [teaching the kids in school]. This winter, I was asked to go down one afternoon to show what I was doing to the children, and they were really interested. All ages, for about two and a half hours, and they asked lots of questions, . . . to see how it was done, they want to know how I sew it together, and things like that. I never go back because . . . I don't know.”

**Children not learning at home**

Rosie said the children do not seem to be learning from their parents, and not many women sew now. "Not too much, not with fur. Because maybe every year before Christmas I get lot of orders, but I just do half of what they ask me to do. It's just too much for one person. I don't make too many parkas because of buying the fur. And mitts, not too much. The fur hats, they're the ones that I do the most."

![Fig. 14: Rosie Archie and assistant show off new Aklavik fur parkas, dolls and fur pillows in July 1992.](image)

**Note:** The following June, 1993, I visited Rosie at her home in Aklavik. She showed me the work she had just been doing, and I took photographs of her. I asked her to bring some of her sewing items over to the Arts Festival to sell in Inuvik.

In July 1993, Rosie came to the Festival office in Inuvik, with several bags full of woven sashes, fur slippers, dolls and other items. She was excited because Economic Development was sending her to Montreal to learn how to make 'fashionable' fur coats from a fur manufacturer in Montreal.
In 1995 a Fur Garment Certificate program was begun at Aurora College in Aklavik, taught by a German couple from B.C. More than a dozen ladies enrolled in the courses, and Rosie was one of them. Rosie continues to sew and sell items from her home business, and continues to learn new techniques.
JANE DRAGON
Chipewyan traditional seamstress, trapper, school and community counsellor, aboriginal teacher, and Aurora College Board Member. Fort Smith, NWT.

Fig. 15: Jane sitting at her kitchen table on June 16, 1992, after giving a tour of her log home and fur storage sheds.
This is a summary of Jane's own words and comments from a three-part interview in June 1992. The first part of the interview was audiotaped in Jane's office at the high school in Fort Smith on June 11, 1992, and the second part was videotaped at Jane's house on June 16, 1992. We reviewed the videotape together later that evening, and Jane's additional comments were audiotaped.

Childhood and early learning

"My mother always sewed, and my grandmother. It was part of our clothing. They had always done such neat things that I'm sure it was art. Because it was never plain, it always meant something. It's something that I learned since I was young. You make special things for Christmas, you make special things for Easter, and in between, it wasn't so much special flowers, it was special days. We had special clothing we'd keep for special times. All the special work was put into that, then it would last them a long time. White caribou hide that you can't clean all the time. Everybody sewed, everybody did this work. I started when I was about ten I guess; I used to sew for my dolls. Moccasins, oh yes, my dolls were decorated too. I learned how to knit that way too. I used to do embroidery, beading, a little bit of porcupine (quillwork)--I must have been a little older, twelve maybe, I was in Hay Camp that time. My dad used to be Park Warden.

That work is something that you learn on your own; my stitches are different from my mom's, my flowers are different, I think everybody's individual. Because your likings are different, like mom used to put lots of forget-me-nots and that. Mine are a lot of roses because I love roses. My grandmother, she used to have lots of small little dainty little flowers; that was hers. They learned 'cause it was a part of life. Not in school; it was something we just learned at home.

I made my own clothes as a child, and when I got older and got married, I had the children's [clothes]. I made their parkas; I made everything. I was a full-time mother. I know all the things the children need; it's not a need of materials, it is a need of somebody for their time. And I was there for my children. Now they're
all grown up, but the children in the school, they need me. So I'm a sort of grandmother in here I guess. I sewed for my dolls, then for my children, my children's clothing, and after that, I sewed to sell to people, because that was the extra money I got to buy runners, baseball bats, and whatever we needed for the house. I made ten pairs [of moccasins] every year to sell, besides my family clothing."

Building a log house

"We built this house, I helped to peel the logs, cut the logs, and we brought them all from Salt River. We only had four extra ones. I think we cut off about two feet on the sides. David made those [corner joints] they call them 'duck tails' I think. It took us ten years, first we brought our logs, then we built our basement a couple of years later. But when we moved in ten years later, it was ours, and we didn't owe a cent on it. You have to see my house.

When I first started making pictures for my house, it was because I couldn't afford pictures in my house. Now they're all very special and I've had them for twenty years. That's the kind of things I make. This is my first tufting that I did, and it's about twenty years old. It's made on moosehide, [the design is made of] moosehair, it's all natural stuff. This is one of the beading pictures that I had done for my house, it's been in the same spot since we moved in. I had a mission brother from the Catholic [church] make these frames. This is our Northwest Territories crest, it's all beaded, and I got it framed.

I helped my husband lots; I did a lot of sewing and I always got extra things that my children would never have if I didn't do that. Because I didn't work full time out. A lot of parents today they both work out, so children have missed out on a lot of their culture. It's not only just the culture, it's a way of life in the North. We have to have moose, we have to have caribou, we have to have fish."

Baby belts

In Jane's living room, a baby belt hangs on the wall. "This is a baby belt that my grandmother had made. It's 81 years old right now. My Dad would have been that old. They always used to put them [baby belts] around one side of the shoulder [of the mother] and the baby sits on it, and it's easier to carry. These
beads are very fine, we don’t have beads like that any more. The back of it is all moosehide, the front is black velvet with floral designs in beads."

**Trapping together**

"I've been trapping with my husband for the last five years, so I know where the furs come from and what you do with it. We've been going five years, this will be my sixth, but he's had the trapline much longer than that. Well, we've been married thirty-three years, and he's been trapping full-time. Our trapline is about 62 miles but we usually make fifty-six miles to go by leaving from Town, but we don't go all the way, we use half. So for the last three years we've been trapping only on one side. So this fall, we're gonna leave that part and trap the other part. We usually leave from the house on our skidoos. We harvest the furs on half the trapline. We use these three-wheelers [ATV's] in the Springtime when we can't go with our skidoos. Now my husband bought us four-wheelers. We use them in the Spring and Fall."

**Starting a sewing co-op**

"I started a little sewing center with one of my friends . . . we both had put in 200 dollars apiece, and started a craft shop." Moccasins or slippers were one of the products they made. "I would get one woman to do the beading part, then somebody to sew it up, and another to put the fur on, so it would end up to be in three hands before I got it back to the shop. I had to put it around without hurting the next person’s feelings. In four years I worked there, volunteering my time, and I sent her to school, business admin. We were really going to get into this business. We doubled our money. . . and we got this thing going, and we had all kinds of money in the bank, and then she said she wanted to work for the government. . . .We were going to work together, we talked and talked, . . . and sold some memberships to some native women, as many as we could get.

Then we both decided we'd give it to the native women. So we gave it to them, with all our money, there were 52 women. We said 'Here, this place is on its feet, everything is paid for, no bills, and you can have it and keep it up.' They went bankrupt in a couple of years, they started paying wages and everything else. That was the end of the handicrafts. It hurts, because we had put lots of work into it. That was in the
seventies or early eighties, maybe ten years ago. With that little shop, everything they could buy from our shop they could buy at 10% off, because the materials had to pay for themselves. We gave it to them at cost price, and 10% on top. We were getting material very cheap, and we had two prices—for non-members it was the regular price. It was a really good thing, they just never got it together. The president didn't keep it up, and then she had one big sale and sold everything, and that wasn't fair to the other women. That's how it went. The Native Women's [Association] in Yellowknife [now] buys handicrafts to sell."

Sugar Shack—a quiet place to sew

Jane has two storage sheds behind her house, one she calls a 'sugar shack' "because . . . I always came here and sewed while they [kids] went to school. When they leave for school, I go out to my sugar shack. Because if I stay in the house the phone will be ringing all the time, so this way I have a chance to sew. This is where I sew, I have a sewing room in my house, I used to have my machines in here."

Using materials from the land

"I make my own hides, first of all. I take it . . . right from scratch, from running around in the bush, to whatever I make. I make time [for sewing] my weekends are covered, usually it's in the evenings. When I go to the cabin, like right now I'm going to the cabin, I'm going to be . . . smoking a moosehide while I'm there. So there's always something every weekend. I'm so busy now, but I want to do this for the next five years, and after that I'm going back to my home crafts."

Artwork designed individually

"Usually when I make things, I have my four daughters, and each one is individual, I know the things they like, so I try to match them up. One would like different shades and shapes of flowers. [For other people] I usually ask people how they want it, and they draw me a little picture, and that's how I make it. The majority of people always have a preference, very few say 'do whatever you want', they want a special thing. I make mitts, mukluks, hats, all the handicrafts of the North, wall pictures—moosehair tuftings, beading. [Customers] get referred to me from other people. I don't take any deposits because I never know when I'm
gonna have it done. When I was home, I knew exactly when I would have it done, but now I don't hardly take any orders. I just make ten pairs [of moccasins], five pair for men and five for women.

I want to make my daughters dresses, I made them skirts years ago out of moosehide, but they never wore them that much. I think they wore them on career day or something. But if I had made them a nice dress, they would wear them once in a while because they like their culture.

Usually my favorite thing to make is a parka. I like the embroidery; I like to get a big bundle of material and make something out of it. I do appliques too, it's whatever people want. I used to make ten parkas before, ten moccasins. Ten parkas, now I'm lucky if I make three."

Using new materials

"Last winter I made a little pair of crow boots out of beaver for my granddaughter, and I put some velcro on it--things we didn't have years ago, but now we have it available, so why not use it? It's so easy to put on. I think we have to [use new materials]. I'm sure years ago when people got new things they would have used it too. These are the wool [yarns] that I use to embroider, but I have to split them now, because they're too thick. This is bear grease, [from] . . . when the bear hibernates. So I know it's cholesterol free, and that's the truth!"

Making things for sale

"Handicrafts really went to an extreme, even since I was young until today. I find people are making things for sale, with maybe one little flower, there's nothing really, no meaning going into it. But they want the same price as somebody that had put a lot of thought and work into it; and they expect the same price. And then you say, 'What am I doing making so much flowers and so much stuff, and the other woman doesn't even do a good job?' That's what happens, . . . you never get paid for your time, so you might as well do a good job and sell that and be proud of it. I go into craft shops and I look at the handicrafts, and I say 'Oh my God, how can somebody abuse?' There's no talent in it, and it spoils it for a lot of people that take a lot of pride in their work. It's like that with other things as well, with knitting and things like crochet. The
handicrafts is dying off now, because the handicrafts that I do I would never get paid for my time. If I have to get paid for my time, it would cost too much."

Pride in artwork

"If you're making something for your daughter or your mother, you're going to put the best you have into it. I want the best for them. I do my best anyway, you don't worry about the time. I'm very proud of things I do, I'm not making it just to sell, it's because I appreciate it and I love doing it. It's your pride in things you do... this is something I took my pride in. I make it and this is my handicrafts. I would never get paid for my time and I don't worry about that part, always it's because it's something I like doing. Time was never that important to my... people.

Benefits of sewing

"Whenever I find myself really busy, ... I never get stressed because I take up sewing, and you see from nothing, something grows. I'm still working full-time, but now whenever I want to get away from things I'll make something. From a piece of material all of a sudden you've got a little jacket, I like that.

This year, I want to make my ten pairs [of moccasins]. I don't know how long I'll keep my ten pairs up, but, I will have ten pairs, and I tan my own moosehides, and everything I make my slippers out of. I have to buy the beads. I sometimes put moose-hair tufting, but I haven't made any with the porcupine quill. I used to make them for my husband, but that was long ago. It's not that hard, but it's time-consuming. Like porcupine [quills], you have to really watch when you sew with them if you have young children around because those little points are so dangerous. You cut them off, but when my children were small I found a way to stick them into the hide, while I sew them. I left the points on to put them on the hide, and as I use them I take them off, I cut them off."

Jane's artwork now

"This is all free-hand. I'm not an artist, but I love makin' flowers. I can never draw a picture--I suppose I could, of flowers, because this is my drawing. I've got to be in the mood for it, and when I am, this is
how I go. I am making myself a new parka. This [old parka] is a parka that I had made about fifteen years ago. Now I'm making this one for myself." When Jane starts to make a parka, "I just cut it up, I don't hardly measure, I just cut it up. I have no pattern. I just know [how big], they usually tell me the size, and I just look at 'em. This is the back [embroidered white yoke] of my new parka-to-be, and it is gonna have wine stroud on the rest". Stroud is "like a melton cloth except its woven tighter, [and]...is already windproof. If I use a duffle material, I do that [put a windproof layer in between].

This is all embroidery with wool [on white stroud] and I draw all my flowers. This will be the back, just like that one, and these are the [two] fronts. . .I'm not going to have cuffs on, because I found, when I made that one, the cuff always was dirty."

Women's and men's parka styles

The women's and men's parka designs are a little different. "The women's always goes down [in the middle of the back]. The men's, the flowers are higher up, and they have some [flowers] on their pockets. We put wolverine [trim] on parkas, it's frost-free and never freezes on your face. Sometimes we use bear [fur], I'm not superstitious, I use all kinds of furs, whatever people want for their parkas. I know [in] Fort Rae, they don't use bear [fur] at all, because of their superstitions. This time I'm going to put fur on it. I just fixed this [parka], so it has no fur on it [yet]. I find it's warm."

Children's parkas

"This is one of the little parkas that I made for my granddaughter. Now my daughter wants the fur in, so I'm going to turn it outside in and make a little mother hubbard out of it, it's muskrat. This is one of the jackets I made for the girls, for my daughters, in fact they all wore it. Now I'm going to cut it up again, and make another little coat...for the other granddaughter. I'm gonna put this as a lining. I have a fur machine."

A tour of the fur storage shed--furs and traditional uses

"I'm gonna show you some furs in the shed. Actually, one of them I call my 'sugar shack', and the other is where I hang my furs. This is the wolf fur, we got this from our trap line, this is a dark wolf. I have a
wolverine, and this is all the beavers. We get beaver and wolf, marten, fisher, this is gonna be tanned because it's ripped." When it's damaged "we wouldn't get anything for it at the auction house. If the price is good, we sell it to the auction, if the price isn't good I keep it for my sewing.

We get all kinds of furs [on the trapline], . . . there's some moose hides, this is when I take the flesh and the hair off of it, this is how it looks. And when it's at that stage, they used to make canoes, teepees, and things out of it because it's waterproof. After I soften it up, lots of work, muscles, sunlight soap and suds. This is how it looks when it's the finished product. Usually [it takes] about a week, to have a hide done, all completed like this. That's working at it every day, a little bit of this and a little bit of that.

This is fishnet made out of caribou hide--this is how they used to make fishnet years ago before the cotton came in for the nets. [It's] caribou hide--it's very strong, you can't pull it apart at all. And when it gets wet it doesn't stretch more than it is, so you can catch fish. Caribou hide is a lot thinner than the moosehide. This is a caribou hide and the flesh is off, and they used to use it [with the fur on] for mattresses years ago when people used to travel--it was their blanket. And it's a hollow hair so that it doesn't freeze or frost up. It's warm. That's wolf and that is a solid hair so they could freeze up if it gets damp . . . the caribou doesn't.

This is a lynx pelt, I'm getting it tanned. This is my lynx hat, and there's my lynx boots with the Northwest Territories crest on them. These are my winter boots. This is a buffalo hide, they used to use that for blankets too. The caribou's the best for blankets. This is made out of caribou legs [mukluks]. I made this too. These have all been worn by my children, and I just show it to people.

This is a beaver pelt. [It's soft] because it's been commercially tanned. This is one of the moccasins that my grandmother had made with the porcupine quills, see I told you she always made fine dainty little flowers. [The roses are] a fine silk--this is the silk she used. Then some fish scales that I sew with--this is the natural color, and after I dyed them. Then there's some moose-hair tuftings. This is the bag that I use for the Elder Hostel [teaching].

This is the jacket that my mother had made; this is made out of caribou hide. They used to use that before. . . These are the bears, different colors--I use that for boots and things like that. That's a whole one
[black]--as it is. [I could sell it whole] but I find sometimes I make more with my sewing. This place [shed] is all made out of steel, so there's no mice or anything coming in it."

**Commercial tanning of furs**

"All my furs that I sew with are commercially tanned, so that they never turn 'buggy'. If you take it back to Vancouver, it doesn't matter. Here's the other bear [brown]; it's a whole fur too. The claws I cut off, usually because what happens in the tanning they just get broken, so I just cut them off. . . .This is one of the hats that I made for my husband for trapping--he uses this [velcro to close]. And here's the little boots that I was telling you about, sheepskin inside, fur outside, velcro to close. And all my duck feathers to make pillows. I show that to the children in school too, just so they realize that we don't throw stuff away but we make use of it. I make all my pillows, all my children have pillows like that, some of my friends. This is moosehair--this is how it looks before I cut it and before I dye it, this is the natural color.

This is the skin where I take it off, when I'm fleshing and scraping the hair off. These are caribou hides that I want to do at my cabin. These are ready to be smoked. It's double, two together. All kinds of goodies. There's some sealskins in here, there's some foxes, I have friends in the arctic who usually send me some, and I send them what they can't have. This is all our foxes from our trapline. I got work here for years. I haven't got time to get bored.

Some [buffalo hides] are sent out to be tanned. I tried that, I wanted to make a hide like a moosehide out of buffalo, but it turns out like a string. You can't tan a buffalo hide, but you can tan the buffalo with the fur on, but not with the fur off."

**Fleshing beaver**

In the basement of Jane's house, four small hides are stretched on plywood boards. "These are beavers. This is when I take the fleshing off, this is how it looks and then my husband nails it all up. These are all beavers, and we're gonna send them to the tannery when it dries. "Fleshing means to take the fat off them. I just use a big knife. It used to take me one hour, now it takes me fifteen minutes, I timed myself."
What I do is in the Springtime, I flesh the beavers, and then I freeze them, and whenever he has time, he'll do them. Now he has time, and he's doing them. We have three freezers."

Art is a way of life in the North

"It's art [to others], but it's a way of life in the North. Everything we use, we do, we need it for everyday life. To us it was never 'art' until now, it's recognized as art. As you go further North, you'll see more fancy stuff because the people are still wearing it more.

With fish, I make necklaces out of the backbones, I make pictures out of fishescales. Those are things to show them that you don't just get something, eat it, and forget about it. You can make things out of the animals; so you don't just take what you need and leave the rest out there. The more children you can get that across to, that's how it will be."

The meaning of sewing

"My sewing is very—it relaxes me. I enjoy sewing, so whenever I am very busy, and I wanna take a break from everything else, I usually pick up something and make something." Jane is well-known as a traditional seamstress in Fort Smith "because I always sewed I guess. And I show people how to do things. I don't keep any secrets because I find the more people would benefit by it, maybe they would take up the sewing and things like that."

Jane is very proud of the work she does. "Oh I am, because I always create it, I start from scratch. Then first thing you know, whatever I'm making, if I decide to make a jacket I make a jacket. If I decide to make a coat, I make a coat. Moccasins, hats--I always have my own little style, because I tried different things on and it depends on how they fit. Even my husband's trapping hat, the fur hats they make they only go up to here, and he needs it all underneath his chin because of the cold weather, so I made that longer. Even when I was making my children's clothes it was the same thing. It's what's better, how you can improve it. How it could be more comfortable. My children all wear [traditional clothes] a lot. When I go out to the bush I have all the clothing that I made on, except my skidoo suit. In the north it's so cold that, if you need it you make it."
National recognition

"Now I have a showcase in Ottawa, in the Museum of Civilization, not Yellowknife... I made a complete man's outfit and a complete woman's outfit, and now, whatever I make from now on, I make one for them. Like if I make a hat or jacket for my grandchildren, I have to make one for them too, because my showcase will get bigger. I'm very proud of it, because I know that later on my children and my grandchildren will see that, and people that I know. I made things that I had made for my children, like it's a winter outfit, parkas, hats, mitts. My parkas [for the CMC] were made out of duffle, all embroidery, with wolf trim, satin lined, wolf mukluks to match up to the knees, the top of the foot was beaded. The jackets were embroidered all the way up the front and a little bit at the back."

Northern Studies & counselling at the schools

"People always say 'well I went and worked there,' but I always worked at home. So after the children were grown up, I decided I liked to go and work out too, but my husband said it was a poor time. But anyway, here I am." Jane completed the two-year Community-School Counsellor Program at Arctic College in the early 1990's.

"I love it here [at the school]. I know the children, and some of them have hard times, and so do the parents, and the teachers all care for the children. If they didn't care they wouldn't be here because nowadays it's a lot harder. A lot of pressure, students get a lot of pressure from their peers and everybody else. I don't think they ever sit down to review their life. Nobody does; it's sad, so, that's my role. I want to do that for the next four years, and I want to give them all I can, for the next four years. Give what I know to the children, any way to help them to do things. And later on if they want to learn more about it, they know where I am. Because we're not going to leave here, this is where David and I are going to retire."

Teaching traditional native culture at school

"Sometimes people think that if you're native you should know your sewing and things like that. And that's not true, that's why I put it into the Northern Studies so it would be part of the curriculum, and so everybody does it, you don't have to be a native to learn how to do moosehide. The native children probably
have seen their parents doing that so it's no big deal. But if it's put into the school [curriculum], they see how important it is, they would respect their culture a lot more. We have children from all over the North, so when they go back home, they would take it more seriously and they probably would do it too; you know, keep it up. Because right now, as it is, it's a dying art."

**A program for all northern students**

"My Northern Studies class next year [at the high school], we decided we are going to make [preparing] the moosehides a part of our program. As the season goes, we gotta do the furs, and how we prepare them, how we sew with it. We had 32 children enrolled last year in Northern Studies. We have to bring it up to see what kind of things they're interested in.

In the Northern Studies program at the high school, they are also planning to produce a video series on tanning moosehides. "From there they would learn what to do with the moose, I'm going to show them how to make dry meat, all kinds of things like that. So the students, for the next four years while I'm here, I want them to learn as much as they can from me, because I'm only going to be here four or five years.

The TV [crew] have agreed to come down and film the students, a whole series on making moosehide. During the winter, we're gonna make things out of it, and then in the springtime we're gonna flesh beavers and that'll be our trimming. The whole series, we have a job ahead of us. It's gonna go through all the schools."

**The importance of passing on knowledge**

"I don't want extra for [telling others about traditional ways], because everytime somebody taught me something if they wanted extra for it, I would never have learned that. So what I learned I want to pass it on, so they can pass it on, later on, themselves. All of them are not going to be moosehide makers, but out of them, I may get a few. I think when we show them these things, they learn the value of them, the animals and that it's very important to have your values, and I'm sure they're gonna learn from that."
Children today want to learn

"They [children] want to learn, but things cost so much now, like moosehide now costs $800 [per tanned hide]. So if they make it, they learn how to make it, it costs them nothing, because there's lots of moosehides thrown away in the North; all they have to do is pick it up... It all depends on the parents, it depends on how much they encourage it. I think the small communities still have a lot of handicrafts. I know Fort Rae, people still wear traditional clothing. And that's important, because I think if you wear your traditional clothing and are proud of it, there will always be some. But the more they buy it from the store, they will slowly just lose it."

Jane says the students are very interested in learning. "Very much so, because when I bring my furs and that, they have all kinds of questions, and there's some of them they have seen it at home. There's also lots of them that never did. So it's always a good thing to have it at the school."

Teaching others

"I do [teach] elder hostel, I have an evening with them, I show them all the furs and how we get them; I show them all my handicrafts, and I have a northern foods supper for them. It's surprising how many people don't realize that it's part of our life. If we get something, it's used for something. Like the trapline my husband has, it's like farmers acre off their land and only use part of it, and rotate crops. The trappers do the same thing. We have a trap line that's ours, one year we trap about half of it and we don't touch the other part. You harvest that and you have animals all the time. If you kill everything you see, then you'll have nothing. That's the kind of thing that I explain to the Elderhostelers."

Jane is hoping to help bring traditional clothing back "I hope so, because the children like wearing mukluks, and things like that, so if they make it themselves, I'm sure they will appreciate how much work that's gone into it. That's the kind of thing you have to show people, and you have to tell them, to be proud of things they do, because... all kinds of good things come back."

Note: Jane's beaded and embroidered artwork is now on display at the Canadian Museum of Civilization in Hull, Quebec, as part of the 'Threads of the Land' exhibition. She is also now on the Board of
Directors of Aurora College, and is a strong advocate for the integration of traditional learning into college programs. She feels it will help to maintain the cultures of the Western Arctic. She continues to sew and provide counselling to the community.
CHRISTINA FELIX

Inuvialuit traditional seamstress, creator of 'Delta Braid',
owner & designer of Christina Felix Parkas
Tuktoyaktuk, NWT

Fig. 16: Christina in the showroom of her parka shop in Tuktoyaktuk, August 5, 1994.
CHRISTINA FELIX
Tuktoyaktuk, NWT

Christina Felix is an Inuvialuit Elder who lives in the Hamlet of Tuktoyaktuk, NWT, above the treeline, just at the mouth of the MacKenzie River on the Beaufort Sea. She is the designer and owner of Christina Felix Parkas which has a world-wide reputation for style and quality. When I visited her in her parka shop in Tuktoyaktuk, both she and her husband Emmanuel talked to me about the past. Christina is one of the originators of the elaborate and colorful cotton bands called "Delta Braid" which decorate the hem, sleeves, and pockets of her parkas, and many parkas in the delta region. Christina and Emmanuel were expecting a busload of tourists to drop in any time. Shortly after we started to talk, they did arrive, so I stayed and observed from her perspective. When they left we resumed the interview. Christina and her husband Emmanuel both helped to answer the questions I asked.

Childhood and beginning to sew

Christina was born in the Delta region and "I grew up anywhere, everywhere, [as] we moved from place to place with my dad when we were travelling." She says she began sewing "trying to cut a little parky for the dolls, that's what we did at seven or eight. For the dolls we made parkys." If it wasn't right she'd have to rip it out. She learned to sew from her sister Bessie, and later in school.

"I started sewing in school in Aklavik, and then dresses and skirts." The nuns taught her at the Roman Catholic hostel in Aklavik. She says "the first thing I made [was] a parky cover for my mom, it was a Christmas parky. . . . we worked hard in school that time." But it was "my sister Bessie, she taught me how to cut a parky." Christina has been making parkas for over fifty years now, working out of her home for most of that time, until she started the shop in 1985. Now she gets orders from all over the world.
Origins of Delta Braid

When asked about the origin of 'delta braid', Christina's husband Emmanuel told this story: "Before the delta braid they used to make it [a parka] out of skins—caribou, and black and white skin...really fancy parka[s] for the big days or whatever, the gatherings. There were always designs from all over on parkas. I have seen pictures anyway from our ancestors, long long ago, the design—I have seen them braided like that with fur. Black and white, they used the caribou bellies white with a really dark skin—just when it's changed hair—that's the time to use it for trims.

So I couldn't say when started the delta braid. Long long stories to cut the hair and get the trim. The real fancy parkas, I used to see the old pictures, they got a trim like that, but out of fur. Mostly made out of fur anyway, caribou or muskrat, they used muskrat for parkas too. The bellies when they cut them, the belly's a different color, and the back—they only make two kinds. I don't know how long ago when they start parkas like that.

But now it's changed over to [cloth]. . .the design it might be fancier too now—all kinds of colors. There were bias tapes already when I was a kid, but they don't make it like this. They make [a] few lines, I used to see when I was a kid the others—just few lines, they don't make it like this. But her and her sister, they're the ones that started these, make it like this. Delta Braid they called it." An example of Christina's 'delta braid' follows:

![Fig. 17: Christina's Delta Braid design—13 layers of bias tape are carefully sewn one over the other including tiny pieces of different colors to make a geometric design. Sometimes rick rack is used at the edge to finish it off.](image-url)
Christina said “Way before trim started, [it was] little narrow and different, ...machine [sewing] is faster, faster than the hand sewing. And it’s better.” Christina was asked about inlaid sealskin patterns, and said "I don't do that anymore, too many orders, in a rush."

Waterproof Kamiks

Christina said there are still things that can only be done by hand, such as the waterproof seams on kamiks because of the small needle. Emmanuel elaborated "when you make it waterproof you gotta overlap it, and when you're cutting it, your needle don't go through that whole skin, just between those two. You don't make holes on the skin, inside or outside. The seams, they don't put it [the needle] right out of the skin--between the two skins they put the stitches on--they have to make it two, like seams...to be sewn twice. It's so neat the water can't go through that." Emmanuel said sealskin and whaleskins are used to make soles for kamiks in this region, but Christina said she can't make those anymore. "No more teeth. Can't do nothing."

Christina's designs

Christina makes parkas that are different "The way I cut them, mine is different the way I cut it. The other parkas [are] just like jackets. This I put a hood on." Christina makes her own patterns for slippers and crow boots, and has had as many as five women working with her at the shop. She buys furs from Edmonton and Winnipeg. "Before I sew I stretch them, [and] wet them," and then she mends them. In her shop was a row of skins that she was stretching after mending. "We tan wolfskin at home, and fox."

Artwork

When asked if she considered her work artwork, she said "No, my work is . . . they do all the artwork uh? Molly and . . . two girls. They sew better, they cut the patterns better and make real dolls like real person. . . . I can't do it that much. . . . I can make designs and parkas, she can measure you and it can fit, your parka, when you put it on."
Teaching the next generations

Christina taught her daughters and daughter-in-law Molly how to make parkas. She says they use different designs. She also taught her granddaughter who is now twelve. "She tried it first two, three years ago, she always try." But she says "Tourists don't buy those little girls sewing..." When I asked if she thought the skills were going to be lost to be able to do this work by hand, she said "I guess so... they could still do it, but it's slow." She has not been asked to teach in the school but she said of teaching in her shop "It's hard when you're teaching and sewing--'cause they had to do it, and undo it, and do it over again, it's too slow."

Christina and Emmanuel Felix were married over fifty years ago, and on their fiftieth wedding anniversary congratulations came from all over the world, including from the Pope and the Prime Minister of Canada.

Note: The Christina Felix Parka Shop continues to be busy and prosperous, and Christina works with other concerned women on improving the status of the arts in the Western Arctic. When tourists come, as a bus load did when I was there, Christina stands in the middle of her shop, quietly waiting to answer questions.
MONA IGUTSAQ
Inuit seamstress, and women's co-op organizer
Taloyoak, NWT

Fig. 18: Mona on July 29, 1994 at The Great Northern Arts Festival, Inuvik, NWT.
This is a summary of Mona's comments in her own words from an interview videotaped, on July 29, 1994 at The Great Northern Arts Festival, Inuvik, NWT. Mona came to the Festival as an interpreter for her region, and spent a great deal of her time helping other artists communicate in English and Inuktitut. Mona also interpreted the interview with Peeteekootee Ugyuk, also from Taloyoak, whose interview summary appears toward the end of Chapter 3 with a picture of Peeteekootee holding a "packing animal".

Early childhood

"How did I learn to do all this and that? I lost my mom when I was eight so nobody really taught me. I don't know what kind of work they were doing before the white man came. I didn't know any of my grandmothers, just my dad. I don't even remember how my mom looks, until I saw her picture a few years ago. I had an older sister but she didn't teach me anything at all. But today I'm not afraid to ask her, if I want to know something about sewing. I'll just go and ask her today." Mona grew up both in Inuvik and "home: Taloyoak. [Pronounced Tell-o-yu-ak] It's 500 to 600 people. I learned by watching, nobody really taught me until a few years ago I started asking questions. At that time, when I was younger, I was scared to ask. But I learned." Mona didn't learn to sew when she was little.

Learning at the hostel

"When I started going to school here, I learned from Home Ec... in Inuvik. The first piece that I learned, we were doing a lot of beading in Stringer Hall back then. We would pick these willows and bend them, and put string across, and make necklaces, and put names on them. The students that were there with us. They taught me how to do that, because they were from around here in Aklavik and Fort McPherson, and from around here. That was the first thing I learned how to do. We were just in the Stringer Hall, in the hostel, in the dorms, and the girls would start doing something, start up something. Making necklace, either making necklace or always beading moccasin tops, and they would bring them to school with them. Not to
the school but to the hostel. So that's why I learned how to do beading, that's the first thing I learned how to do, I learned to do beading. I never learned how to do anything at home. I learned from here. Until a few years ago I started learning from home, like I wasn't afraid to ask anymore. Back in those years it was just, I don't know, either I was not interested or I was too scared. I want to learn. Today I'm not afraid to ask anybody if I want to know something."

Learning by asking

Mona began asking "My relatives, my friends, and that's how I started sewing... everything. I make parkas, kamiks, whatever. Oh, what else do I make? I make clothings, I sew clothings, embroidery flowers, delta trim--delta trim on the Mother Hubbards. You cut them out... and I learned to do that now, and I know how to do embroidery.

Nowadays, I learned that... when you want to know something it's better to ask, now. Ask when you want to know something. If you don't ask you won't know. I learned that now. I know that now. When I don't know something, I like to ask now. That's the way that things are done. Some just keep quiet, even though they don't know, even though they want to ask, they're too scared to ask. Some people are like that, I know some people like that."

Mother Hubbard Parkas

"The parkas, I don't know. It's not a community style [Mother Hubbards], it's all over. When I do it for my family and for my friends, if they're ladies or girls, I put flowers on them. I cut the pattern out of another color cover material, and make flowers or any kind of a design, and I stitch them on. I do that on my two girls packing parkas. I should have brought one but I didn't know. My packing parkas are different--they have pockets that come right up, from up here, all the way down. All the big pockets, this way, flowers here and flowers on the pockets. Flowers on the bottom, and around here, and on the front.

I do that to my two girls packing parkas, that's different from everybody else." They are called 'packing parkas', "because you pack your babies in them. It's [an] amauti... appliqued. I do that all down the covers. I cut out cover materials--flower patterns--and sew them on. Cover material on cover material--same
material but different colors. It's better to have the same material rather than have something different on-
same material but different colors. I have my own style of sweatshirts that I brought with me, those are my
patterns. I was just making them for my friends, and for my family."

**Recognition of individual style**

"One lady asked me about my kamiks, and asked 'did you do this?' and I said 'yeah', [and she said] 'I
knew you could do that'. I don't know, I don't know why she knew that I could do something like that. I did
my kamiks all in knots, and they're different, so I started getting these ladies to do all knots on the slippers.
All in knots, because of my kamiks. They were doing embroidery but I started letting them do them in knots,
and they look better.

They used to make these cape coats, cape parkas, that lady over there, Jean, those are her style.
Nowadays you see them in the stores . . . they're not made in Taloyoak, but somebody else must of picked up
the pattern from there. 'Cause I know this lady from home, . . . those are her designs--cape parkas, cape coats.
The parka that was worn last night [in the Fashion Show], the black one with the flowers [with] a cape on
top. That lady from Taloyoak, that's her design. She started those in seventies. She--went out to Ottawa,
and she went Montreal, Toronto, Vancouver, everywhere. She travels, and she went to New York with all her
work and everything. Her clothing for fashion show was everywhere, and she was in newspapers, magazines,
and everything, articles like. She was in kind of articles.

When the craft shop closed down, it just ended there. She doesn't want to have anything to do with
crafts anymore. So today she's working for crisis center. At home she's still doing a lot of sewing, for her
family and everybody but today she doesn't want to be involved with the co-ops anymore. She says she got
tired of dealing with, I don't know, government. At one time CBC was calling me, and they wanted to
interview me, and I said 'Can you go on instead?' and she said 'No, I'm tired of that, it's your turn.' She's my
cousin too, so we are kind of same. Whatever she does I like doing, and whatever I do she likes doing, we
work well together, we like doing things for other ladies, other people, to help them.
She invented the Mother hubbard dress that I was wearing last night. That was her pattern, that is made out of her pattern. She had all kinds of different coats, and owl pockets, and oh, gee, you should see all those kinds—all the coats that she used to do in the first craft shop they're all her patterns. And they were sold all over, fashion shows everywhere. . .

Recognition

"At that time I used to ask her for patterns. 'Can I borrow your pattern, and can you help me out with this and that’ I used to ask her that because she's so close to me. But today, last year, she would come to me and say 'Can I borrow your pattern?' It's so funny. I was the one who used to ask, and now today she would come to me and say 'Can I borrow your pattern?' And some of these ladies know that, and some of the ladies, even Peeteekootee that I'm with--she knows that and she does that and now, she's so--it's odd or something. Yeah, it makes me feel good too. She was the one I used to ask, and now today she asks me.

And now I know that I could do it now, and I could do something and if I want something I'll go and do it. Whenever somebody tries to go on top of me, when I don't like that, I just go right on top of them. It's better just to start right on top than start on the bottom. If you start from the bottom you won't get anywhere, its better to start--go right to the top and work down."

Re-organizing the women's craft co-op

"Back in 1974, the first craft shop started, around 74--73 or 74--but somehow it closed down in 86. I was in there with them. I worked with them for four years, but I wasn't there anymore after it closed--I wasn't there when it closed down. I applied for another job, so I wasn't there anymore. Somehow it closed in 86 and they lost the copyright to Holman--of the packing animals. A few years later the ACL [The Arctic Co-op Limited] bought the copyright and gave it to Holman, you know how they are, they just say--they just buy the pattern and give it to that town and say 'can you make these?' A few years later we started seeing these packing animals in stores, all over, untidy--big hands, big babies--they were not cut out the way they were supposed to be cut out and the stitches were so big. And you could just notice right away even from looking
from far that they were made from Holman. So it made us feel, 'Gee, what did we do, like I don't know, those were our patterns, why are they spoiling it, why are they doing it so untidy?'

So we got some ladies together—it wasn't easy trying to form a group. Before we formed a group, the Hamlet keep pushing about the packing animals—getting the packing animals back, and that, but nothing was done. Until a few years later, last year, 1992 in December we formed a group of fifteen ladies and myself as the sixteenth. [We] named ourselves and [put a] sign up. And in the Spring of 93 we did a four-week workshop—four weeks of workshop, and see what can we still do? How—what are we still good at? Things like that, we had all these ladies back from seventy something... some of them were the same old ladies still interested in the same sewing."

Support for the new co-op

"So we got some of them back, got a lady from California, a designer, and we got funding from Economic Development for the wages of fifteen ladies. And the Development Corporation from Yellowknife got involved with us. We bought all the materials and paid for the instructors and, after that four-week workshop, we started again in September of 1993, and we went on until 1994 of May... less than a year.

The ACL, they... supported us all the way. 'Cause they... have seen what we had done before in the past, in the first craft shop. And they supported us and helped us all the way. If they didn't support us, I don't know how we'd have done, but they got us involved with the Development Corporation, too. And last Spring, when was it? April. The Development Corporation came over to Spence Bay, Taloyoak, and had a meeting with the ladies. So, we became partners with the Development Corporation. We'll be starting again in September as [a] Development Corporation partner—they're just one step ahead of us. They'll be having [a] meeting in September, but even though we haven't had the meeting yet, we know that we'll be working with them. They'll have one person more than us, and we'll have one person less than them, or if they, anything that has to do with us and them, they'll be just one step ahead of us all the time. We start out like that but as we go along, and if we do well, they'll be moving back and we'll be moving up. At the end the ladies will be
running on their own. Economic Development [GNWT] is the ones that are funding the training wages for the ladies—they are on training now—they'll be on training for another year.

The Development Corporation [are] the ones who [are] paying for the materials and for the instructors and all that. We went after the Hamlet, and asked them if they could lend us a building for the year that we're going to be training the ladies from September to May. And they were really supportive, and lent us one of their buildings. We're in that building right now, but during the winter, we want to get our own building, like where nobody could get us out of the building, where we could stay permanently. So we went after another building--the building is a two-story building. We went after the Hamlet Office, and into their meetings and told them 'If you guys support what we're doing, and if you want to see something going on in your community, you could support us, and you'll have no problem giving us another building.' They were supportive.

I wasn't surprised. Because if you want something you've got to be strong. You can't be afraid. You can't afford to be afraid if you start. Once if you start something you just can't back off. If it's for your community and for the people of the community, if you care for your people, you've got to be strong and do this. If you're not doing it just for yourself, you care, you really care for your people. If you . . . start something out like that, you gotta be strong all the way. The people that you're dealing with, if they know that you're strong and you could do something for yourself, they'll help you. They'll support you."

Getting the packing animal patterns back

Packing animals are 3-D stuffed wool Northern animals or people—mothers carrying (or packing) their babies in the hood of their Amautis (Inuit parkas). On the front of Peeteekootee’s summary, she is holding one of the packing animals she created. "In spring, I think it was in March, we wrote a letter to Holman ladies and told them. We wrote in the papers say 'we don't make your patterns, why are you doing our patterns, why are you doing ours? If you're not going to give our patterns back, or whatever, we could do some of your work or something.' Some kind of a, gee, demanding letter or something. We all signed it and sent it over. We
faxed a copy to Nellie Cornyea, John Todd, our MLA John Ningark. And too, Economic Development, Cambridge Bay was in caucus, so we faxed them all.

A few months later, just as the Development Corporation came to have a meeting with us, a fax came in from Holman saying 'Okay, this is your pattern, I'm glad you're started off again. I'll give your patterns back. But we're keeping our own patterns... for the standing [polar bear]...'. Have you probably seen the standing polar bear that's on its four legs or the Muskox? That's their pattern. But our polar bear is on its hind legs and its sitting up like that, but their polar bear is on four legs. I saw that done at the Northern Images and I don't know. Its there, its on four legs, I don't know. This is the first time I've seen it, and, if you, you just feel, it's like when I went down to Northern Images I saw this polar bear. It looks like a polar bear but I don't know—it's not Peeteekootee's pattern for sure. All of the patterns—packing animals—they are all her patterns. Peeteekootee [designed] all the packing animals."

**Learning from each other at the co-op**

"We've got mixed [ages of] ladies in the co-op. Younger girls, younger ladies, middle age, and older ladies. So they [are] all mixed in together and they all teach each other. It's just, gee, you've gotta come and see. So in the fall we'll be starting off. We had this lady from California—the one we had for workshop. Its good that she came to teach the ladies, and she gave some of her patterns away to us, too, like a fox puppet, curly fox, seal bags, packsacks—those kind of patterns. She gave them away to us, so we [are] using them right now also. We will be producing those in Fall, [the] new items. We've still gotta do more work on the packing dolls. We've got to talk about how we're gonna do, how many of them do we want to do, and what do we want? In the Fall we'll be doing—right now we don't really know if we'll be doing those packing animals in fall."

**New materials and techniques**

"We'll be making them, but, there'll be some piece workers too, at home. We'll be doing them. We still got to do more work on them, 'cause we're using new materials on them now. First they were duffel and duffel [all heavy wool fabric], but that was in the seventies when they started out with duffel and duffel. Now
last year at that workshop, we were trying out pile [fake fur] and stroud [lighter weight wool], trying anything. We invented polar bear-packing polar bear, male raven, male owl, tried some of them in pile and they look more real in the pile.

"... Some ladies are faster than the others... The lady that came with me did all those ones, Peeteekootee. She] made the ones that we brought. Sometimes I don't have time to sew at all in the craft shop because I'm always running around doing papers, and all over, I'm an all over person. The ladies are always bugging me 'Am I doing this right? Am I doing this wrong?' You know, that kind of a question."

Packing animals tell stories

One of the first 'packing dolls' designed by Peeteekootee Ugyuk was 'Thunder Woman with lightening baby' [pictured with her summary]. "This [legend] was invented in a curse. It was Peeteekootee's first doll, and also this one, the Sedna. All of these are handmade, everything's handmade. All the packing animals, all the seams, even the pile and everything. The duffle at home is expensive, but we ordered these [fabrics]. Even though we ordered them we still pay for the freight and everything. This is a new seal, it's made out of stroud and pile, [and there is] the packing walrus. All hand made, everything's hand made, no machine stitch on this. These are all new. Always they're made out of pile and stroud, while others are pile and pile.

I asked her [Peeteekootee] to start making these flowers like this, [on the slippers] 'cause I tried this on my kamiks and it worked out very well and everybody really liked them. So I started asking the ladies if you are going to make slippers please use just knots. That's how they started using all knots. We wear these [duffles] inside our kamiks and inside our rubber boots in wintertime. These are our sweatshirts, this is my pattern. When I make them for my friends I put flowers on them. These were made at the craft shop. I couldn’t do them myself anymore because there was too many orders, so I gave the pattern to the craft shop and they started making them.

We can’t even keep up with them at home. Sometimes we have some tours, not too many tours but, people like filmmakers were there last spring making a film, they were from Vancouver. They were [here] just to make a film called 'Frostfire', They were there every afternoon... We couldn’t keep up with them, they were ordering, ordering..."
New ways of working

"When the ladies come they work 9 to 5. So instructors come in—they are instructing us how to use sewing machines properly. Instructing the ladies how...cause we never had those machines before in there. We had heavier equipment in the first craft shop. They know how to run those, but these are the new ones. So we have instructors like that, like professional fast people, like, you know, who teach you how to do them faster. How can you do--how many can you do in a second or in a minute or things like that. It went well, there was dust flying all over....

We've got two different things going on there. One is doing packing animals, [the] slow way, with our hands and sewing them, and the parkas with our hands. The other is like fast way. Two things going on at the same time. If we get tired of doing these fast production--you have to produce how many in how many days and how many months or how many. They say what number can you do this in, and we try that, and when you get tired of that. We were just training just now, we're not really into [production], but we'll be there, we're getting there. We know how to do that now. When we get tired of that, and the instructor has to leave, in the middle while everybody's gone, just us are left behind--sixteen of us--so we slow down. In the middle we do slippers, packing animals, sweat shirts, or dresses or parkas, that's in the middle. We do that in the middle, and when its time for the instructor to come back, we put all that on the side and get into [production sewing]...."

The instructor comes to Taloyoak for "Just a month, or something...she's not always there. Its fun learning, we're still learning, we keep on learning until we die. So, the older women—we're trying to keep them on the slower material. Like we have this lady doing packing fur dolls, no, packing dolls, or she makes them out of rabbit fur and leather—no calico or anything added to it—just fox, or rabbitskin. The ones you buy from south in stores, and leather—she makes that kind of dolls. We keep her on that, because she can't, she doesn't go into the machine sewing. We just keep her doing that. We're new. We haven't really got into all that [co-op management] stuff yet. Cause, we're learning one at a time.

We don't want to rush it. When you rush something—at the end you'll—you know that you did something wrong there. That's a mistake I made, and then, it's just like your sewing. When you rush your
sewing with your hand—it's not done properly—and you have to undo it again. We know that from the first experience—of the first craft shop. This one we just started, so we don't want to rush anything. We're still taking it one [day] at a time. We are going to take how many years until we can [do it right]. We don't rush anything if we are going to start something like this. We don't jump from here to there. You go one [step] at a time, its a better way to do it. Its well, we'll get there."

Sewing for survival

The new co-op helps the women support their families. ". . . it really does. For the widows too who don't have husbands, that have children at home, that helps alot for them. And for older people that don't have any of their family, or husbands working, its helping them. It's going to help the town people, [of] Taloyoak."

Mona says that the co-op will have quite an impact—putting sixteen women to work, who will help to support large families. "Gee, how many children? Gee, so many. Some of them have a lot, some have lots of grandchildren that they're keeping. Everyone—it's helping them—we are starting something here, and we're not going to stop until we get it where we want. We don't want to rush it. It's gonna take time. That's one thing we learned from the first experience, not rushing anything like that. Some questions that you ask I can't answer cause, we're not there yet. I don't know yet. Today we know where we are and where we are going, that's all I know. And we're not gonna stop until we get where we want."

Teaching the next generations

"Every person has her own learning ability. The older people in my culture always say 'If you want your daughter or somebody to learn, don't teach them too much. They learn by watching.' That's what they say. They don't try to teach them too much, they learn by watching and doing it themselves. If they make a mistake they try again. That's how they learn these things so I don't say nothing. If they want to try, they try.

My oldest daughter, she still doesn't know how to sew and she's twenty-two years old. But my younger and next one, she's twenty, she knows how to sew. She started at four, the very first check she received was when she was four years old. But, the other one, the older one, still today she's twenty-two and she doesn't
know. Her younger sister would teach her sometimes, try to teach her, and she would watch her younger sister sewing and just laugh. Why she doesn't know how to do it—It's always different for everybody. . . . My older one when I'm sewing and cutting, she doesn't say nothing, she doesn't even care to watch me. But the younger one, when I start cutting and sewing she says, 'Mom, let me try that.' You know, she starts bugging me, without me asking her 'You wanna learn how to do this?'" Mona says the younger people, "they're not afraid to ask," but the older people are afraid to ask. "That's how it is now.

There's gonna be a grade ten added to our school in the fall, next month they start. They start early and finish early—cause families like to go out camping while its spring, so they start early. They'll be coming over learning some points from us. And we'll be going up there. It's gonna help our students too, to learn some points from us—a guy from Education came over to talk to us.

In our home community we all help each other, we all support, whenever there's something going on, we help. Whenever somebody's in trouble, or whenever somebody needs something, we help each other.

Note: Although Taloyoak is in the Central Arctic, it will be part of Nunavut, the Eastern half of the Arctic, when it divides in 1999. The women's co-op in Taloyoak has influenced the Western Arctic, especially Holman. So the interviews with Mona and Peeteekootee are included here because they provide valuable insight into how things often get done in the North, and how women's traditional sewing skills are being used as a means of survival by using them in new artistic ways. These interviews also provide insight into how children learn, and how a group of women are improving their community by working together, sharing their knowledge, and teaching the next generations.

For another account of an Arctic Co-op, see Sue Rose's summary of how the Holman Co-op operated; also Elsie Klengenberg's summary of her own experiences at the Holman Co-op, which follows.
ELSIE KLENGENBERG
Inuvialuit stencil printmaker, stone carver, & traditional seamstress
Holman, NWT

Fig. 19: Elsie in May 1995 in Inuvik, NWT, rough-cutting a soapstone carving, her first in many years. She is wearing a Holman parka cover she made with applique patterns on the hem.
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ELSIE KLENGENBERG
Holman, NWT

This is a summary of Elsie’s own words and comments from an interview on July 20, 1993, conducted and videotaped during The Great Northern Arts Festival in Inuvik, NWT. We were talking in English, which was not her first language. Two years later Elsie completed the Fine Arts Certificate program in Inuvik, with her daughter Helen, passing with high marks.

Childhood

"Long ago when I was a kid we used to have snow house, and everything but TV. My father’s name was Victor Ekootak. There was no co-op long ago when we moved to Holman, there was only seal hunting and fishing and something like that. When we moved to Holman my dad used to draw. I used to see him; we had no paper--big for drawing. He used to use writing pads--those little writing pads? He'd just draw--never use patterns or anything, draw old time people. I used to see him." Elsie helped him put the pieces of writing paper together to make a big sheet, but says she didn't draw much then, "I started after my Dad died. Just think about him and how he used to draw, make bears and draw. I wished to know how to draw--just like a little kid my drawings, used to be. I just try, and learning, learning."

Early Education On the Land

"I never have school. My dad, you know first time the kids, when we were kids--I was eight or nine years old--other people’s kids started going to school here [in Inuvik] for the first time. I really wanted to go to school, but my Dad can’t let me go. ’Cause I’m the only girl, and I’m a younger one too. I really wanted to go to school." Elsie had to stay with her parents, "stay with them and help them, hunting, and help my mom, you know, what she’s doing. Just made dry meat, and hunt cariboo, and seals, fish." Elsie helped scrape hides for winter clothing, "sealskin, from there I never go [to] school. I wish to go to school, but I never go to school... When the seal skins--we make them dry--when they're dry--we started sewing them for hanging[s]. And we
started to make a co-op like that. You know stone cut? My dad cut them, he and a few people start the co-op."

Traditional Sewing Skills

Elsie learned to sew and make parkas from her mother and friends. "I used to sew, but right now, it's different now. Long ago we used to have only straight on the bottom, [but] it's getting different from long ago. It's getting lots more, now it's always make them fancy. Just like it's different now." The applique work on the bottom of parkas was "cut by hand, and then sewn on by sewing machine--It's easy, although you have to move around so much--you put them in there and what you call those stickers--pins?--you use them. I don't sew anymore, only my daughter sew my covers--she has learned too." Elsie says children and adults always wear their traditional clothing, and the women sew first for their children and husbands, and then for themselves. "Holman's ladies--the kids always have nice clothes--warm clothes, boots, kamiks, warm mitts, parkas. Old ladies always make fancy parkas. Even young ladies always make nice parkas--Christmas time, Easter time, always make nice parkas. Always look at them, like the other day, always look at the Holman ones, always make them win." [in fashion shows] "Always win the nicest one."

Organizing and learning at the co-op

"Just about dropped sometimes, the co-op. When we had kablunas [white people] working, just about drop it, but we try it again. It's up again right now. Just about no more co-op sometimes, how many times it must be? One time or two times, just about drop. We find out, we kick the manager out, and try it again. Now we got new art shop, new co-op, stores, hardware. About eleven or twelve years [ago] I started working at the art shop, printing. I [am] still printing."

Elsie says nobody really taught her to draw, "Nobody. Only when I'm gonna learn at the art shop, the art shop worker--manager--just show me how a little bit. I just started, and I look at the prints, and I copy. From there I started printing. First time when I used to work with Mary [Okheena], the print used to be stencilling, used to be flat, no changing--just like really flat. Later on...we started learning how to fix the prints, put color on it. We learn. Just us--we try how to do it. Just try it, and just try to do it better. Just like
now, when we are working at the art shop co-op, we still learning, help each other, and how to put color on it—
-we always help each other. When we really like our drawings, our own drawings, or anybody's drawings at
work, we pick it out and we work printing it. I print my own, I draw my own work—printing."

**Learning new techniques**

Elsie says sometimes the co-op brings people in to teach new techniques but there are only a few
artists working there. "Only six of us. Stencilling, some woodcut, some of them are etching. Peter etching,
Louie woodcut. Sometimes we could use woodcuts. Me, Mabel, Susie, Mary we always work stencilling... first time I used to carve, too, before I started printing, drawing. I never touched them again, maybe I still
could. I started to think 'Gee, maybe I should go back to carving', and also so I could try, carving and
printing. Maybe I could. Maybe I could finish one—I could try."

**Themes in her artwork**

Elsie says much of her work is based on legends and stories and scenes of traditional life. "I like to
draw people, and animals, and little kids. Sometimes I really having a hard time to draw, when I want to draw.
So hard sometimes. I never use patterns or anything. Just the paper and sometimes I sit there and I can't draw
... so hard sometimes—just still trying, yeah." She says that when she's out on the land camping, "I look at
animals, and land, like that, it just makes it easier to draw.... Sometimes it's so hard to work on printing
when we stay home and the TV is in there, and sometimes want to look at it instead of working. So hard
sometimes at home. I always work at, bring my work to the co-op art shop, and work them and print them,
[after] I work at home on my own."

**New Influences**

Asked about the influence of non-native people, and new materials and techniques, Elsie said
"Native—is that Indians? Native never go [to] Holman. Indian never go to Holman." She is 'Inuvialuit' and
says the white people "the managers and workers, always working there helping us.... they always go to
Holman, you know etching, they always have learning, us never teach from anywhere, only etching."
The meaning of artwork

Elsie talks about how her work makes her feel, "I really like it. I never have school, so I like my work. If I have school, if I have big grade, maybe I never work like this. I don't know, if I got a job somewhere, maybe I never work. I'm so glad that I could work printing. 'Cause I never have school, I can't work anywhere, only in printing. It's so hard to say it. I wish to have school long ago. I feel good, you know, I like it [printing]. They [tourists] always start to--when they like my prints, and say it's nice, you know, it feels--better."

Fig. 20: Elsie on the first day of class in the Fine Arts Certificate Program in Inuvik, NWT.
Teaching the Next Generations

Even though Elsie did not go to school herself, she is teaching other children both in school and at the co-op. "School time we always teach them at the school day afternoon. [They] go to our work, I mean, to art shop and learning. Those kids go to art shop and we have school day, school hour." Just certain kids are chosen to come to the art shop and learn--the kids that seem to have talent, and they are taught by 'Me, Mary, Mabel--we always take turns. We let them draw first, and let them cut out. Some of them are easy to learn, and some of them are hard. School days we always learn them. We used to go to school and bring some stuff, and we used to learn them. Too many kids at once, you know, Can't learn like that. We just talk to them, and we let them, four or three at a time, we let them go and . . . they're gonna learn, kids gonna learn. You know those kids that come here last year [to the Festival]? They used to learn from us and those teachers."

Note: Two years after this interview, Elsie and her daughter Helen were chosen to represent the Western Arctic and Canada at the Native Arts Festival "Keeping Our Stories Alive" in New Mexico. There they co-produced a special stencil print and presented it to the Governor. In May 1995, Elsie was accepted into the one-year Aurora College Fine Arts Certificate program, and moved to Inuvik with her husband Joseph and youngest daughter Delma. Elsie’s daughter Helen also moved to Inuvik with her young family to take the program, and she helped her mother with interpretation and written assignments. In the program Elsie began to carve again, and was an inspiration to the other students. Elsie said she was grateful for the chance to finally go to school, and she completed the program with high marks, but she was glad to get back home to Holman. She and Helen were interviewed for a segment of "On the Road Again" for CBC TV, in April, 1996. Elsie participated in the Inuit Qaggiq Festival in Ottawa in 1996 as well.
LILLIAN KRISTENSEN
Non-native weaver, businesswoman, animal shelter founder, and Fort Smith "Citizen of the Year" in 1995.
Fort Smith, NWT.

Fig. 21: Lillian warping hand looms in March 1996 in Inuvik, preparing to teach weaving to students in the Fine Arts Certificate Program at Aurora College.
LILLIAN KRISTENSEN
Fort Smith, NWT

This is a summary of Lillian's comments from an interview videotaped on May 21, 1993, in Fort Smith at Lillian's home, gift shop, and animal shelter.

"I live in Fort Smith, NWT, a little town right near the Alberta border. It's a nice quiet little town... a frontier type of town. We have about 2500 people here, half are native and half are white. Most are government workers but there are a few people like me around that are just doing our own thing. Between my husband and I we've done different things in Fort Smith since we came here in 1971."

Childhood

"We were born, both my husband and I, in Denmark, in Copenhagen... In those days we went to school, starting when you were seven, and you were usually out of school by the time you were fourteen. Then, if your parents could afford it, you could continue to University, otherwise you could go in and take an apprenticeship for four to five years, depending on what trade you were into. Then you would go to a technical school, and part of that was to continue to upgrade. Just your reading, writing, and arithmetic, and then your technical things.

Apprenticing--Learning design

"My husband went into book printing and binding, everything to do with making books. I went into a fashion house where I learned to sew dresses. You were just placed next to a person [who had] already been there for many years, and you start overcasting seams, and that's how you learn, step by step. And between twenty women sitting there, there were only four sewing machines, and three ironing boards with the old fashioned iron without the steam in it. It was an old building, and it was quite dirty everywhere, and we were sewing these very expensive dresses, styles from Paris. The bosses would go to Paris twice a year and buy patterns, and buy originals, and you have fashion shows for queens, and all of the people that earned a lot of
money, along with the great snobbery that went on in Denmark. We met and married in [Copenhagen in] 1956. That was one reason we wanted to get out of there, after both of us went through apprenticeship, because the taxes were so high."

**Immigration to Canada**

"We were young, we'd just gotten married, and we wanted to get away. We decided that Canada would be the place. We came here in 1956, we went to Vancouver, we had no choice, the immigration in those days, we were told. A year later we had our first boy and two years after that we had our second boy. And those two boys, that was it, there was more to life than bringing up children, two was enough for us.

Through all the years my husband would have some business, and there was very very little money coming in. We did not go on unemployment, we never have in all the years had any help from the Canadian Government, we've been on our own, we've done it, and that's a pride. Our boys now are grown up, one is in the navy, and the other one is working on the northern highway. So we are very proud of both of those boys, and we really lived up to what it is to be an immigrant in this country, along with we now have a business.

In the meanwhile, when we went to Vancouver, . . . I was always doing a little bit of sewing for people, in a quiet way, and not to go to work and leave the children, I stayed home with them."

**Vancouver to Montreal**

"After being eight years in Vancouver, we decided it was a good option to go to Montreal to open up a little printing shop at McGill University. I didn't like Montreal, so after we had lived there a year and a half, we found a little farm in Ontario, and managed to get enough money together to buy it. And then I moved out there with the boys and my husband then stayed in Montreal in a small apartment, and he then commuted back and forth to our farm for five years. Our farm was a sort of MacDonald type of farm, we had a couple of calves, we had a horse, he got so big that I couldn't ride him, because I didn't know much about it in the first place. We had chickens and geese and ducks, and cats and dogs. We had great danes who had ten puppies so we had twelve dogs at one point. It was just a very nice life there, the boys had a good time going down the creek fishing and falling in through the ice in the wintertime, and all these little things. Life was just great."
Learning to weave

"On the farm, my husband had given me a loom, a 36 inch. I had never asked for a loom, but my husband decided it was a good old fashioned type of look, that his wife should sit there and do weaving. And it fell right into the sewing, and that, and I liked knitting and crocheting and whatever, all these different things. So I got this loom and didn't know what to do with it. Someone came to visit and said 'I know a young woman 18 miles away that does weaving, she has a loom very much like yours, and I'll make sure she knows about you, and you can give her a call.' And so I did, I went to her house one day and said 'Hi, I'm so and so, I hear you do weaving. I have a little loom...'. And she said 'fine, come in,' and it was like we had known each other all along. She was a few years younger than I but had gone through an arts and crafts school, to learn how to do these things. And she then showed me how to take four different colors of yarn, like purple, red, blue and white, and she was very free to use the colors. She put all of the colors together, got them on a warping wheel, and then made the warp. And then started on the loom and in no time she had it done. And we started weaving. We just picked any color, and I thought—that's it for me.

I had tried [to learn] in night school, it was always about fifteen miles away, and it [was] a little farmer town, and there was some kind of a school, and they were doing weaving. And they started out saying on the blackboard 'Okay, never mind the loom, this is how, this is the warp, the weft, and so many ends', and I just thought 'I can't believe this.' Then you had to use cotton yarns, and flat colors, and I wasn't impressed at all. So I gave up on that, I was only there a couple of times.

Then I met my friend Anne, and she was showing me how to do this. That was it. I started struggling with putting all the threads on the loom which I still hadn't learned to do, trying to get everything organized. At first when I was weaving I started out so many inches and it shrunk to that many inches as I was weaving along, and it was really frustrating. But it was just a matter of learning and Anne kept saying, 'well just keep doing it'. But even from the first piece that I did, I found that I had to do something with it. This ain't for me to sit and do placemats--or scarves--or things that you just take off and then it's finished. It wasn't enough--I was a dressmaker, I was a designer, and I liked to create, to not know what I'm doing until its there. Then I
start to really create. So soon after I learned to do it right—to get the tension right, I had this long 20 metres of fabric. Woven fabric in wool—I didn't like fine woven fabric—I liked the really bulky stuff.

So I had six stitches to an inch. I had two to three ply yarn, sometimes one-ply in between, and then I was just weaving. I found that it was both the warp and the weft that was doing the pattern for me. I liked the vitality of all the colors together, not just one showing together. That's how I did it all along—I got into making dresses and skirts and jackets and coats, and in those days, this was in the sixties. So I started in 1965, and then it took me a few years before I really caught on, and then after that, I made more of the hippie type of clothing in those days. The casual type. I would do woven jackets, with fringes hanging down, and fringes on sleeves, and no linings and funny buttons and straps. Never mind the zippers and so on, and people liked it.

But after five years, it didn't work out without my husband not being able to get a job, and we didn't have enough money, so we had to give up the farm, and I was getting very tired of being alone. He's a fine printer, and I suppose he should have stayed with it, but when we left Montreal six to eight years after that, that was when we packed and went North."

Montreal to Fort Smith

"We went to Fort Smith, that was just a pick on the map, and we have been here since 1971. People in this town—it was all government workers, all white people who came here because they already had a job. They would then get a house with wall-to-wall-carpeting.

We came on our own—we were one of the few families who had come to town in those days, and we bought this little log house that someone was going to tear down. They didn't think that anyone would want to live in it. Well, we lived in it, and it was drafty, but it had a homey feeling. We had torn down the old ceiling and we had the old wire hanging, and I would hang the weaving from there. Probably dangerous, but it was colorful, the TV was hanging from the ceiling one time because there wasn't room for it to stand anywhere. It was such a neat little house, with just the upstairs for bedrooms. People liked it, we had a red
lamp hanging in the window, and that little house that was a nothing before became a home and a very busy place.

When I came to Fort Smith, I started out weaving and by the few people we got to know when we came to town, they were talking about that I had this loom, and some of my friends came over to see this. One time, somebody called, I didn't know this person, and she said 'I have a friend, can we come to see your weaving?' I said 'sure that'll be fine, come along.' Well she showed up with a whole car full of ladies, and all came into my tiny little house, and there they were, expecting me to do like a fashion show of all the things that I had made, and explaining how they're done. It just took me off my feet, I wasn't used to that, I didn't like standing up in front of even two people, let alone more, but I was stuck with it. And that was how it went here in Fort Smith. Word by mouth got out very fast, and I got orders. So I was doing jackets and I worked very hard. I worked long hours—I liked doing it. There was no problem there. After the first year, I had earned $9,000 and that was retail. So that was really not much money that came in."

House burns down

"Two years after we arrived in Fort Smith, in March 1973, our little log house burned down. I was sitting weaving, and suddenly there started burning by the chimney, and in no time, the whole thing was up in smoke. Everything was in the house. It was a very cold day, wind, the boys and I went and sat at a neighbor's house, looking at our house burn up in smoke, and somehow, I couldn't believe that it was really anything. I just didn't believe it was really burning.

It wasn't until the fire department left, and ... I was alone, and I stood there and I looked at my house. And I came in and looked at this burned out place, and that was when I realized that it had burned. Inside, it was not what you call a hot fire where everything went down in ashes, the whole upstairs went and a few places downstairs everything was all scorched ... and I looked at all my cones [of thread], which we had all on the wall on dowels ... were hanging with icicles and this black water, and it was scorched. And my loom was like it had gotten suntanned, the one was pretty good--my first one, my 36 inch loom I started out on, then after that I had got a 45 inch loom--that was totally gone. So it was just such a shock to see all my
beautiful yarn and everything there, books, all scorched. And my husband's books, all his fantastic book collection was gone, and some of them there was only one in Canada. All these things had gone, and it was really hard to accept.

If the fire had happened at night, we would all have perished in that fire, because the smoke went so fast. But because it was in the daytime, we lost one cat, but we had the two kittens, the one great dane, and we all got out of the house, and to me, it was just beautiful that we were all safe . . . We saved the loom, the 36 inch loom, and Ib [Lillian's husband] took it to the college where he was working. The carpentry shop said he could use their place to fix it up.

But the next day, the day after the fire, one man came to us and said, 'It's so neat to see you have your own business, you come to town and you have been working hard at it, and you have made this place into a nice little house.' That is, before it burned. And he said, 'Let me know how much it would take to get you back on your feet'. And we thought that was quite something. So we figured out how much and he came and he gave us the check and said 'Okay, order all the yarn you need, and whatever else you need, and that is a loan--a 99 year loan.'

We established a bank account, and the government opened up a house for us. In those days you had to be working for the government to even get a room to live in. And I thought it was just one of the examples of what--they opened up a house for us, and they painted it, and after five days, after the four of us had been all over the town living in four different places, we came back into this house and there was a chesterfield, a chair, there was a mattress, and there were clothes all over the place, all over the house. Masses of it, and I had a field time going through all this second-hand stuff and loved it . . . so, we slowly started to get back on our feet."

**Back to weaving**

'I got back into my weaving, I was using whatever little yarn there was I washed and used. I made a couple of wall-hangings. I thought this was the last of it so it was a terrible color green, yellow and not my favorite color combination. I like more things like purple and orange together, and red and purple, mauve,
and white, soft and light blue, and so on. So these were terrible colors, but it was the last of it, and I really appreciated having a little bit until my new shipment came in. And then I worked again at the weaving and it came back up again. So, from there on we went through different things. We had no money, we were totally without, and so it was a little difficult.

After the first year and a half the government said 'you've got to have a home.' We had a friend who said 'I'm leaving town for a year, you can live in my trailer to take care of it,' And so, we lived there rent free. After when he came back, we then moved into another trailer for a month, then we got into public housing."

**Pride in her creations**

"I continued doing my weaving all along. I was busy with orders. I would be so busy at Christmas time that I would send things out on COD orders to all the neighboring towns, and I remember payments coming in--COD orders coming back in January and right into February. I would just get check after check, it was a neat feeling. Even if it was not a great income, it was a great feeling. I remember there were days, especially after Christmas, I would go and stand out where we had the Bay building, and we had the post office, and a bank, it was right across the street. I could go and stand there, and one day I counted seven women walking in my woven jackets--that they all had received at Christmastime. And it was such a neat feeling--that I had created those, it was all my idea, and here were these women walking around very happy, talking about 'where did you get one of those?' That's great. So that was the feeling about weaving what I had created--it was a good feeling."

**An old house of their own**

"We then had to find a place of our own. We couldn't keep public housing, they didn't want us to stay for too long--although it didn't seem right--but you have political things. We were a white family from out of this town and weren't quite fitting in to some extent. So they didn't think that public housing should room us--so we had to get our own. So one day, a friend took me up to this place in town where we are now, showing me this corner lot where there were two buildings--both empty. [One] had been the library and it had been the first post office in town. So it had a little bit of a history. They had belonged to the . . . Federal
government, and one . . . was an ophthalmologist's clinic at the time. The little house where we are now, which is our home . . . . It's probably something like forty old years now, that is old for Fort Smith . . . So when the government decided they didn't need them, they handed them over to the town of Fort Smith [and] they put them up for tender. Anybody could put a bid on them. Two houses was what we needed, we could then start a shop. That was supposed to be my weaving studio. I remember sitting across the street before we put in the bid, looking at these two buildings, and he said we were going to start a shop. And so he put in the bid and we got it. I thought 'Well, sure, I guess I can figure this out about the weaving,' but I was excited about us getting a place of our own. We had no money, so we ended going to the Federal Development Bank and they said 'we can give you money to buy the place and to fix it up, but we cannot give you money for inventory.' That's how it worked in those days. So we got this place and we moved into the smaller of the two buildings as our home, and the bigger building was then made into the shop . . . ."

Starting a shop

"So we got it all ordered, and went to the government in Fort Smith at that time, who had the local collection of Native crafts. We got on account all kinds of items for our small shop. At that time, after we had torn down all of the walls and removed the doors it was made into two rooms—in the middle of the house there was a bearing wall. So we had the front room and the back room. The back room was . . . my weaving studio, with all my yarns and ironing board and all these things, and . . . the front of it was the little shop. We managed to get a couple of hides--one was a buffalo hide and one was a muskox hide--and we took in two sawhorses, and we would dress the sawhorses up with the buffalo hide--the long hairy beautiful fur. We put it over that just to fill out the space--because we didn't have much. And all my weaving would be spread out, and being so colorful, it didn't look so empty in there. Then we had one wall with all the native crafts on. We were still limited in how much we could buy, because we were totally borrowing money from the government. You know, borrowing and . . . then it has to be repaid over a long time. So they have been very good to us."
Teaching weaving

"And so as time went, I was doing more weaving, we even got an apprentice coming in. She was there for less than a year. And she worked for me for a little while, and people were coming in to buy things--I was getting into making wall hangings, and I made woven bags, and then out of little leftover pieces I would weave what I call wall pockets. Smaller wall hangings, bigger wall hangings, trying to make a variety of things. I made dresses, I made jackets, I made vests, I made pillows. We ended up getting a lot of plants in, and we got a coffee table and a couple of chairs, and people would come in and sit down and have their coffee in the middle of the shop, and it was very nice."

Needing her own space

"After I had . . . the weaving studio in the back room, my husband always thought it was a good place for me to do weaving. And he thought the whole world should see it. And I didn't work that way--I didn't operate that way. When I was doing my weaving that was me, I always imagined that's like when a painter starts painting something he's into that painting. I've never painted so I'm not sure, but I imagine you're into that painting and nothing else around you means anything. You're in there, you're on the hill, you're in the house you're painting, or whatever it is, and I didn't want to be disturbed, because then it's gone. And it was the same thing with me with my weaving. I would sit there --I usually put on twenty metres--and then I measure out so much for what I figure what it is I was going to do.

If I was going to do a jacket, I knew exactly how much I needed to do, and this is where the border was going to be, and I created all these things. I make simple drawings and a simple way of doing things, and I'm the only one that understood what it all meant. I would use my measuring tape. I need so much--so much for the front, so much for the back, and this was 36" wide so I had to go by the length, and so much for this sleeve and that sleeve, and then for whatever I wanted to do. But my husband invited people to come in and see what I was doing. They were saying 'What are you going to do with it? All this that you have on the loom already, what are you going to use if for? It looks interesting.' So I felt compelled to go and show them. So I unrolled all the yardage to show them, and then I had to put it all back on again at a different tension, and
then it disturbed me. And I was really getting very uptight, very frustrated about my own time wasn't there anymore.

And so, after a few years of doing that, I was losing interest, I had had enough of it. So I said to my husband, 'I'm really tired of weaving, I'm tired of being poor, I'm tired of being broke, we have no money, very little money for food because everything that came in there had to go to pay the loan back, pay whatever it is that came up. It was tight with money. And the weavings were leaving me with a feeling I was in a trap. My husband was proud of what I was doing, and I didn't want to just come out and say to him 'forget it I had enough of this' because he is not good at taking that kind of a statement. I had to do it in a different way.'

**Economic and creative survival**

"So I just said 'I have had enough of this, I need to get money, I need for us to get back on our feet.' So across the street there was a little movie theatre, and ... a little shop [was starting] over there, selling candies ... as movie theatres have. And [the owner] needed somebody to help, so I asked if he would hire me, and he said 'Oh absolutely'. Then later I found he needed someone to clean the movie theatre, so I said 'Hey I like to do that.' I needed the money, I wanted to earn more money.

Then after I had done that for awhile, he said that there was a women's correctional opening up in town, and it wasn't hard core girls coming, they're coming from all over the North. 'You might just like that, and that would give you a good income.' So I went up there and I said to them that I ... would like to ... teach the girls weaving and sewing. And the fellow said 'Sure, we are hiring full-time, but as a casual that would be fine.' Well, the first day I showed up at work they showed me around, and I said 'What am I supposed to do here?' It didn't sound right. 'Oh you're a guard' they said. So without knowing it I was hired as a casual guard for 640 hours and after that, it was the end of it for that time. There was another time later, when they phoned me to be a casual hire, so that's what I did."

**Teaching sewing at the women's correctional institute**

"I volunteered when I was working to help the girls to sew and trying to bait their interest, and sometimes we got a lot of things done, and other times I'd just sit there and do my own thing when I was busy
supervising. It was very casual when they first opened it up. And it was all like a big sort of family to some extent. You were in there with the girls and I actually had a very good time with most of the girls, doing things, having different ideas, and without forcing it onto the girls, I would do something if I saw a different way of doing it. I did a landscape with different kinds of embroidery stitches. Then I did a piece and I hung it up on the wall, but I would do these things in the hope that something would catch on. And some of the girls did some of the time.

After the 640 hours ... I put in another 640 hours, for three years, and I earned government money then. Meanwhile, I bought furniture, I bought the carpet for this house, I got the walls for this house done, and all of the money I earned went also for food... and for ... holidays. My income was paying for that. In the meantime the shop was taking care of itself.

So throughout the years, with me working, after three years I decided it didn't work anymore. Rules were being tightened, and I found for the first time in my life, I ended up with high blood pressure. There ended up being a few girls in there that were kind of scary to be around. ... Some of them were put into jail at RCMP because we couldn't handle them at the correctional. And so I was supervising at the RCMP for the girls, and noticed that the janitor at the RCMP station wasn't doing a very good job. I did a better job working there in my eight hours, and I asked questions. So... Why not? I decided to bid on the next contract that came up, and won it by $5. I got the contract and that was how my great career [began] in doing janitorial [work]."

Janitorial work

"Considering my official business name, 'Lill-Kris Creations', it was quite a name for a janitorial. From working at the RCMP, one of the members quit the RCMP and started a lumberyard. And he needed somebody to clean that place, a nice clean building he had built, and came and asked me if I would do the janitorial at his place. I guess he had inquired about how secure and trustworthy I was. Then he asked me about doing his house and home, because his wife worked full time. And then he was also involved with other buildings, there was the old post office building--the janitor there didn't do a good job and he asked me if I'd
then do the post office. So at one point, I then had a couple of other private houses I was doing, so some evenings I would go around to four different places and clean. And it was quite a life. Some of these I then lost out on as it goes by bid each year. I had the airport but I was working for someone who had bid on it already, who lived in Vancouver, and I didn't like his attitude, so I quit that, and that was the end of my janitorial. In the meanwhile, the years passed and I felt my sanity was not like it used to be and I was getting tired of cleaning toilets."

A dressmaking partner

"So from then on I went back, and decided it was time to get back into the dressmaking business again. I then approached somebody else in town who used to have a fabric shop and was doing sewing. And I asked her how she would like to partner with me, and eventually start up a shop. So, she said it wasn't exactly what she had planned, but she would go for it. She had the shop and the wall was in the middle, she had the two rooms in the shop. So we had the front room which we turned into a dressmaking business, where I was doing dresses to hang on the rack, she was doing orders. And in between if she had time, she would also make clothes for the rack. Then we took in fabric and sewing supplies. Everything that a fabric shop should have had. My husband had the other half of the shop--he was . . . slowly starting to go into books.

I can't quite remember back how it was, but in any case, this other woman and I, my partner and I--well I didn't even last a year with [her]. . . . She went away on a two weeks holiday, and when she came back I said 'Sorry I can't handle this.' . . . so I broke it off, and I got out of it."

North of 60 Books

"So we . . . had a whole extra room again. So we moved back into the front to create the shop, and I was doing a little bit of sewing but not much. I had sort of lost it. We went into creating the gift shop. We got shelves from IKEA, and filled it up, and my husband started dealing with the college and the schools to supply their books, and he's still there. Now it's the college--in the old days it was AVTC but it turned into the college. It's a much much bigger outfit than it ever was before. The young people from all over the North are going to the college. So now Ib's down to dealing with the college books and that's a full-time job. He has
somebody working in the morning, but before all this happened, I got into the gift area and started working that up.

I started going to gift shows twice a year, and just totally dove into running that part of the business. My husband then bought an engraving business in town, and so he had that besides whatever else he was doing with books. He started ordering more books for our shop, and he was working up. One day we removed the bearing wall in the middle of the shop so we had one big room, and I created an office at one end of the shop, so that he could do his engraving and whatever else, office work that went along with it. When you get involved with government you get the government paperwork. That's a whole different area.

I had labels for my weaving, that was 'Lill-Kris Creations', but my husband liked calling the shop 'North of 60 Books'-books were still his basic love, and he liked the idea of calling it a book shop, and I didn't mind at all. 'Lill-Kris Creations' was my name and I didn't particularly want it mixed with anything else. And so, being a man, and living up to what it takes to be a man, he got his will, and the shop was called 'North of 60 Books'. But we still kept our accounts different--separate--I had 'Lill-Kris Creations' which went under whatever weaving or sewing I was doing, and it took in all of the giftware. And then he had 'North of 60 Books' which took in all of the books, and as time went he got into tapes, maps, flags, engraving. So we had a mini department store, and we used to kid around, and I found myself very good at gift wrapping, and I found myself having to create this gift shop."

A feeling of accomplishment

"That was the fascinating thing--to even imagine that we should be able to run a shop. And today we have over $100,000 worth of inventory. And I look at that shop and I think that we have been able to handle that, is beyond me. I definitely never thought I was a business person, and I am running a gift shop, and I am totally impressed that I can do it. And I still can't believe that I can do it, but I seem to be able to. This is a gift shop where my faith pays, and I'm wearing a different hat all together. Suddenly wearing high heels and dresses every day, I am the buyer, and if they ask me if I like the stuff, I tell them what I think. If I don't like it,
I just tell them--they ask. So there is that kind of guts to tell people--it has not been me at all in the early days. But you learn and you grow, and it's a very interesting thing."

Thinking back

"It's been exciting in all the years when you think back of what you have done, we have accomplished a lot of interesting things. In comparison my family back home, who was always very home bound like I used to be, but they stayed home and they went to work for somebody, and they have a little apartment they are sitting in, and the way I see it, there's been no excitement in their lives. They have been able to travel to Europe when they go on holidays, they have been able to have their families around them especially when their children were small, and we missed out on all these things.

But I have learned to be independent, I'm not too sure if I would have learned if I had stayed in Denmark. Over here we were on our own, and as poor as we were, then that's the time I was so bone skinny that I dreamt about being fat. Oh, brother, did I get answered. So I guess it's a good life showing at the very end.

In the last five years the shop has been good to us. I haven't worked out, the money is just coming in to the shop, and we have gotten well-known, we have people coming from Yellowknife, Hay River, from Toronto, from Edmonton, and people say 'Somebody else knew we were going to Fort Smith, and we were told 'don't you dare leave Fort Smith unless you've been into that little gift shop.' It's such a compliment, it's a great feeling, people come in and say, 'Wow there's so much here, it's so interesting' and that is nice. That's a creation, that's something that's a fulfillment, it's something that we've done.

The creation is mostly me, my husband is busy doing all the paperwork for the college, but I have created everything. I have designed the shop, we have got glass shelves, glass cases, they are just sitting there now, and by moving them around quite a bit, I have a layout in the shop that's interesting. No aisles, so you can walk around and try to figure out where you're going next."
The animal shelter

"I also started, about twelve years ago, an animal shelter in Fort Smith. It was needed like anywhere else in the North nowadays, there is no other operating animal shelter in the North. Yellowknife they are trying to start one—they have a board. But they are not really doing that much, as I am. I started out taking in dogs and cats in a little backyard fence that I built myself. My husband didn't want it so when he was out of town, I built it. So when he came home he looked at it and said 'You did it.' And I did, I made the doors, put up the fence, and did the whole thing. And that was how I started--it had a dog house in it, and the cats went in my basement under the shop. And that's where I kept them.

Then as time went, people were supporting it, they liked the idea there was somebody doing it, and SPCA heard about it and somebody came by one time, and was encouraging me about it. I've been getting food and help from people throughout the years. Today, we have four dog runs with dog houses in it, and we have one nice built house--the college built it--we paid for the materials, and that is the house where I keep the cats. We had more fence added just last year, and now it's a totally enclosed yard."

The need to create

"Now, we are at the point, for the last four years, I have wanted to sell the shop. I feel totally stifled in the shop. I am finished creating. I am now just doing it. It's a routine, and I can't say I'm bored, but I feel . . . as if I have heavy chains on my feet and my hands, I now long to create, I long for my loom, I long for my time for my sewing. I always do a bit of sewing, but it's not like--I have all these magazines and files--I have things I have saved over the years. Things I want to create, and things I want to sell. I am ready to burst, I am ready.

I am putting it this way, we have now gone through a long life together, my husband and I, we have been married for thirty-seven years, and it's like now we are going into the last chapter of our life. Not meaning I'm ready to die, I mean we are going into a whole new way of living. And it's very exciting. We got ourselves three acres of trees, virgin land, 12 km out of Fort Smith, and Fort Smith is very good to seniors, so we decided this is where we going to stay. We are going to build a house, so the day we sell the shop we will have the money for the house, in the meanwhile we have a warm little log house on this three acres, and we
are planning for the house, cutting trees, creating a road, and we are creating a back yard and it's very exciting. I got my weaving loom, . . . my sewing room all planned, my husband will have a workshop and a double garage. We already in our backyard have two geese and three chicks, and it's exciting. I couldn't wait to get these--I had a chance to get these little fellas from friends, and I think it's great. We both love them, we call them 'geese for geezers, chickens for chicks', and that's all they had. They're in my backyard making a mess and I love it."

Note: Two and a half years later, in March 1996, Lillian came to Inuvik to teach weaving to the Fine Arts students for one week. When she arrived she told me that she had been diagnosed recently with a rare type of cancer, and had just undergone chemotherapy. The one week she was with us was barely long enough to introduce the artwork she loves, but it whet the appetite of some of the women students. Lillian said also that the shop is still for sale, and while she was away for treatment, the community people got together and started to build the addition to their new house in Belle Rock. She remains positive, reflective, and energetic, and is an inspiration to many. She said she appreciates the honor of being chosen as 'Citizen of the Year' in Fort Smith in 1995.
NANCY LA FLEUR
South Slavey language teacher & moose-hair tufter
Hay River, NWT

Fig. 22: Nancy at The Western Arctic Craft Festival in Inuvik in July 1992.
NANCY LA FLEUR
Hay River, NWT

This is a summary of Nancy's comments from an interview videotaped on July 22, 1992 at The Western Arctic Crafts Festival in Inuvik, NWT.

Childhood and early learning

"I came from Fort Providence. I do moose-hair tufting. I didn't actually start sewing when I was very young, but from about five on. My mom made me sit down and sort the hairs with her, the moose hairs, the white from the black. That was our means of getting our allowance. As we got older, about nine, we wanted to try particular scraps, she didn't want scrap hair, and we didn't want scrap hair, we wanted good hair. We weren't allowed to use her good stuff and practice on until we were older."

Selling her work

"I was thirteen when I made my first one to sell. She [mom] trimmed it better for me, 'cause it was not cut good enough. And then I started to sew, whenever I have time. And my mom said she learned the same way as her mother, my great-grandmother taught her, Lucie, and then her mother taught her. Both of my grandmothers are dead now." Nancy says her grandmothers did not learn tufting from a nun, they learned it as it was passed down in the family." She walked around the tables and showed me what she made.

Nancy's artwork

"This [barette] is made of hide with a foam backing and beading on it. These [tufting pictures] are faster. Nobody can make them [the birds] this small, I even tried. This takes much longer than the flowers. The rabbit takes forever. You use flour paste, flour and water, and you just draw the design onto [the velvet]. Nancy used to do large pictures "but it was too expensive for people. They couldn't buy it. I put [the prices] down, they have to add the commission."
Passing on the skills at home

Nancy has five children. "Now my oldest daughter is learning, she's 13... But she's not interested in it [tufting]. She's growing up the modern way, it's really hard for her to sit down and try. She gets a regular allowance every week, so she doesn't have to work for it. But she tries". Nancy says that she is not afraid that tufting will be lost. "I think the kids are growing up the modern way and it will be years before she can sit down and try to sew."

Teaching traditional skills in school

"In Providence they are [teaching tufting in school], they try, and a lot of the younger kids are doing it now. But in Hay River, I don't see any of the young kids doing it." There is a curriculum in the school for students to learn some native crafts, "but the kids aren't interested. In Hay River there's just three elderly ladies that I know that sew, any kinds of sewing, and there's another lady that I know that does tufting, but she doesn't teach it. What they're trying to do now is... to get more traditional and other cultural things involved with the school, but they're having a hard time finding teachers. I don't know how that's going."

Native teachers in schools

Nancy was in the teacher Education Program at Arctic College, and she is now almost finished the Interpreter/Translator program, and says she enjoys that. Her specialty in language is South Slavey. She wants to teach language in the school, and they pair that sometimes with native crafts. "I think so, that's what they're trying to do now, to get a lot of native teachers, and that's what the aboriginal teachers are for, that's what they're trying to train aboriginal teachers [for]--to teach [language and] cultural and traditional skills. So the kids will learn their language and other traditional skills."

Note: Nancy was my student in the Teacher Education program in Fort Smith, 1989-91, and she demonstrated tufting to other students in the class. Many of the women from other areas had not seen this technique. She told me before that she was the only tufter that made tiny little birds. During the Crafts Festival she was busy helping with interpretation and cash. Since our discussion in
Inuvik, she has completed the Interpreter-Translator Training Program at Arctic College, and she is teaching in Hay River. She is still doing a lot of tufting and her reputation is growing.

Fig. 23: Nancy LaFleur demonstrating tufting to students in my art class in Ft. Smith, 1990. Behind Nancy are Joe Beaverho from Lac LaMartre (now Wahto), Henry Charney from Fort Good Hope, and Florence Peterson, Ft. Simpson.
BEVERLY LENNIE
Inuvialuit educator, seamstress, cultural liaison, and arts organizer.
Inuvik, NWT.

Fig. 24: Beverly and her sister, Glenna Hansen, in Inuvik in July 1993. We three sang "Oh Canada" together at the opening ceremonies of The Great Northern Arts Festival.
BEVERLY LENNIE

Inuvik, NWT

Bev was a student in my art methods class at Arctic College in Inuvik in June, 1990. That fall, she and her family moved to Fort Smith and she took the Teacher Education program full-time, and was in some other of my classes. Bev and her family lived a few doors from me and I got to know them better, and I saw her every summer in Inuvik. In 1993 Bev worked as the Artists' Needs Coordinator for the Arts Festival. This is a summary of Bev's comments from an interview conducted in her kitchen after the Festival ended, on August 7, 1993.

Childhood and early learning

"I was born and raised in Aklavik, Northwest Territories, but I've been living here in Inuvik for the past 14 years. Aklavik is a very multicultural community, there's the Gwich'in people, the Inuvialuit people, and the non-native people. There's about 800 to 1000 people who live in Aklavik, maybe 100 are non-native.

My mother said that years ago when she went into residential schools, they were put in there by their parents because a lot of the people lived out on the land. My mother said that she spent two years in a residential school. In the school they did a lot of darning socks, stockings, and mending in addition to their studies and domestic duties. My father-in-law's mother was one of the first Gwich'in ladies to marry an Inuvialuit man from this area, Johnny's grandfather." One of Bev's grandfathers was an English trapper and prospector.

"I grew up in a family of seven other children. When I was growing up and going to school I was really shy, and I wouldn't say very much. I didn't want to ask questions because I thought everyone would think I was stupid or something. When I was growing up I hated going out in the bush. It was lonely out there, I wanted to stay in town and be with my friends. Even growing up I didn't eat a lot of traditional foods that were prepared by my mother, because I didn't like the taste of caribou, I didn't like goose, and muskrat and all those foods. But now that I've been married, I guess your tastes change. Now, I love going out in the bush,
and it's a whole different lifestyle. I'm married and we live off the land, and we like doing things, I enjoy it more than I did as a child.

My Uncle Jackie used to draw a lot. I used to sit and watch, just with pencil, he would sit and sketch. He was very good. I think a lot of those skills were acquired . . . when you live out in the bush. Sometimes you have nothing to do out there, like after all your work is done, so you would sit around and start sketching."

**Terms: Eskimo or Inuvialuit?**

"I consider myself an Eskimo, because that's [the way] I was brought up, that was the term that was used by everyone, was that you're Eskimo. So that's what I use, I consider myself as an Eskimo. Then when the land claim was being implemented, the people who were fluent in the language, said that the proper name would be 'Inuvialuit'. I myself am just becoming familiar with that term, and I have quite a hard time understanding. Like there's the Inuit people, Inuit which means people, and Inuvialuit means one group of people in this area. Then I was speaking with someone the other day who said there was another group called the Inupiat [Alaska Inuit], that's what I would be, so I'm still trying to come to some understanding. It's easier for me just to call myself an Eskimo person. The term Eskimo was not an insult until the land claim. About two weeks ago I was speaking with an Inuk from Gjoa Haven, and I said 'Well, I'm an Eskimo' and he was upset. So we had a long talk about that the next day. I said 'You made me feel like I wasn't part of your people. And we are one people.' And he said 'Eskimo' to them would be a swear word that was used by the Indian people to call down the Inuit people. And I said 'Well I wasn't familiar with that piece of information', so it's really crazy."

**Artwork at home**

"The type of artwork that my mother did was handicrafts—embroidery, and making parkas, and other winter clothing for her family. She usually sewed first, for my dad, then she would sew for the kids. Usually at Christmas time, everyone would get a new pair of mukluks. At Easter time, everyone would get new whatever was needed. During the winter, those are times when we'd have new clothes for the winter. Christmas and Easter. They always wore their old clothing from the previous year during the Fall, and when the snow came.
A lot of people would go out to the bush camps for the season [in the fall] and they would return at Christmastime, or Eastertime, whenever there was a holiday coming up or when there was feasting and dancing. That's the time when all the family would go back into the community and start their celebrations. I guess that's one way the women showed their skill."

**Learning to sew**

"I learned [to sew] years ago, I used to sew duffle slippers to wear around the house. And I would do beading, I learned from my sister-in-law who was from Fort MacPherson. She taught me to do beading on the loom." When Bev was young the parkas were made of "duffle was the main part of the parka, then they had the cover which was usually made from, I think it was, 'Grenville' or [other] material, quite a thick parka cover material. They would trim them with wolverine, wolf or black bear fur, or fox. The lining would be made from thin material, more of a wool. The reason they use wolverine is because when you're travelling, you breathe a lot, and the front of your parka [hood] usually frosts up, and it [wolverine] wouldn't get wet. They would be able to shake the frost off the fur, so that's why they would trim their hoods with wolverine trim. The fox, they usually used that trim for young children because they didn't go out much, so it didn't matter if it got wet, because their visits would be short. The black bear they used, but not very much because if you got caught out on the land you could freeze your face. That's why they used the different trims on the parkas.

My mom made a lot of fancy jackets. We called them 'fancy jackets', they would be embroidered and they'd have fringe on them, they would look more like a coat-jacket, with wool fringe around the yoke."

**Preparing furs and hides**

"I can remember watching my mother scraping and tanning a Wolvering skin. It was a big job, because she would start it and she would get tired of doing it, so she would go and ask this other old man to complete it for her. She would tan the beaver skins, wolverine, and also caribou legs for making leggings. Scraping it, and doing it right from beginning, not smoked." They didn't smoke and prepare moose hides when Bev was growing up. "That's something that has been lost along the way, tanning their own skins, and I think that Eskimo people use the skins differently than the Gwich'in people. Like the Inuvialuit people . . . use a lot of
the caribou, what they were able to get from hunting. And rabbit furs. The Gwich'in people usually tanned their own hides. It would all depend on what area you came from. The people that do still tan their hides would be the people from the Sahtu area."

Traditional recognition of women's work

The women never signed their work but you knew whose work it was. "Yes, and if someone wanted their parka trimmed with Delta trim or braid, or something on it, they would [say] 'Bring this over to Ruby McLeod', who's very well known for her Delta Braid, or Doris Blake, another lady who does really good Delta Braid, and Maureen Rogers. These ladies are really recognized for their fine trim. Or if you want a pair of slippers made, then there's all these ladies who are known for their fine quality of work that they do. I know that Jane Charlie Sr. from Ft. McPherson would be one lady, also my mother-in-law, Jeannie Lennie, or Margaret Lennie, and it would all depend on the type of work that you wanted done."

Influences on artwork

"The Gwich'in ladies are known for their beadwork, and they do a lot of beadwork on baby straps, beaded slippers, beaded parkas with mooseskin and beads on them. The Inuvialuit are known for their caribou skin legging boots, their fur mitts, part of their traditional clothing, and also mukluks. Both groups do embroidery. They embroider their mukluks and parkas.

The knitting [with beads] is done by hand. My mother-in-law does a lot of that beading but I'm not sure who taught her how to do that beading because my mother-in-law is Inuvialuit, and the beading is Gwich'in. There is a lot of [cross] influence. I was just at Shingle Point this last weekend, and I was speaking with one of the Inuvialuit ladies . . . who was . . . knitting with beads. And I said ' . . . what you're making?' and she said 'Oh I'm making slippers for my daughter for Christmas. And I said 'Oh how did you learn to bead?' And she said 'I learned from the Indians in Aklavik.' So it's something that each group passes on.

Years ago there used to be a group for quilt-making, the WI, or Women's Institute in Aklavik, a group of women first started by the Anglican Church, and they would all gather on a certain night and learn
how to make quilts. I think it was something that was passed on from the people, like say the RC [Roman Catholic priests and nuns] were usually French-speaking, and Anglican ministers were usually English. Then the Bay clerks and their wives. . . ."

Sharing Women's art skills now

Some of the women "are protective of their ideas. Say if you want a pattern for a parka, I could take a jacket and get a pattern off of that, but would I have left enough room for seams? Duffle is very bulky, so you have to allow for that. A lot of the native women would cut out their own patterns. My mother would never cut out a pattern, she always had to have her sister cut out for her. I even remember my mother, whenever she wanted to embroider on a pair of slippers or mukluks, she would get someone else to draw the flower for her. I guess everybody would be recognized for the skill that they had in certain areas. So my mother would send enough material over to Elizabeth Hansen so that she could draw her flowers to make the mukluks. And that would be from Aklavik over to Inuvik and then we would send them back. It's funny. I guess that's how they used other people's skills to accomplish what they wanted.

Before the parkas that were worn were very simple, just a cover. The fur trim [was] on the bottom and around the hood and sleeves. Only the men and women who had the fancy parkas, meaning they had the Delta Braid on them, they would have something to do with how they would get the materials. Then it slowly began to change. I think when I was about 16, 17, they started getting new parkas." The difference between parkas now and when Bev was a child "I think there is more trim put on today's clothing, so that they would be more modernized. The materials nowadays are easier to get, so they can do more. They're still bought from the store."

Delta Braid

"I grew up with [Delta Braid]. I watched my aunt doing Delta Braid on parkas, my Dad's sister, that's who my Mom would get in the beginning to do her Delta Braid. I think a lot of the ideas for Delta Braid came from the wide store-bought trimming that you would get. Years ago when my Mom would do parkas, she didn't have someone to do her Delta Braid for her, especially for the children, what she would use on the
parkas would be the store-bought trimming. It was wide, like the lace, but not lace, so maybe a lot of the patterns came from trim they had seen.

Years ago there used to be a fur shop in Aklavik, The Aklavik Fur Co-op or something, and they employed about 20 or 30 people. A lot of the designs that they would put on the rat-skin parkas would be the geometric shapes. So it derived from that I guess."

**Going to high school away from home**

"For me to get my education it's been a real struggle. When I was growing up, the school [in Aklavik] only went up to grade nine, and then for me to continue on with my education I had to leave my community. I went to school down in Fort Smith, and I did not like being away from home. Being in such a structured environment, I went back home. Then I tried again and still I couldn't stay away from home. So I just quit, I was in grade 10. Then I started working and even then I didn't like being away from home. So I quit that too and went back home to Aklavik. I only carried on with my education after I got married. It's just being away from home, you're not with your family, and it's very important. You're with a whole bunch of students and it's just a lonely life. No boarding home parent can take the place of your parents, and it's just an empty feeling, it's lonely. It's not just your parents it's your other family, like your relatives, and it's lonesome."

**Gwich'in and Inuvialuit cultural relations**

"My brother married a lady from Ft. MacPherson [Lorna Storr], and when they first got married, her grandmother, who is Annie B. Roberts, she's about 93 or 94 years old right now, when they first got married Lorna introduced my brother Billy to her grandmother. She said she was upset because she thought Billy was a white man, and she didn't want him in her house. Because she was ashamed, or embarrassed because her house wasn't clean or anything. That was kind of funny.

Now I think the Inuvialuit and the Gwich'in seem to get along quite well. If there's a celebration going on in one of the communities, like the carnivals that they have. Each year around Easter time they all go and mix and celebrate. There's a carnival up in Fort MacPherson, that would be the Gwich'in people, a lot of the people from each community usually gather up there and join in the celebrations, in games or activities
that are going on. The Gwich'in and the Inuvialuit land claims are both separate land claims. The Inuvialuit is the land claim for the Western Arctic Inuvialuit, and the Gwich'in land claim is for the Dene people of this region. There are borderlines and there was a big controversy over the overlap of some of the land areas, but that was all sorted out, I think."

Keeping traditions

"My father-in-law would not shoot a wolf, because of the belief that his great-grandfather (Gwich'in side) could change from a man into a wolf, so he does not to this day, shoot wolves. A lot of those superstitions are beginning to die in the younger generations. Mind you, my husband, the first couple years that we were married, he trapped for a living, he provided for us. Every time he killed an animal, there was something in the neck that he had to break or something. He just did it because his Dad did it. And the reason he did it, his Dad told him, if he didn't break this then he won't get as many animals as you would. So whenever he goes out trapping, like my husband still does, even though he's not superstitious or anything, he still carries on that, what was handed down to him by his father." There is still some gender-related division of labor. "A lot of it, like the sewing and everything, is happening through the schools."

Teaching the next generations

"They're trying to revive the culture of each group, by implementing it into the school system. I think that is okay in some ways, but then in other areas, I think these skills should be taught at home. I guess it should be taught at home, by the parent, and not by the school system. It is something all kids should know, because you know I just started sewing parkas last year, and the reason I started sewing, is I was thinking 'Hey I have five kids, like I always depend on my mom to do those things for us. Like my mom's fifty years old, and if anything happens to her who's going to carry on the tradition?'

I think a lot of the skills are being passed on to other groups through night schools. Like they have sewing classes, and so that's one way of women passing on their skills. One way I disagree with, is schools doing [cultural teaching]. I feel it's the parents' responsibility to provide those skills that are needed to survive out on the land, and also for sewing. It seems that the government is always stepping in and taking
over parental responsibilities, and I think it has to stop somewhere. I do agree that a lot of the curriculum needs to be adapted more to the area that the child is from, but I think if they do that they would be further ahead than trying to teach them skills for survival out on the land. Like I want my children to go on to university, and I don't want them using all their time in school for learning the lifestyle of the North. Johnny and I as parents, we do ourselves, take our children out on the land, and with their grandparents they learn the skills. Bev wants them to be able to function in both worlds.

**Traditional ways of learning**

"Usually, the way children are taught is they sit and watch. They observe what the elder person is doing, they don’t ask very many questions, and then they go and try it themselves. There doesn’t seem to be very much verbal communication going on between them. It all depends on how you grew up. . . . I always express my feelings and if I want something I know that I have to ask for it. So it would depend on the type of lifestyle that you grew up with. In my husband's home, my mother-in-law, they don’t talk very much. But she does a lot of crafts. She’ll just sit and her grandchildren watch her beading, so that’s what they want to do now. They want to bead and that’s a skill that’s being passed on, just by observing without verbal communication. A lot of children are very shy and don’t ask many questions. I'm not sure if they don’t ask questions, if they're just shy, or they're brought up that way.

I think it does put aboriginal students at a disadvantage because a lot of them, if they don't know, they just sit there. And I'm thinking, now they're either lazy, just from my observation, or they just don't want to learn, or they're shy. Or they want to learn but they don't know how to do the work. I found that being shy, everything I did it didn’t help me, because now it seems like I have to start over from this point here and try to get my education."

**Language barriers in education**

"I think a lot of the system is based on English that's spoken properly, and a lot of the families speak another language first. Like English is not their first language. That's one problem that a lot of the native students have, is coming from a home where they speak English, but it's almost like a broken English, because
their first language is Gwich'in or Inuvialuit or some other language so they don't use the terms properly.

Then they go into a school setting, like when I was going to school years ago I was always corrected for words. Then you go home and use the words that your parents use for explaining about something. Then you go back to school and use that and the teacher says 'No that's not the proper way to use that.' You're always afraid of being corrected. Even my daughter Crystal noticed that when she went South, she said 'Oh everyone's always correcting me in my class for the way I say something.' Correcting her English."

Cultural revival linked to pride

"Now, the children are being taught traditional arts and crafts, and it's being taught more than it was when I was growing up. Because the land claim has been signed, and that's some of the things that the leaders are fighting for, to get back into the traditional way of life with the drum dances and all. They had drum dances when I was growing up, but I didn't do any of them, like dance. I'd like to put my son into the dance group. The culture is being revived now, because of people recognizing that they don't have to be ashamed of who they are, or what they are. I think they are realizing that it's something important. I think that it's important, but what I think is more important is getting an education and being able to function in both worlds. I think it's really important for the children today to get the courses that they need for university."

University admission a struggle for aboriginal students

Bev says that not having finished high school "keeps me from being accepted at universities. You need your Math and English 30 courses in order to be accepted. They have the mature student status, that you can be accepted with, but that I think is just lip service that's provided by the universities. Because in order for me to get into the University of Waterloo, I had to write a letter saying that my husband has been accepted into the environmental resource program, and I think that it's a waste of my time to be down there while he's going to school, to be sitting and not continuing on with my Teacher Education program, and I would really like to go to school, and I am Inuvialuit, or an Eskimo person. It seems that the only way that we're accepted is by our native background. And I think it's really unfair."
Aboriginal barriers to post-secondary education

"I think that universities have to consider why a lot of these aboriginal students are leaving school. Why do they leave school? On my transcripts there are only three courses, grade ten courses, and my marks are very low, but what has to be taken into consideration is, how a child is affected by being away from home. And it does affect their status in the school.

I just applied recently to the University of Alberta and was refused admission, and I'm thinking of writing them a letter just to explain that it's really unfair. I think I have proven myself, first by going back and getting upgrading at the adult education centre that's now Arctic College. Then by taking the Teacher Education Program, and doing very well in that program. Then taking university courses [in Ontario].

There's all these areas in one's life that affect the way that you're going to do in school. What affected my grades at the University of Waterloo, is that it is a whole different lifestyle down there and you have to adjust to it. It wasn't as hard [as without her family] but there's all these little obstacles that were placed in your way. What we were confronted with down there, was the high cost of rent and food, you have to pay for everything. It's not like living up here in the North where if you run out of food you can go and hunt off the land. So it's very costly in the south, and you don't have subsidized rent like you do in the North. Students do not own their own homes. A lot of [Northern] mature students who return [to school] are already set up here at home, they own a home, they have bills to pay on a monthly basis. They go down South to try and better their education and the funding that we're given from the government of the NWT does not meet the required amount needed to live in Southern towns. In order to do well in school you . . . have to have all your family there, because if you don't there's all this added worry. It was better in Fort Smith with the whole family there. The whole two years that I have taken postsecondary education I've had a constant battle with funding. It always seems that instead of concentrating on your studies you're always fighting for the right amount of money needed to compete."
Education in the North

"Trying to get my education and trying to promote the importance of education is a real battle in the North. Say, the cultural and traditional lifestyle, being integrated into the school system. That is important for survival in the North, but then you also need the academic skills to further your education. I think that they need to focus more on the academic part in order that the aboriginal students can go on to university. Those skills can always be learned when you return back to the North."

Note: Bev contributed a great deal to this research project: In 1992 she wrote a letter to the UBC Ethics Review Committee, explaining why I did not need permission from male elders before speaking to women. She and her husband, Johnny took me to festivals and fish camps, and helped identify and introduce me to women elders I would not otherwise have met. She was articulate in discussing cultural differences between groups of people, and in explaining how things in the past were different from now.

Bev and Johnny own their own home in Inuvik, and are dedicated Christian parents to their five children. Bev often helps Johnny prepare project proposals for her father's firm, Storr and Sons Contracting. In 1992/93 Bev coordinated the Stay in School program in Inuvik, and conducted a research survey of parents in the town, and she asked me to help her analyze the results.

The Festival hired Bev as Artist Needs Coordinator for two years—1993 and 1994. Her constant smile and jovial laugh put the artists at ease and endeared her to everyone. In Fall, 1994, Bev began home-schooling all five of her children, and they are doing very well. Bev was elected to the Festival Board in Nov. 1995 and began training to be the Coordinator of the Festival. Bev was fully in charge of The Great Northern Arts Festival in 1996 the first time an indigenous person had held that position. In September 1996, Bev's husband Johnny was promoted to Regional and Inuvik Airport Manager after years of training and experience. In Spring 1997 Bev helped do a research survey of Inuvialuit people in the Delta region on their understanding of self-government, and uncovered a lot of fear of the unknown.
MARGARET LENNIE
Inuvialuit traditional seamstress, carver, & cultural tour guide.
Inuvik and MacKenzie Delta, NWT

Fig. 25: Margaret holding a new 'Mother Hubbard' parka she just finished making for herself. Photographed at her cabin on the Mackenzie Delta in late June, 1994.
MARGARET LENNIE
Inuvik, NWT

In early August, 1993, Bev Lennie took me to visit her husband Johnny's Aunt Margaret at her house in Inuvik. We had tea and she patiently explained many things to me. Several days later I went back and videotaped her comments. I took along some beadwork I was attempting to do, to ask her advice. This is a summary of Margaret's own words and comments from the interview videotaped on August 8, 1993.

Childhood and residential school

Margaret was born and spent her early childhood in Coppermine, but at the age of six she was sent to school to Aklavik. "The residential missions, to the Roman Catholic. I spent almost six years there, not even [home] for summer holidays. I don't know, when you know nothing else, it's not that hard. . . . They used to have a group of people they called the WA, women's auxiliary, and it was a young group of kids that got together and we used to make little book markers, stuff like that with beads, and make little bags. I remember those things because I find now that they worked for me, because you found stitching, and it helped you in learning how to put your needle, to stitch. They were important even if they were small, because you learn, that's your first project, and because you are sewing you remember it. It comes back to you, then you remember this is the way. . . .

I remember dressing a doll when I came home from school. I tried to do something, I learned and dressed the little doll with caribou clothes. I don't remember whether it was good, but I was real proud of it. But your young eyes are not seeing the faults. I never did get around to making the waterproof stuff, sealskin. I made a pair, but . . . I did the [chewing] but I didn't learn it well enough."

The importance of sewing

"For us sewing was important because your men had to have warm clothes, and a woman that didn't know how to sew wasn't considered a very good wife. So . . . they taught the basics first, [then] it was up to you. If you weren't interested in improving something, you could be a sloppy sewer. If you didn't sew, if you
weren't a good sewer your husband would suffer. He got cold, he got wet, you had to know how to sew. They sewed for everybody, if anybody needed something that was your plan for tomorrow. It's an everyday thing.

In April or March, I forget, there were people called 'inlanders', they were the people who [lived] where the caribou was, and they lived on caribou. They used to come over to Coppermine to trade skins for shells, tea, and stuff, and bring dry meat. . . . They were called 'inlanders' and I remember seeing this woman, she went up to see [someone's parka], she didn't admire the parka, she went over and turned up the hem to see the stitches. The stitches were important. . . . A well-trained seamstress could make little small stitches, so if a parka was fancy or not, if the stitches were not right it was sloppy sewing. They could even turn something over and look at the stitches, 'Oh, yeah, I know this woman'. Sometimes you don't have to look at the bottom to see the stitches, you look who did that, whose style it is . . .

There's some things you know that you don't have to do them anymore. If you want to do them because you want to know for yourself--that you know you did it, it's a challenge. . . . but that chewing, and work on sealskins, is something . . . to experience."

Learning from an Indian elder

A few years ago..." then I was really trying to find someone who knew about how to tan hides, to show me . . . . Hyacinthe Andre's mother, this is an Indian woman from Arctic Red, I remember it was her birthday, and she came over. She told me she was going to show me something that was forgotten. She said they didn't use frying pans at the time, it's like you put it in a tub of water, and put a board across the tub, and heat up an iron, like a frying pan, and put it on...until it gets hot enough, and put the hide over it until it gets warm, and then remove it. . . . She said they used round rocks instead. Round stones . . . heat them up and just roll it around on the hide to soften it. After you've taken the hair off, there's a layer that you have to remove before the hide can get soft. It's really [hard] to just do it by hand, without [good tools. They used] a caribou leg bone that's split, so it's sharpened on both sides. You know the caribou leg bone? It's something like ours, it's about this big [12"] and you split that in half, [lengthwise] and it's sharp on one side. You put little teeth, file shallow teeth that could snag on the [hide]. This is Indian stuff I'm telling you, from Arctic Red." Margaret
was honored that Mrs. Andre chose her to tell, "and not tell the others, I know, I often wonder about that. [She told me] through an interpreter, she didn't speak [English] at all. She was Loucheux, and she knew I was trying [to learn]. . . she could hardly walk, she must have been in her nineties at the time."

Old ways of measuring

"My mom was really good, she used to sew lots, she made her living with sewing. Somebody would come and they'd want her to make a pair of shoes. And she'd look at their hands, and she'd make the shoes. They used to ask her 'How? How did you do that?' and she didn't know herself. She didn't realize that was what she was doing. Or they'd happen to be standing on a tile, and after they'd go, she would go over and say 'this is where his toe was.' There's lots of ways to do things. You don't have to tell them anything. There's lots of silent ways to do things. The elders didn't think it was important enough to tell anybody. It was their own thing, their own way."

Margaret demonstrates another old way of measuring before rulers were common. She stretches her hand out almost flat on a piece of paper with the fingers apart, and then rolls her hand forward on the middle finger. "Imagine my foot line here, Sam's is like so--this size--the length of the hand plus one or two [finger joints]. Mine is not stretched too much. You learn yours and your husband's, you could use any fingers once you get used to it. There's lots of ways to use hands."

Keeping secrets

"There are [reasons for keeping secrets], I think it's wanting to get something for it. This is southern stuff, down South everybody gets paid for what they do, and . . . they're getting land now, and they expect to get paid for skills that, it's not a bad thing. . . it's different. You can't approach a person, say 'okay show me how you do that'. You have to ask them, and feel honored if they're inclined to let you in on something. . . . All women have their own techniques. . . there's lots of little things. I've got a lot too--see I just thought of it. I've done that! Like telling. . . I have a daughter-in-law, who's originally from the South. And she's learned everything, and I admire her for wanting to learn, so I teach her. So, I tell her, 'Come and I'll teach you this,
but this is our own secret, our own way of doing it, don't pass it on to anybody.' I said that, I just thought of it, I didn't think I did that!

I can't think of a reason, I think it's because others don't like to give you their secrets, so you're doing the same thing. I've known people that say 'No, you'll copy it and make money.' There's people that don't even like to give you patterns, like a parka pattern. And yet at the same time I tell people, 'You have to teach the younger people the basics, if you keep it to yourself, it's lost.' It's not because you don't want to. We've got to tell our people, find someone who's interested and tell them. [You think] 'I worked hard for it, I went through all this to find that out, so you should do the same thing. It would be good for you to learn.'"

Things are different today

"There's too much other stuff, other interference. I don't live around town enough to know. There's too much TV. I have two daughters and one likes to sew, but not much. But she does sew, and if she does something-- don't let her know I'm telling you this-- she does something and if there's a little flaw in it, she'll take it all apart. She's a perfectionist, and it's got to be perfect before she's satisfied. My other daughter is not interested in sewing. She still sews. Even if they are not interested in it they still sew because you have to know a little bit. Like if you're out in the middle of nowhere and something rips, and it depends on someone's life, and it's going to be used, it's got to be done. That they have to know, just a few stitches. There's some people that don't even know a few stitches. It all ends up survival.

But now, there's social services, and the store, and everything it's handed to you on a golden platter. I think everybody should go out [on the land] with nothing, just to see if you can survive. Long ago there was a lady on the dew line and she taught her kids. . . . I don't know what she did but she told me. . . . she took them out and taught her kids how to pick plants. She was good in Aklavik long time ago. That year was really hard, everybody had a hard time, there was no jobs, nothing, and everybody helped one another. We lived in Pokiak that time, and I remember we used to get together and we had all these little kids. . . . We'd say 'lets see what we could put on our table.' And she's one of those women out of nothing she could make this delicious-
looking table. She could make things out of nothing, she made canned tomatoes look good. She was a real good wife, good mother, and a friend."

**Teaching sewing**

"Your daughter, you have to start her off on something. Teaching her how to cook [and sew]. . . . If they are interested, if you find someone who is interested, push it, push them to doing it. And from there, if they learn the basics, they could find their own mistakes and learn from them.

Everybody must [learn] without knowing you're teaching. Even etiquette, when you say things to a kid and give him something and he doesn't say 'thank you' you're teaching him when you say 'what's the magic word?' You're being a teacher then."

**Beading techniques**

Margaret showed me a parka she made for her husband, all in beaver fur with a beaded smoked moosehide yoke. "This is the beading I did. Outlines, you count beads on the outlines [of petals of flowers], and then the middle will take care of itself. Compared to buckskin or cowhide, [moosehide] is really easy to sew, you gotta do it to find out. I do the [flower] center first, the outline, I count the beads, and then fill it in, and then bring my needle out, and count the [petals], stitch it down, and this space the size of one bead, and by the time you sew them down, push it this way with your thumb, then put the beads down, and then you jump over here, and then you fill it up with whatever, you don't count the beads. Stitches are covered in the back anyway, your lining, the threads don't show. I do the same thing with this. That's why I could do it with one needle, techniques I learned myself. Some designs I use one needle, some I use two. . . . The drawing behind there is just, you don't even use it when you count beads."

Margaret demonstrates a beading technique on the fringed collar I brought with me. "You'll see the difference once you start. [putting it around your finger] controls your thread and helps you space [the beads]. Doubling the leaf, and the stem--I mean, it doesn't look finished when it's a single line."
New and old designs

Margaret often uses "five petals, we used to make it plain, but after awhile I got tired. . . . I used to put little lines here [coming out from the center of each petal] like couple of lines like a petal, I used to do that but I got tired of that. I did this long ago, I haven't done it for a long time. Sometimes when you take something, and your mind's wondering what you should draw, sometimes... especially after you've drawn so many times, you just put your pencil on it, and automatically your hand is going, and then you think 'oh yeah, that's the one I was going to make.' You have lots of designs in your mind. Sometimes I look through books for designs, because I get tired of my own.

I use whatever [colors] I have. Sometimes you're drawing, and your mind is telling you it's going to be this color'. Sometimes too, you don't like a color, but you use it anyway because you happen to have it. . . . It comes out okay, it brings out something even if you don't like it." Margaret shows us three pairs of moccasins she made and each flower pattern is different. "That was long ago, we used to really mix our colors long time ago. . . . Now they are all . . . these [moccasins] are new... the design [is old], the style. The colors are mixed you see, I started that two or three years ago. They call that the 'Lennie design' because of this--dark blue, light blue, and another shade of blue. Once when Don was going to get married, the men all had this design, and the same design, but pink for the girls, twelve pair!

. . . If you just sat down and just did it [sewed on a pair of moccasins, it would take] two days. It's nice to have a stockpile of 'uppers' done. There's certain times of the year that I have nothing to do, so I make a pile of 'uppers'-I just make them and make them and make them, and at Christmas they sure come in handy."

An artist?

"In sewing, yeah, and I've done carving. Both Sam and I [have done some scrimshaw]. Gee, I wish you could see the one, it's right in town. It looks really good, even if I did it! I'm not bragging, it does look okay, when the light hits it. He just looked at it different ways to see what light gives it the best. . . . We etch it, about that deep down, and then slant around the picture, around the carving, and it just brings it right out. It's white, and the top is a kind of a dirty white, and we scrub a little bit of brown in it, and it does come out
pretty good. We should really get into it more. One of my sons, my boys, did that, he did it too small. Even before they started carving, I said 'make the drawings big because you're going to have to take some off.' But he did little tiny people and they were too small."

When people ask, they are ready to learn.

Margaret says that people have to ask if they want to learn. "I don't know if everybody is like that. I think ... a grown man, a 30-year-old son, you can't go up to him and say 'you're doing this wrong. Do it this way.' He's a man, you're talking to him like a little kid. You understand? That's what it is. I don't really know, it's just our feeling, when you're asked to explain, it makes sense to me. ... He's a man, he's no longer a child. But if he comes to you and asks for advice, sure, you're all mouth then. You just tell them, you tell them. He has to ask, and there's sometimes, sure you see something, you know what the result of that something is, you have to go and warn them. You say 'If you gonna keep that up....' Even if you see their mistakes, they're going to make mistakes, but you have to back off, let them--mistakes are the best teachers.

One time my daughter and I were talking, and she said 'How come you never told me that?' And I said, 'If I told you, you wouldn't have heard me. And you did it and it sank in, and it's in there and you know it. And if I had told you, you'll just see my mouth moving, and it won't get through.' Like not too long ago there's something, one of the boys was doing something not right with his kids, they told me about it, but I thought it's not the right time', and I thought 'I have to find an opportunity, the right time, the right place, when it's happening, I have to be there.' If I were to tell him about it now, it wouldn't even make sense to him. When you try to talk about something that's happening, and it's not the right time, you don't even make sense. You even confuse yourself."

Sharing a way of life with tourists

Margaret and her husband Sam provide cultural trips for tourists out to their home on the Mackenzie Delta. Margaret explained that they are "sharing a way of life. They all do [appreciate it], you should read my guest book. They do, they're really grateful for, because I taught myself not to be overly friendly. Sometimes when you're overly friendly, you think 'I wonder what he wants?' So I tried to teach myself, I act like I act in
my everyday life, not trying to put on, and it's not that hard after while. So they're looking at our way of life as it is . . . We're not trying to prove anything, we're not trying to show that this is not what we do, or it's dirty, we just let them see, it's not fake.

We cook a fish for them . . . we take them to our cabin, outhouse them. . . it's an hour and a half to get there. And we take them to the fishing hole about 5-10 minutes, on our way over I have the smaller boat, and we set the net, and then we take them fishing. They all get their fish, they're happy. And then we go home, and then I clean the fish, Sam cooks it, and I cook the bannock in the house [on the wood stove]. This is a bonus, like a favor for them, if they want it cleaned, I clean it. And that's also advertising ulus which they are really impressed with. The ulu—they really think they are something. If they tried them it wouldn't be that easy, it's just, I've done it so much, I make it look easy. Anyway I clean some fish for them, if they want it, most of them do. I fillet them, take the bones out--this is a favor I do for them, I don't have to do it. Sam cooks the fish, and then bannock.

And there's people who say 'No I've never eaten fish before, I don't think I'll eat, . . .' but they have tea and bannock and they end up eating fish. Sam puts onions in and spices, and we cook it on those [racks] you know, the shape of fish? We don't take the scales off them, we clean them, put onions in, and close it up, the juices stay inside, it's a really good way of cooking, it doesn't dry. And then all the time is wasted. It's supposed to be a six-hour trip, over and back travelling time is about 3 hours. And after we sit down and eat, they just talk, and we tell stories, and then the next thing we know it's late so we have to rush. We make sure to leave a clean place, no scraps around, so bears can't get in. We had a bear once on the porch, it was a good thing it didn't go inside the house."

Note: The following year, in late June 1994, Bev and Johnny Lennie took me in their boat with their children and we visited the home of Margaret and Sam Lennie on the Mackenzie Delta (see picture in Chapter 2). Bev's mother and father, Jeanne and Bud Storr also came, so there were about nine of us who just 'dropped in' without warning. We were welcomed warmly and with no apparent fuss, Margaret quickly had tea and bannock made on the woodstove. Sam and Johnny went to check the fish nets, and Margaret showed us a large metal storage building they recently built. That's where
they kept furs and hides, which were all hanging in bunches from lines strung high across the space, to keep them away from bugs and rodents. That's where Margaret showed me the new parka she had made, and I took the picture at the front of this summary. Sam and Johnny brought back fish, Margaret cleaned one and it was put on the fire to cook. Soon we ate, and the fish and bannock were delicious. Later, we looked at old pictures and visited.

Sam and Margaret continue to live much of the year in their cabin, without 'modern' plumbing or electricity. Sometimes they come to Inuvik to get supplies and visit, and they stay in their cozy house in town where they do have 'modern conveniences'. They run tours for tourists every summer, or in winter on request.

Fig. 26: Margaret Lennie with Jeanne Storr near her cabin on the MacKenzie Delta.
MARY ANN MACDONALD
Metis traditional Seamstress, beadworker, and
1993 Fort Smith 'Elder of the Year'.
Fort Smith, NWT.

Fig. 27: Mary Ann MacDonald in her living room in April 1993, holding a pair of beaded moccasins she made.
MARY ANN MAC DONALD

Fort Smith, NWT

This is a summary of Mary Ann's own words, summarized from two conversations: the first audiotaped in June 1992, and another short interview videotaped on May 20, 1993, both at her home in Fort Smith, NWT.

Childhood and convent school

"I learned only Cree and French as a child. I went to school in the convent in Fort Chipewyan from the time I was four or five, I guess. My dad put us there because my mother couldn't look after us, she was very sick. So he put us there not long after my mother passed away. My sister was just small, she wasn't even walking. She was crawling when my mother passed away.

I didn't stay in the convent long enough to go with the big girls. I don't think they ever sewed beads in the mission. Them days they didn't learn sewing in school. Just reading and writing and that way I finish not even grade three. Some people, they say things for nothing. True, some of the nuns were kind of mean sometimes for nothing, they'd hit kids, punish them for nothing, but I used to get lots of that because I didn't know how to talk English."

Language difficulties

"They used to give me books in English and I had to read that. It was hard for me because I didn't understand, I couldn't read. If I didn't do it they thought I was just stubborn...but I couldn't read because I couldn't understand English. Well they used to take me to the Sister Superior and she had a strap, and they used to give me a good lickin'. Sister Superior told me 'Well, she doesn't want to read, so put her in the grade one, with the grade ones in the other school.' That's what they did to me because I didn't know how to read. It was hard."
Learning stitches at school

"When I stayed in the mission, long time ago, the nuns used to make their own clothes for kids, like underclothes. These flour bags they used to wash good, and that's what they used to make the underclothes from. The stockings for to hold, there's little strings so you tie them up. All us kids we used to sew. Small stitches we had to make--that's where I learned. I used to make loose strings about so long, the nuns told us you have to make small stitches, all small stitches. So that's how I learned, and lots of practice in how to sew. I used to like that, when they used to give us sewing, I could do that. Just only those garters and strings, with small stitches and thread on a small string of cloth folded up."

Taken home to work for father and step-mother

"I was about nine years old when my dad married another woman. When he got married, they wanted me to help inside the house to wash dishes and that's where I learned lots. ...My dad just took me from the convent. My brother stayed in the convent. ...I was too young to do all those things. My stepmother was crippled, she didn't walk right. It was hard for her, so I worked at whatever she told me to do. I used to like working, so I lived there. My stepmother, her mother was Cree and Chipewyan, I think mixed, and some Torongeau--French, and her dad was pure Frenchman. My stepmother was brought up in town. Only after she got married with my dad, she stayed in the bush.

When they took me out of school, they went out of town right away, they took me in the bush where he was fishing in the fall. Them days they have dogs, and my dad he look after [them] for the Hudson Bay, and Colin Fraser, he had a store too there. They asked him to look after the dogs, and he hang lots of fish in the Fall, so when he went to the dogs they could have something to eat. Make dryfish, in the summer, she make lots of dryfish, I used to help her. That's the way I learned to do dryfish. They were good workers, my stepmother and my aunty, they worked hard for my dad. There were not too many children [in the family], there was my sister Olive, brother Oliver, sister Liza, brother Pat, sister Madeline--there were six of us. I am the oldest, others were older but they passed away."
Learning to sew by watching

"I stayed with my aunty, my stepmother's sister, Aunty Rosalie, [when] I went to start school. I just speak French and Cree, and the English book now I have to read. And I couldn't do it, it was hard for me. So I didn't even finish my grade three, so I quit school that way, couldn't learn. I just stayed home with my Aunty Rosalie right in town. I lived with them more than living with my stepmother. So she used to sew lots, that's where I learned good sewing.

My stepmother used to be a good sewer too. I used to watch her and she didn't like people to watch her when she sewed. So I didn't watch her too much, I have to sneak away to watch how she sew, once in awhile, so that's the way I learn. I could see the way she'd put her beads, and embroidery, oh she used to make nice work. And those porcupine (quills), she used to make those too. But that, I didn't learn that. I was scared—they used to tell me if you drop the little pointed things and get them in your legs you wouldn't feel it, and they just work their way inside. So I was scared of that, so I didn't want to bother with that, so I didn't learn that.

The first pair I made, it was for my brother. He was big and I was eleven years old. She told me, 'you can sew beads now, you better make this moccasin for your brother. So I did beadwork everything, and she cut out the moccasins for me, and she told me 'I want you to sew it.' and she told me how to pleat and everything. So I did that. That's the first thing I did, I still remember the flowers, I couldn't forget because I was so proud, you know the first ones. It was my stepmother's design. After that she said 'Now I want you to do beadwork for your dad, moccasins.' So I did that."

Learning the old ways

"Sometimes I used to stay with my aunty, my dad used to let me stay with her and I used to like working, just to help her do everything. Her husband used to work the whole day for the Hudson Bay, so I used to bring some wood for him so he doesn't have to do that after work. I used to haul snow to melt for drinking water. That's what they used to use a long time ago. But you never did take snow from right close where we live. We'd go in the bush where there was no trail, and threw the snow from on top until snow at
the bottom is just like ice. Icy snow smaller, that one you take because it makes lots of water. From on top, that snow doesn't make much water. Big bag, 100 pounds, I used to fill it up and tie it on the sleigh, I used to pull that in, like a toboggan. And that's the way we used to make water. Inside we had a big pail and put a little bit water, fill it up with snow, slow fire with a big wooden bar and it gets full, that's what we used to do.

It was good, I did like working, inside too. With my aunty I used to wash the walls, I start to work for them when I was 11 or 12, to wash the floors, wooden floors, them days with a brush you had to scrub really good. They were fussy for their work, wherever you wash, the other part has to look the same color. That's the way I learned. But I was glad I was never dainty. And I sewed whenever I got the chance."

Sewing for survival

"I have been making moccasins for sale since before 16, while I was living with my dad and stepmother. Them days, moccasins used to cost five dollars, and [had] lots of beads. The store gave me the hides and the beads were mine. Them days the moccasins for winter, the uppers were made of smoked caribou hide--the kind that wrap around your ankles--only for summer you put fur. Here in the bottom you put stroud, and you cut small little teeth. Now the scissors they got to make to cut with, [but then] by hand you make the teeth. Sometimes we put beads on there too.

I used to sew for Indians, sometimes they used to go away for the whole winter, just Christmas they used to come, they used to leave with me moccasins to make for the kids. Or gloves. They used to give me hides for that, moosehide and some beaverhide. Beads, well, my stepmother's sister, my aunty, she used to give me the beads. So I used to sell for five dollars, but them days it was cheap, the material. I used to buy material for my clothes, my aunty's daughter used to make dresses for me, but I worked hard all my life."

Marriage at sixteen

Mary Ann worked in her father's house until she was "16 years old. I met this guy two weeks before I was supposed to get married. Them days that's the way--the mother and dad they fixed it up. After that they called me and they told me about this. They said 'It's better for you to get married now, before anything happens. You haven't got a real mother, its hard for us too.' 'How could anything happen', I said? Even to go
to the washroom outside, you know at night, my brother has to come with me outside and wait for me. He was strict, my dad. But I guess it was good. I don't blame him for it.

Now when they asked me to get married, I thought 'Gee, my stepmother never used to give me butter', how I wished for butter. And tea too, with sugar, never. Just water we had to drink, us kids. I thought, 'Gee, that would be nice, if I get married at least I can eat butter. And drink tea with sugar.' I thought it was only that, marriage for, I didn't know nothing. I didn't know nothing because them days people they didn't talk to the younger people. What is this marriage? You don't know. Well, 16, you're pretty young, you don't care. That's the way I got married, and I didn't know anything. Well, after I got married, it was okay for a little while. But my husband never went to work."

Supporting the family by sewing

"I had to sew to earn money for my kids' food. I had children right away and had to earn a living for him too, buy his tobacco. I supported my family with my sewing, even with small babies. But I don't know, I didn't have no worries. Even though I didn't have very much, the only time it was pretty hard, when sometimes I used to get short, and evening comes and I have no sewing to do, I didn't have nothing to feed my kids, have to go to sleep without supper. Myself too. Then I used to sit down and try to finish for the next day, so I could buy some more groceries for my kids. Morning come I used to go to the store and buy stuff. That's the way I did.

The men who say they made a living for me, I don't think so, because I've been doing this a long time, making parkys, jackets, mitts, mukluks, and everything I've been doing. Whatever they asked me to do I did it. It seems like there's nothing hard for me. I made my own patterns. My step mother she had her patterns, especially the moccasins.

People would tell me 'you're crazy, having a man, and he can't support you, you're supporting your husband, buying his tobacco'. Lots of people used to tell me 'you're crazy'. The storekeeper used to tell me that because he used to give me hides to make moccasins for them to sell. He said 'It's enough you're supporting him, but I don't want you to buy tobacco. If you're gonna do that we're not gonna give you hides to
make money for yourself.' Lots of people told me that wasn't right. I used to work hard, and he couldn't even cut wood for me. I had to go and cut wood in the bush.

I didn't know much about reading and that, I didn't know very much, I was just home all the time. I don't know, my dad brought us up that way. Not to go and bother people and go and visit, he said 'Some people they don't like that, to go and bother them'. So I [was] brought up that way. After I got married I never did care to go no place, I just stayed home. Even today I never go no place. My daughter lives not far from me, I never go and visit. They come and visit me, but I don't go and visit there. I just go outside to work.

I had to stay with him, I couldn't go no place. He used to go out every day in the evening, sometimes come home three or four o'clock, I don't know where he is. I don't know, I just didn't care. You know, if he don't stay home, just as long as I have my kids and they're okay. I had six children with him, but the rest, it's MacDonald's."

Separation from husband and kids

Eventually Mary Ann and Daniels separated. "When we split that time, the convent took the kids because I didn't have no place to put them, I couldn't take the kids with me to stay with someone, just one little boy I took because I didn't want to put him in the mission. The people I was staying with would go for a beaver or rat hunt in the Spring. They had a little boy, and they said 'It would be nice if you would come with us.' So I said okay because I was used to that, being in the bush, when I was living with my dad. So I was glad. But my little boy, now I left him with other people, they were Anglican people. After I came back, I took my little boy, and went to the Crees to take their family allowance—the kids family allowance. I signed my name with them, and they kept my kids for a while until they were big enough."

Learning English

"I was 28 years old when I learned English. I stayed with some people and this guy said to me, 'Talk to me in English', and when I answered in Cree or French, he used to tell me I'm not talking with you in French or Cree.' He said 'Answer me now, even if you don't say it right. If you don't say it right I'll let you know how
to pronounce the words.' So he used to talk to me so I thought I'd try, and he'd correct me. He tells me 'This is the way to say it next time'. That's the way I learned English."

Children

"Toward the end the kids come to stay with their granny here, and they run away from there and come back to me. They didn't like to stay with their granny, she was mean to them. That was my mother-in-law, my husband's mother, Daniels' mother. [Then] he came to [Fort] Smith, I was in Smith here too, and him too, he came here and he lived with my girl. Some of the [children], after they stayed with me, some were getting married or they were working, they were big enough. They wanted to be on their own.

I stayed in [Fort] Chip, but after that I came here, 1946 I came here. Since that time I stayed here, but went to Yellowknife for maybe five years we stayed over there, but we come back again and I lived here all the time after that. I never wanted to go back to live in Chip, I'm not used to that place, not since I left. All the old people I know they are pretty near all dead. There's just young people now."

A new husband and more children

"With MacDonald I had these kids now, and I had to make a living for them. He was a very nice guy, twenty-two years I lived with him." Altogether, Mary Ann had twelve children. "But two passed away. Until one day I broke up with him too. I couldn't stand, well, that he was going around with somebody else. I thought 'I'm not going to have a man that way.' He had another house, and I told him it would be better for him to go and stay over there."

Settling in, boarding patients

"So I stayed here, and then more people came to stay here, and [now] that's the way I make my living, sewing and keeping people. I take care of people and they pay me, welfare pays me. Before that the welfare people were helping me, when I didn't have anything. But after I started to take patients I told them that if anybody wants a home, some patients, I'll take them, and make my own money. So I did that, and took them
into my place, to look after them. I was happy alone. As long as my kids were around, they were all big, my
kids, they weren't small then.

Me, I don't know much, I didn't finish my grade three. Sometimes I want to write letters, since the
time I got here... I could read now, but not all, some places I don't understand the hard words. It's hard for
me, because I never used to talk English a long time ago."

Mary Ann an artist or designer?

"No, I just sew. I'm just a sewer, that's all. And to draw, well I just learn myself. I didn't know how
to draw before, so I made up my mind to draw. I was still not sewing to sell for people, I used to ask someone
to draw for me, but sometimes they don't like to do it. So I have to try, I'm gonna draw my own now, I'm not
askin' no one.' That's the way I start to draw. From there I learned more how to draw, and people used to
bring their stuff [for me] to draw for them, used to make a dollar or fifty cents. But fifty cents it was lots then,
a dollar was lots then, you could buy four pounds of butter with a dollar them days. This was in Fort
Chipewyan, that's where I was born."

A family of artists

"My brother is still alive, he stays in Norman Wells, he got married over there. And my sister
Madeline, that's the one that used to cook for the park, she stays in Fort Chipewyan. My brother, the one that
passed away, ...they used to run that boat in Athabasca, from McMurray to Fitzgerald. He drew, but he made
[things] with wood and everything. They used to use only this--they called [it a] crooked knife--long time ago
they used to have that. That's what kind [of] pocket knife he used to make all the things. Artists are in my
family, different things they make."

Making parkas

"When I could sew them days I could make parkas, I don't know how many parkas one year I used to
do. Some fancy ones, some just plain with appliques. I don't draw all the designs, some my daughter draws. I
draw on the stroud after. I made lots of parkas, I used to do sewing early in the morning, I always did get up
While everybody's sleeping I used to start and cut out the parka, the new parka. After they all go to school, I'm free to sew, so the whole day I sewed. I finish one parka I used to finish in a day. People don't believe when I say that. But it's true, I'm not bragging. Not the fancy work, the appliques. The fancy work it takes longer, about a week, the fancy work all around the sleeves. And I used to make the kind with the fringes too. Men's parkas more likely have the fringes, the ladies is different. Now the men's and ladies is just the same, you don't know sometimes if it's a lady or a boy. Some of them use the fringes with the ladies now.

... Now I can't do it very much [make parkas] it's too heavy, I get too tired. But I'm gonna try to make it for my daughter."

Wall-hangings and slippers

Mary Ann sews applique and embroidered wall-hangings. "Everybody likes the black one. I put canvas on the back afterwards to save the stitches. I use wool and that embroidery thread. I mix them because they look the same. When I haven't got the color of wool, I just use embroidery thread. It wears the same. I haven't made up my mind how I'm gonna finish those pictures [applique scenes]. I was thinking of getting somebody to make a homemade [frame]--I don't want to buy from the store. Moosehair I do, I've done lots of pictures, but I got nothing here to show. I've given some to my kids."

When Mary Ann makes slippers her design has a right and a left. "That's so you could tell the left, you see that's left, this one the stem goes this way, that's the right. I always do the petals different because that's what I do, that's my style. I don't know how to do porcupine quills. I always put the border around the edge of my uppers [beaded top part of the moccasin] because to me it looks not finished [otherwise]. I have some uppers made for moccasins, the large ones are for men. I make the same border around for finishing--if I have red flowers with pink, then I put red finishing and white. I charge $75. I put a lining on my moccasins always--quilted lining--and they really like it that way because they don't have to have socks inside the house. They just put the slippers on.

I always use stroud for the upper. These are white to match the white caribou hide. I always make flowers with five petals. These [beaded pieces] I bought from somebody else who needed some money. They
are for mukluks—the small piece with one flower for uppers, the long piece with three flowers for up the front or around the top. Maybe I'll make these up this winter and try to make a bit of money. Here's another pair that are full-beaded. Somebody else made these, but I make them sometimes. The full-beaded ones are $85 finished. This amber stroud matches almost the smoked moose hide. They give me the footprint sometimes,...but not for babies--they're just small. I just know what size. Sometimes they tell me what size they want, like for a gift."

Dolls

"I used to make my own dolls and dress them up. So I used to dress them [dolls] up different, some of them, all moosehide, jackets and pants, moccasins. Some of them, they used to make fur parky, used to be from summer caribou hide, fur the outside, and they didn't have zipper them days, so they used to put fancy stroud [down the front] here, and make these pompoms with wool with a little string, that's the way they tied. Those leggings, with navy stroud, and on the side with white and navy, and from [the hip] you put fringes down. That's the way I dress up my dolls, and moccasins, everyday moccasins. Those leggings, they have to have something to stop the snow going up, so they used to make a garter with wool you braid, and that's the way I dress up my dolls. The white parka is stroud. The other one is all with beads, silk embroidery, they were really nice, and I sold them all. I haven't made any doll clothes for awhile.

I used to make the doll too, these are too 'white'. It has to be like an Indian. What about those little coloured dolls you can find? Their face is kind of reddish--there's all kinds of Indians--some are red, some are dark, that way they wouldn't know. They [dolls] cost so much now, because it's homemade. When I went to visit New Brunswick, my daughter-in law stays over there, that's for her I made that."

Teaching the next generations

"My sister's kids didn't learn to sew beads and embroidery, I don't think so, not one of them. I taught my daughters. . . Mary Hill, Doris she could sew, and Shirley, she lives here with me, she could sew, and Lorraine, that's the baby of the family, that one knows how to do sewing. She's pretty good at it. Only Gertie and Eileen never sewed. So four of them, they know how to sew. My daughter Mary, too, she can draw good.
With all that paint and canvas too, she can do that. One of my sons carves, his name is Freddie, he can draw too, really good.

I have lots of stuff for sewing, so when I die, my kids are gonna have that so they could sew. Like duffle, I have been buying some when I was making good money with my sewing I bought lots of stuff. I have to buy the hides now from Edmonton, and it costs so much, the fare to go out.

They had sewing class for making parkas and jackets and they told us to bring any of our sewing. And these were not young people. And they didn't know how to sew with beads, so they would sit close to me and I showed them how to sew beads. Young people, I didn't bother. They used to ask me [to teach at] the school. But I'm one of those persons, I don't like to leave my home, I'd rather stay here and sew, so I used to tell them I didn't like to go."

Reputation

"They asked me [to make things]. They heard I guess from other people, the ones I sew for them, they show other people, they tell my name, and they phone me and they come here. So then I tell them, like parkys--pay this and this, and that's the way I used to do sewing. I made lots and lots of parkys. That time they didn't sell no parkys in the store, now they're all from the Northern and from Inuvik parkys. They were selling them. Them days it wasn't that way. So I made lots of parkys, men's, women's, kids. I used to charge, the ones that are not fancy, different price. If it's too big of a parka, well I have to charge more because I use more material. I just used to explain to them. Before I sew I make sure to tell them the price, if they think it's too much I don't have to make it. So I tell them you have to put a deposit before, so I can start the parky, or moccasins or anything that way.

That's the way they know my name because I did sewing for lots of people, and I see lots of people. Some of them, these people were here and they move someplace else, and they see my sewing. Norman Wells, there were lots of white people there, quite a few, my son lives over there, I did lots of sewing for over there too. For McMurray too. Native and white people too. Lots of natives they can't do any sewing around here, so I been making for them too. But the white people, they're the ones who I always sew for.
And I used to make necklaces, belts, everything, little souvenirs, so I used to sell all of them. I never
did keep my sewing long. When they come here and they see, they buy. I never sew anything this winter. I
didn't feel like sewing, because too many of us here. It's hard when lots of people. At times I get tired but
then I lie down. I got too much to do, it's true, the patients here, I can't just leave them alone. I have just the
one patient now, but her sister lives here too.

So today I'm alone here but there are always my grandchildren and my kids. They are all around me
so I am not lonely. I'm just happy."

Note: When I visited Mary Ann in 1993 she had two boarders, a daughter and grandchildren staying with
her as one big happy family in her wood-frame bungalow in Fort Smith. On Canada Day, 1993, Mary
Ann was named Fort Smith's 'Elder of the Year'. When I sent Mary Ann a copy of this summary in
1996, she wrote back in 1996, saying that "... due to health problems I have been unable to do
sewing like I used to."
Fig. 28: Mary Ann's picture in News North, July 19, 1993.
LAURELLE MACY
Non-native painter and art educator
Hay River, NWT

Fig. 29: Laurelle at the 1995 *The Great Northern Arts Festival* holding one of her paintings of native dancers.
This is a summary of Laurelle's comments from a conversation videotaped on July 27, 1994, at the Great Northern Arts Festival, Inuvik, NWT.

Childhood

Laurelle was born and raised in Northern Alberta. "High Prairie, Northern Alberta. I grew up and spent most of my life there, out in the country. We grew up on a farm where we had horses. My mom was the kind of person, she'd get us a horse, a few horses, get us a cow, just so we could get up in the morning and milk it. We never even used the milk that we milked out of the cow, but 'you go out there and feed that cow.' We had it for a few years and we sold it. Just so we could get the experience of it. My uncles of course had cows, but our own personal cow! So I always loved animals. I gravitate toward animals, and it was just a natural step for me to paint them."

Early artwork

"My mom has a picture that I drew when I was three years old of a little pig in a house on a stick, in paint. I don't know really why but there's a lot of creative people in my family. Musical, not way out, creative in a subtle sense, and I've always drawn. So me and my cousins would sit and draw horses though. I was so incessant, I would just spit pictures out five every hour. I have telephone books of drawings of just horses, different ways to draw horses, different personalities of horses, me and my little cousins would sit around and prop up these horse pictures, and we would say, 'okay that horse,' and we would get into his personality. I never had a lot of formal [art] education in school, I was always drawing in social studies. I'd draw a horse, or I'd draw an animal of some sort from another country, teachers would always say that I was the artist, I was a natural artist all through. They didn't even recognize me as an artist, they thought I was an animal artist. In
art classes I would just do anything that was alive, like fish or horses, camels. I wouldn't draw anything else. They'd stick a flower in front of me to draw and I'd still draw an animal. I think I drew a lot of angels too."

Rural living

"Also when I was younger, as far as my Northern existence, my father gravelled roads all over Alberta and the NWT, from Fort Smith right up to Fort Simpson. I really wasn't involved with any towns, or I didn't get involved with any people. We were stuck out with the gravel, you know camps, the cook house and a bunk house and such. We went to [live in] those places. . . .

They didn't have any art in high school, there was no upper level training. They had some guy that was a biologist, who painted on the side, and he was the art teacher, so he basically let us go on our own. He'd give us a medium and we'd draw flowers, and he'd say 'draw this'. But I never really blossomed, and then I figured I knew enough and I was just stuck in it."

Art college

"I don't know why I went away to college as soon as I graduated, I had no idea. I was fairly aimless, I had no direction in my own mind. Of course your father tells you 'Oh you should take something that you're gonna get out and make money and get a good job', and that kind of thing. I don't know why I chose art, I have no idea. I was wandering around, I was idealistic I guess. Oh, I'd like to try this, and I signed up for the art program--it was Advertising Design, at Ricks College, Idaho, 7000 students.

I was such a novice when I first went, 'cause I was so used to drawing my own way--I mean I had tried things up to then, and everybody said 'that's nice, but really you don't challenge yourself.' And that's what I say about anybody that is untrained. What schooling does, they never hold your hand and say 'now this is how you paint this.' They make you struggle through it yourself.

One class was three hours long, a studio class every day, and they'd give you a bowling ball and a cube, and say 'draw that'. And we'd say 'oh that's so easy' and we'd draw that and be done in fifteen minutes, and we'd still have another two weeks, three hours a day to draw that bowling ball. So pretty soon you gotta look and say 'I can't believe we gotta draw this' but then you see the nooks, and the shading, you have to really
look. So that's what school did. We had a diversity of teachers ... [and] it was an excellent, excellent two years. I wouldn't have traded it for anything --I learned a lot there.

There was a lot of students that signed up for the art program. I didn't think it was gonna be easy. But by first semester most of them dropped out, there was just a handful of people left. You know when you get recognized--then you feel good, 'hey maybe I can do this' and then you get absolutely frustrated, 'cause then you have to be able to take criticism, if you're an artist. That's what people do, you stand up and say, 'Okay, critique this piece'. And you have to say what you like about it and what you don't like about it, and it's hard to do that at first. If it's stiff, or cold, or unbalanced, or it's too--if something's irritating somebody, figure out why, what it is. So it's kind of good for the ego and bad for the ego at one time. You work really hard but it's great experience."

Graphic artist

"Then I worked as a graphic artist in Edmonton for awhile, I think I was still too young though, I didn't want to be tied down to nine to five. I never thought art was so [mundane] 'now, we want a sketch on a water treatment plant, and we need a logo for that.' So I would work on that. I still was a country person. I was stuck right in the middle of Whyte Avenue, I had to take a bus there every day, so I wasn't there more than about a year.

Then I went back to Brigham Young University, to get my bachelor's in art. I got a minor in health, cause I enjoy health a lot, my teaching certificate, and also a certificate in gerontology, which is the study of aging and development. I enjoy old people, I've worked a lot with them, and I just like old people. I like talking to them and finding out exactly what it was like in the old days. I used to bother my grandma, asking her all kinds of things. Questions upon questions upon questions, so it was a nice supplement to my health minor, to take that."

Marriage

"By that time my Dad had bought the hotel in Hay River. I'd come up North to work, I didn't have a visa for working, I had to take a few semesters off, and make a transition there. I stayed down in Utah, and I
met a guy. I painted and I never considered selling anything, I just drew for my own sake. We got married in Saint Louis. When I was in Missouri I worked for a design shop, and they'd commission me, and I'd do pieces that would match a room. ... This one guy had a big bar, like a New York bar, in his basement, and he had Peter Maxes hanging on his wall, and a Chagall, he was a really big art [collector]. And he had a big weight room downstairs all in red and black, and he wanted me to paint, I think it was 8 foot by 4 foot, and so I painted a nude man, really big muscles, and he's looking back, and he's twisted. . . ."

Working in cities in the U.S.

"[We] lived in Denver, . . . moved to Los Angeles, we were transferred there, and then my husband couldn't stand it anymore, and by that time I had my first baby. We didn't like it anymore--all the same weather, no snow, no rain, it was always the same, every day, and that drove me nuts--I didn't like it at all. It was too packed, and you couldn't drive out in the country if you wanted, you just drive through city city city. So then we went back to St. Louis, and it was pretty stale in St Louis.

Pretty stale--the economy--it seemed to me. And it's too hot for me--very very hot. And my mom was up here at the hotel--by this time my parents had divorced and she got that [hotel] kind of as part of the divorce settlement. And she was up through the summer all by herself and she had a big crew of about fifty men that were coming in to live, to eat, and everything at the hotel, so it was a big contract."

Returning North

"So we went up North, me and my husband, and there was my mom, and that was it. It was really hard when you have a hotel, like it's a real wild hotel, people are drinking and leaving their kids outside, and comin' in drinkin for days, go out, pass out, come back in and drink, I mean, hard core drinkers. So we had a real wild, they call it 'northern environment'. Everybody in Hay River has to go to the Zoo to get a real taste of the North. It's something like the 'Range land' in Yellowknife. But when you live there everyday, and you smell the beer-stained rugs and there's cigarette burns all over, and, it was--there was no way I could leave mom alone there. We just worked really hard, and we ended up staying a little longer, and then Pat, that's my husband, got a contract [power buffing] some planes up here . . . and so we thought 'we'll stay up here for a
year' and so I could continue to help mom with the hotel, and we had a general store, and I didn't like the bar scene much, so I hung out in the general store. And I had lots of time to kill.

You know we had to order things, stock the shelves, you know, I'd work there all day long, why pay anybody, I'd just think. So either you stare at the wall, or you play [with the computer] all day or you paint. So I started painting--I painted all kinds of stuff. People come in to buy a chocolate bar and I had paintings stretched out on all the tables. Okay, bounce over and, and I had a little girl, so it was kind of easy--it became our front room this store.

A girlfriend of mine, first she gave me a wildlife arts magazine, and so me and my cousins again, when I was home, when we came back from St. Louis, we painted all of us, all together, way into the night. A couple of days just all together, and it was the first thing--that was late 1989. I got started [again] with art."

Making art again

"If I had a good idea I'd sketch it down. And it's funny, because some ideas were parkas, but I sketched it down south, but I just put it on a tracing paper, and it was just shuffled in all my stuff. Little kids sitting on benches, with unique lines in their faces. And I'd use the same idea. So I'd keep all these ideas, but I didn't draw, there was too much going on. Stuck in life, really, in jobs, and not really believing you know, there's so many artists everywhere, that were really trying to get a job, that I didn't want to live on a sidewalk and paint portraits for $20. That's not my idea you know, if you gotta make jewellery on a sidewalk somewhere in Venice, California, you know it's not my thing. I didn't really push it, maybe I didn't have the confidence to start painting. I came up North and finally settled down and I was doing all kinds of little bitty [paintings], and I thought, 'Gee, this ain't bad'."

Selling paintings through a gallery

"I saw some of the Northern art that was reaching Hall of Frame, Hay River, [run by] Janis and Bill McBride, really nice people. She's so sweet to me, really encouraging. Such a little thing to approach a gallery, why was I so scared all those years? I just don't know why I was so scared, but I just went in there--to
Yellowknife, and me and my sister were dressed in the rubbiest clothes, 'cause we didn't really care what anybody thought about us. 'It's the North', dress how you wanna dress, and just go up there.

I had all my paintings that I'd been doing in a garbage bag. I had done some really nice ones. I was proud of them. Proud enough that I'm gonna march around Yellowknife with a garbage bag full of paintings! And I go into the art gallery, only because it was the biggest name that hit me. I phoned a few--I guess they get phone calls all the time, 'Do you wanna see my art?' 'Well, send me a sample I guess.' No real commitment. So I just went to Arctic Art Gallery, because it was the first one I stumbled onto, just slapped my garbage bag onto the table, said 'I do some paintings', and I just got out all these little ones like this, and all the staff bought it up before she even came out.

But when I went around the art gallery, it was like 'Gee this stuff is really nice in here'. I saw some stuff that I thought was just tacky stuff, it shouldn't be on the wall, I was shocked it was on the wall. But then again, there was a lot of nice stuff, and I thought it was a very nice gallery. It was the old place. And she said 'yeah', and she bought up everything I brought up there. And she took care of me for a couple of years, selling stuff for me. And then I was off and running, and I haven't really stopped to look back. I was selling a lot in Hay River too. People found out I painted, and they end up buying it from me--you know the bar cronies. You get to meet 'em and you know them all by name. . . ."

**Portraits**

". . . When I started painting people I was looking for change. I didn't see a lot of paintings of Northern people, Dene people. There's not many Inuit people down there. We go to the thrift shop in Hay River, a fantastic thrift shop, and all the Dene women, and we had some really neat women working for us at the hotel. . . . A lot of these interesting characters, you know, everybody in the bar, they said 'you know you should paint [this or that person] . . . You got the northern miner type, . . . you got the fishermen, you got the campers, we got people parked in our backyard because they canoed down the MacKenzie, and they 'Oh look at this place' and they jump out, 'we're from Italy and we thought we'd come here.' Everybody just loves the atmosphere there."
... So everybody in the bar says, 'why don't we paint these people that hang out in our bar'? Like mom was saying this, paint and draw these people. I was thinking how we could make the place look more northern, we had a big birch bark canoe, and a big musk-ox head, and all kinds of little things. 'Paint these pictures and then we'll put glass on top and shellac it on there.' So you see all these characters--regulars--you know, 'cause they're all what people come North and take pictures of, and you get to know them. So that's what got me started kind of. But I never really did a big bust of one.

Getting grants to paint

"And then I got a grant--I wanted to do Dene people. First I got a grant to illustrate children's books. 'The Five Seasons of the Dene', with Phoebe Tatti, of the Official Languages Department. . . . I did all the illustrations they sent me . . . Then I applied for [a grant to paint Dene elders]. I was still fairly fresh with painting the Dene people, when I did my paintings. The people I painted were people from Hay River, so when anybody saw the show, they'd say 'Oh that's Harriet'. . . ."

Painting women

"It's only been a couple of years now that I've been painting faces. You see them--like I paint women for some reason--I just naturally gravitate to women, cause they're so quiet. Their faces just light up when they smile. They're so quiet, and they just shuffle around and do their own business, you know? But when you get to know them they've got so many stories, fun things, a lot of them have such hard lives though. Really really really hard lives, and they're struggling with their kids who want Nikes, and it seems like there's a real dissent--a difficult generation right now. So I started painting them."

The meaning of art to life

"I put real pressure on myself--'you gotta paint four hours a day', and all my family's a free enterprise type family. Nobody works for anybody, so if you do that, you gotta take yourself fairly serious. So I was trapped in my own house, I always had to paint, 'I have to paint, I shouldn't be here I should be painting'. So I couldn't really enjoy myself. And when you're in an uncreative mode, and you've got to get a lot done, like I
don't know about other artists, but I go into slumps where the brush is a thousand pounds heavy. I just can't keep on--so I got a job, I got out of the house, I get cabin fever. I'm in the house, it's cold and dark all winter long, my kids can't stand it when I paint, so I thought I'll get a job. I got a job for the power corporation, lots of numbers. ... I became instantly creative as soon as I got a job outside the house. 'I wish I was painting' 'Boy, I could-' I was thinking of all these things to paint in my head while I was working. . . . So it was a really good experience for me to get that job. . . . Then I went to school this year--accounting school--to learn all about computers--lotus and accpac and all that kind of stuff. I feel like a person has got to be well-rounded because I don't want to be stuck for a job in art the way the economy's going. You just gotta be able to [work]--nice to be idealistic."

Roles in her life

Laurelle continues to balance the roles of artist, mother and wife, and has painted her children, "but not as much as I'd like. It seems like I'm always painting for somebody--I gotta do a portrait for these people--it seems I've always got things on the table. I got things to get finished. I got to get ten paintings done, or ten 9 x 12's, and so I don't have a painting on my wall. If it's on my wall for a little while, it comes down and it goes off to someplace, or someone will buy it off my wall. There's few paintings I hang onto."

A driving force

"Art is definitely important, something I don't want to quit. It's almost like a hindrance because it's always chipping at your back, 'you should be painting, you should be doing something, you should be creating'. And if you don't do it for years--like all those years I didn't paint, it was always at me--'you should be painting--don't waste your talent'. You know you have a talent--the Lord says, you should be doing it, you should be utilizing your talent. There's so many people that--who knows someone here could be a world class athlete in sprinting, high-jumping, or javelin, but if you never groom it you'll never see the fruits of it. So in my opinion, I gotta keep at it. I'll be a sad woman if I don't do it. I'm not totally happy unless I'm doing it. You know what I mean, If I haven't accomplished something proper, I'm really hard on myself in art."
Influence of the North

Laurelle's artwork has been influenced a great deal by the North. "It's untouched. It's new. It's fresh land. It seems isolated. I just realize that it's raw land--you drive up on that highway, and you have to drive through it even to Hay River, you drive up there you got four hours of nothing but trees. You're stuck on the side of the road and you've got to wait for the next vehicle that comes along. You feel that isolation. Especially we drove all over in the states, and there's pit stops, rest stops, but you get up here and there's a sign that says 'no stops for the next 100 miles!' Just think in the Winter--it's absolutely unbelievable that people actually lived here and they had their landmarks and they walked through this land unmarked, really except for whatever they did, and lived all winter long having to hunt. That just blows me right away, and to think that some of the people that I paint... like this interesting native man, really pure from the old school... Oh the stories he'd tell, unbelievable, someone should have written his memoirs down...

The people up here, you can talk to... this is the frontier--it's absolutely captivating. I like old people to begin with, I like old farmers, I could sit down and talk to old farmers who raised 12 kids and they had to work hard. I love listening to them talk."

Teaching art

Laurelle has taught art to children, and to adult classes. "A real mix, native and non-native, young and old. Anybody can sign up for a basic drawing class. They come in and native people get frustrated a little bit easier. They have definite topics that they paint about scenes or flowers, I don't know if that's because they're influenced by other native artists.

One [woman] in particular paints drying fish and everything, but she's from a very traditional [background]. She's educated but she still filters back, she's done all this kind of stuff. She draws it, and she'll sell her art, she does it, she's really aggressive. She's a really sweet little 80 pound lady, raised some beautiful kids, that's a real tribute to someone when they raise really good kids. She is really quiet, but when you get to know her, she's not planned aggressive, but she'll come over to the house and say 'what do you think of this? Should I change this?' So she's not afraid of anything. She's willing to learn. And it's nice to give everybody
encouragement, they come to an art class to refine the little bit of skills, they don't want to be put through hard core teaching. Hard core criticism I guess. She really wants to learn." The students paint "mostly traditional scenes. It's all so influenced by--in the South Slave--lots of Don Cardinal stuff. He . . . set the precedent, and like Archie Beaulieu--the younger natives are always drawing that same style. They put their own flair into it, but you see it coming out over and over. And then you see the eagles coming out. I feel it's almost influenced by southern markets.

And the Dene seem a bit different--than all the southern natives. I grew up in a town with four reserves all around it, my best friends were native, but they're a lot different down there.

Note: Laurelle taught the first term of a Fine Arts Program offered by Aurora College in the South Slave region in 1995, and also taught a drawing and painting module in the Fine Arts Program in Inuvik in 1996. She stayed at our house in Inuvik while she taught, so we talked a lot and got to know each other better. She has participated in two Great Northern Arts Festivals, and teaches art in Hay River and on the Hay River Reserve. She continues to draw, and paint in acrylics. She produced a set of prints and cards in 1995 and her reputation as an artist continues to grow. In Summer 1997 she moved with her family back to Udah.
Fig. 30: A pencil drawing with watercolor wash by Laurelle in 1991, of a young Metis mother in Hay River.
CECE MC CAULEY

Seamstress, first woman Chief of the Inuvik Native Band, businesswoman, and arts advocate.

Inuvik, NWT.

Fig. 31: These photographs of Cece appeared with her column in News North, a weekly newspaper published in Yellowknife, NWT. Photographers unknown.
CECE MCCAULEY
Inuvik, NWT

This is a summary of Cece's comments from an interview videotaped on July 9, 1993 at Cece's shop in Inuvik.

Childhood

"I was born in Fort Norman, Norman Wells or around there. Everyone learned to sew in the early days because it was a different world then. If you didn't sew you didn't have anything to wear almost. Things were expensive, our parents were trappers, and so we made a lot of our clothes. There was pride in those days because it seemed like women were trying to outdo each other, the competition was great. When I was growing up we didn't have anything but the radio, but you could sit there and sew. Everybody did embroidery, every family was trying to outdo each other to see who had the nicest, most embroidered clothes. Beading and quills, and horsehair too—you don't see that anymore. They used to make the moccasins and around the tongue—they must have dyed it—green, blue, red—the horsehair is long, and they twisted them around and it's just like a coil, and you make designs with it. You don't see it anymore, it's dead I think now. But they still do quills and moosehair tufting."

Learning to sew

"Every girl who was born in the North was taught to sew at home and when we went to the convent we were taught to sew there too. Anyone born in the North had to learn to sew. My mother taught me to sew, and then the sisters taught us in the convent. I went to school in Fort Providence, up the river." Cece learned basic stitches and was encouraged to sew at home, but the sisters taught her different skills at school. "In the convent we learned to do quills, I remember that, the nuns taught us. We had to make dresses, and when we went home we had to make our own moccasins, and do our own embroidery, make our own clothes. There was a store there, but they didn't sell dresses, they sold yard goods, and you had to make your own. We learned to sew with machines, on treadle machines. In the old days sewing gave us something to do."
We never did tapestries in school, we never had time, we only had time for basic stitches—in school we worked on machines and made our own dresses. We had treadle machines. Those nuns sure taught us good, and our mothers too. If you didn't know how to sew you didn't dress well. But today, this day and age, kids have too much money, they don't even like second hand clothes. The hairdresser in town here, she comes from Nova Scotia, and she said everything they wore they turned inside out eventually trying to make it more new. And here they won't wear second hand clothes. My favorite sweater, a big heavy one I bought in the second-hand store in Edmonton. I love it. Just by fluke I saw it for about $4. I grabbed it, and everyone compliments me on it. But people are too proud here, they don't like second-hand."

Delta Braid

"In this area the women do Delta Braid and they're very proud of it, but gradually they're losing it because not many women still do it. It started here with bias tape when it came in. They didn't have the trimming for coats—now you can buy it by the yard. So some of the women started to make their own designs. This is what I heard—they cut the bias tape in little pieces, I don't even know how to do it. It takes a lot of patience to do a real good job. Only a few women do a real good job and it takes quite a while to do it. I can name the women on my hand who can do it, and they're getting older. Everything now is already made. They buy a lot of trimming, but I'm telling you they're losing it, and the white women are doing it—embroidery, making parkas. I don't know what we're going to do about it. The native women resent it when the white women do it, but I keep telling them, it's their own fault, because they're not doing it."

Influences on her designs

When Cece first started sewing tapestries she said she made Eskimo designs "because I was here [in Inuvik], I did all Eskimos because that's all I saw around here. Until somebody said to me 'You're Indian, how come you're doing only Eskimo work?' And I said, 'Well, there's only Eskimo animals up here', so I started doing Indian designs and they went very well. In fact, more in demand than the Inuvialuit because they're more colorful. I love doing it you know. My daughter-in-law loves doing it too. I can do one in two days—not that long, I can do that in sixteen hours for one piece. That's pushing it, eh? I like to take my time. No, that
one's simple, I could maybe do that one in a day. I carry it with me when I visit people, I keep it in my purse and it's just to pass time. I'm asking $75. What you make, you're not doing it for a living, so I don't count that as making a living, it's fun."

A Woman Chief

"When I was a chief for ten years, it took me two years to be accepted by the men. But I stuck in there and then I ended up being one of the boys. I told the chiefs here once, 'I'd rather you got drunk and went to bed at night, and come to meeting in the morning at 9 o'clock. Instead of playing poker all night until 8 in the morning and then come to meeting and fall asleep.' Even though I was chief, with a lot of paperwork and office work, going to meetings, you have your leisure time, you don't work 24 hours a day. You work and then you have your time--I always have my sewing there. I can't sit and visit now without my sewing. It relaxes you. Most of the older women who sew do that--they sew while they visit or watch TV. You're creating."

New Ideas

"There's other little things like, if you have a bottle of wine, you want to make a little cover for it, a cozy like a tea cozy? I make Eskimo doll parkas with a little face on it, and you put it over your bottle of wine. Like puppets, you can make puppets out of them. They're cheap, we sell them for twenty dollars, and that's affordable. I'm in demand for those, I just haven't had the time to do it. Things like that--I make duffels, gun cases. They like them because they're rough and they're lined with duffel. I've done how many ravens! They are so nice to do and I do them on pink because it's a sunset. I do them standing on garbage cans. I did one for my friend in Yellowknife in a black ring. A lot of people frame them, and is it ever beautiful. That's why I don't put anything around them anymore, Nellie told me that.

Now people want me to do more flowers. Even native women are buying them from me. For my name. One of them said, 'You're going to be so famous one day, I want a tapestry.' " Some of Cece's sewn pictures are stretched on circles of wood. "I tried to get the native men to do willows for me, but they made such a mess of it. . . ."
I sit and I think 'what should I make?' I want it to be simple and elegant, if you put too much on it, it's too much. I want it simple. Sometimes I put just one little caribou and a big white piece with a little track behind it. Nothing else. I like simple--my best seller is the eagles--everybody buys eagles. Some are big and they sit up on a branch, but the ravens are in high demand."

An artist?

Cece does not really consider herself an artist. "Not really, I do it for fun, I never took it seriously. I started because I saw the Inuit do it. Believe it or not, one time a guy said to me, one of my tapestries like that with the seals, went for twenty-five hundred dollars. There was a movie star here, and they were auctioning at the mad trapper bar. I was the chief then and the Band didn't have anything, so I said I'll make a tapestry and donate it to you. They gave me $50 for it. I did an Indian woman very proud holding her feathers, and her big frills, and I put Indian animals like wolverine, a beaver, and a wolf. They took it over there as their contribution.

The next day I was at the airport working at my cafeteria there, and one of the girls came in and said 'you know you brought in the most money last night,' And I said 'what do you mean?' 'The tapestry it went for twenty-five hundred' and it was this movie star on Danger Bay. So the next day he wanted to meet the artist. Well I laughed. So he wanted to meet the artist and he wanted me to explain. Well my little brain had to work fast because I had to make up a story. I'll never forget it, he took my picture and he even carried it on the plane--he wouldn't put it in his suitcase. . . . it was so funny. I don't consider myself an artist, I do it because I love it. A lot of them it comes to money now."

Quality and criticism

"When they were going to do Seville [for the world's fair], I never laughed so much. This little guy, this young kid who was in charge of Seville, he didn't know--he had a bunch of little stuff, and we looked at what he had. We said 'we'll take this, this is no good, now this is good, this is no good' by the time we finished we only had a few items that were worth anything, the rest were garbage. And he didn't know the difference, he was going to send the whole thing to Seville. But they're too scared to put the people who know [in
positions of responsibility]. I should be in there, be a Deputy Minister, Bertha Allen and I. We should be in there but they won't do it because we don't have the education, but we sure have the brains and know how. We've been doing it all our lives, but they put these bureaucrats with degrees that's all theory--they don't know what the hell they're talkin about. We know every person from Fort Smith to Tuk and who they are and who does what, who should teach it, who does carving."

**Marketing, pricing and selling artwork**

"I keep telling the women to make things that are affordable. That's why I'm making my tapestries smaller. I outline with machine, only outside by machine, but most of it is done by hand. And it's fast, you can sit there and watch TV and do that, and I tell them it isn't--you can do it fast, and it's good money and it's affordable to tourists and customers. They make moccasins, a lot of them, and they sell them for about $150 a pair, and by the time a retailer sells them, they have to put the mark-up on it, and by then it's out of reach for most people. When I was at the airport I bought two mocassins from the women, I had to give them up for almost the same price I bought them, I didn't make a cent on them and they sat there for almost a year. And this is the airport, I mean there's not very many people who have money to spend when they're travelling on their holidays. I don't know what the answer is. . . .

The school principal's wife who makes parkas in town, and she does embroidery, she's selling coats like mad in town here to a retailer. She's moving to China, her and her husband, and I said to the women, 'you just watch' she might be getting the Chinese women in China to make mass production and ship it back here. Then you're losing your culture--the women don't like it when the white women do it, but I said 'It's your fault! You do it.' I stick to tapestry and I like doing it.

**Government influence**

I'm watching the native people now, and I don't think their prices should be up high, but it's the government that's saying it should be high. I think they can sell more. Some of Mona's pictures used to hang in the family hall, forever, and she sells, but her prices are high now. . . . I'll tell you about soapstone. The soapstone--one time I heard the carvers in Aklavik went on strike because they were selling their soapstone for
so much here, say twenty dollars, and in Inuvik they were asking $60 or $160. They got so mad they quit for a while. Let the natives do what they want, they know what it's worth you know. But the government guy comes in with his degree of course, and says 'well, you know, you can get so much'. He doesn't know he is holding the natives back by making it too high. Now if he was reasonable, he'd sell ten times that much, and make ten times more money. But they say 'no, no; it's got to be this price'.

This is no lie, I heard that there was a warehouse in Ottawa and one in Alberta, full of soapstone. The government was buying them from the Eskimos, and piling them in these warehouses. And they didn't know what to do with them. So they hired a consultant, to see what they could do with it. So the first consultant group came out and they weren't too happy with them, so another consultant group took it over, and my friend was in the second consultant group. And he said 'you wouldn't believe these carvings, they're not very good, the carvers are doing it fast to make money'--it's the government again. So he said 'You know what we told them? Take those two warehouses and put them on a big ship and dump them in the deepest water in the ocean.' That's what they told them! What are you going to do with two warehouses full of carvings? If they sold them for a cheaper price, they would ruin their price. So who's crazy?

Eastern versus Western Arctic

"In the East they are way ahead of us. In the Eastern Arctic they have five things we don't have. And I don't know if we are asleep in the West, but in the East they have jewellry making--silver and ivory, they have a factory for that. They have a factory for [musk-ox wool] knitting, they have printing, and they have weaving, and they have five things that we don't have in the west. And I'm telling the leaders here to find out why. Why couldn't we have the same thing in the West? They're way ahead of us in the East.

... But in the West we don't have all of those things. ... The Aklavik Fur shop has been going on since Inuvik was created, 35 years ago, but they've been up and down, up and down, and the government even tried to do a tanning [plant] in Aklavik years ago. They sent a white guy and a guard, and a couple of natives down south to learn all about tanning. And we were all excited. Either you want to do it or you don't. They ruined all the fur, they didn't do it right and the supervision was poor I guess. You have to get people who are willing to do a proper job and who are willing to help the people, not just do a bandaid thing. I had an Eskimo woman visiting me here from
Tuk, and she's been in crafts and she was so depressed, she came back from a meeting in Yellowknife, and she said 'you know Cece, we're way behind in the West.'"

**Preparing hides**

The women in the western Arctic don't tan hides much anymore. "No, that's past. There's a few that do. I think they still do it in Liard, in some areas they do, where they don't have all the whites and modern towns like Inuvik. Nobody does that, or very few. But around Fort Liard and Simpson, they do a lot of tanning. I don't even know if there's much in Dogrib area. Fort Franklin they still do, but a lot of them just bring in moosehides, and you can buy moosehides from Alberta, Manitoba, in some of those places they still do them in the back woods of the North. Native tanned--beautiful hides come out of Liard, I think in the Northwest Territories that's the best place to buy a hide—through Liard."

**Reviving baskets and tufting**

The birch-bark baskets of Liard are well known in the NWT. "They're trying to teach it, the government got them to start doing it there, and they're picking up and that's their specialty for Liard.

Around Fort Providence is Moose-hair tufting, and around some areas it's beading, around Norman it's mostly beading and embroidery. Up here it's beading, silk, and wool. Those people [from LacLaMartre] are more traditional. Although they do their own sewing, they are losing their traditions, very fast, because the younger generation are taking over and elders are too busy in their own world--bingo and poker."

**The politics of being heard**

"We've got to get new blood. People with vision and know--a lot of us are frustrated because we know what should be done but it isn't being done. They won't listen to us, because we don't have a degree. They are nice, some of them, but they go back to their own thing. People have talked, and the government said the same thing, over and over and over, and not a thing changes. Nothing changes.

It's too late now to change, I think I'm at the stage where I don't care anymore. I say that but I do care, about my art, I do care but I'll fight them in my writing. I won't go and talk to them, I'll fight them in my
paper which everybody reads. You know they read two of my articles in cabinet in Ottawa? Jake Epp told me they read it in Cabinet--two of them--that was during the Oka [crisis: standoff between police and Indians over golf course expansion onto sacred burial grounds]. I just call a spade a spade, and to come from a chief it's quite something. But I'm not an ordinary chief."

Thoughts on government and people in power

"Go to these big meetings and ask a lot of questions: 'Don't you ask the average person for advice?'

All they have is people with degrees, the same people in government and in crafts. The big problem with government, they keep saying they want to try to help the craft people, but they put people in charge in the crafts, or in industry or in the offices in Yellowknife, who have no idea of what craft is in the North. Sure they have a degree or a little paper on the wall . . . . It makes me mad because they have a chance of a lifetime.

If they would use the average woman--I know women in this town who should be in those offices. Just giving direction, and give them the manpower to do the paperwork, but let them make the decisions. Where the money should be spent, what to be done, where it should go, who we should have, how much money to the East and how much to the West? Find out where the money's going . . . there's no money left to help the little people."

Teaching the next generations

"My sister had two girls, . . . she was here and her girls were just teenagers, about 12 and 13, and she just let them use the machine, and those girls were just sewing like mad, because she encouraged them. I couldn't believe it, seeing these two little girls just sewing their own dresses . . . . Let them use the machine.

Myself I wouldn't let anybody use my machine. But it's up to the parents. But we're in a different world now. I don't know if crafts--there will always be a few, the ones that are in their thirties and forties now, will probably try it. Most of the young women are looking at a career, and they don't even know how to sew a button on, most of them. I keep trying to tell them 'you need a hobby, have a hobby, you know, make anything. Make a neck band, or earrings.'

My son when he was about six or seven, he'd come home frustrated, he had to make mitt strings and sew, I guess its just a waste of time. They should teach them the ABCs then. Where they should learn crafts
is in the high school, if they want to. If they want to teach it in the school. And the native women used to teach the high school kids how to skin rabbits and things like that, which is okay I guess. Same as language, I don't think they should teach language in class, in schools myself, I've been against that all along. They're so far behind in the school, in the education, just teach them the 3 R's. Teach them—if they have to go to school, even the elders say that—'why are you trying to teach the language in school, you're just confusing the kids?'

But these do-gooders, again it's the big bureaucrats who make the decisions, 'Well, you gotta teach the culture.' And there's a few [Native] leaders, a lot of them are just as bad as the bureaucrats, because the more they keep their people down, the more sure they are of their jobs.

In the school they teach sewing anyway. Most of the things the young girls do now is just beading--tiny little earrings, and I keep telling them, make big glamorous earrings, lots of beads. Not tiny little things, you can't even see it. And they make a lot of hair bows and things that they spend a lot of time on, and they don't make much money on."

I have a daughter-in-law, she's a white girl, and she's got diabetes so I said 'okay you make a doll--let's try it.' So she drew a pattern but with the first one she made the body too skinny and the head too big, so she had to take it apart. So her second try was perfect. So I showed her, I cut out the parka, so she made it. We took it over to tourism and they had a bunch of dolls and they were so ugly I couldn't believe it. Our doll just stood out, and she gave me $100 for it. I said, 'no we'll take $85,' because she had to put her mark-up, and you don't want to be too . . . I know how long it took us, and we had fun doing it, so now she's making a bunch more. I taught my daughter-in-law and she's doing good. If you're going to do something, do it right."

Note: Shortly after this interview, Cece bought the Chicken Chef (franchise fast food) Restaurant in the center of Inuvik and runs it with her staff. Her wall hangings or tapestries are on sale and help decorate the walls of the restaurant. She has a glass display case on one wall which holds other women's work on a smaller scale--beaded slippers and hairbows. She is still organizing women to make affordable sewing items, and is now also buying crafts for two government gift stores in Ottawa. She recently told me that she is tired of the restaurant, and wants to sell it to spend more time helping women get ahead with their artwork.
LENA OLIFIE
Inuvialuit traditional seamstress
Holman, NWT.

Fig. 32: Lena in July 1994 outside Family Hall in Inuvik at the site of *The Great Northern Arts Festival*. She is wearing the parka, boots, and wolf mitts which she made, and which she speaks about in this interview.
LENA OLIFIE
Holman, NWT

This is a summary of Lena's comments from a conversation videotaped on July 29, 1994, at The Great Northern Arts Festival site in Inuvik, NWT. We were talking in English, not her first language.

Childhood and school

"I'm Lena Olifie from Holman Island, and I've been living in Holman for about at least 30, close to 30 years. I grew up where there was no people. My parents used to live alone out on the land. Well, I don't really know much about crafts then, but my dad used to do a lot of hunting and sell foxes and that. Later on, well, he's been gone for over 30 years so I grew up without a dad, and all that's kind of hard to survive and manage. Mom was gone most of the time." Lena says her father died "when I was about 8 or 9, over 30 years ago." Her mother and family moved from the land into Holman then "about 1960 after my dad died. And I went to school in Inuvik for a couple of years, and I went back to Holman. And I've been living in Holman since then. I went to grade three in Inuvik, and I couldn't go back to school. My mom was alone and she needed me at home. So I had to be home. I learned it [sewing] from my older sister. My older sister--we got different mothers. I got five sisters and two brothers. I'm the oldest."

Marriage and a family of her own

Lena got married when "I only just turned 18, I guess. And I got three kids of my own, so I got a small family. My kids are older now... the oldest is 28, 27 and 21. My adopted girl is 14, so we got four grand kids. I've been married for 28 years."

Beginning to sew

"So I started [sewing] over how many years now, over 20 years at least--30!--over 20 years at least. I started doing some sewings slowly and slowly since I was nine. I guess I started off with little animals--ookpik, seals, and everything, tapestries, and mitts, slippers and mukluks. Later on I started learning more and more
so I started making parkas—everything. So I've been sewing ever since then... for long time now. I make my own clothing and for my kids and that... and I make everything—clothes for my family... ."

**Selling through the Co-op in Holman**

"Where I'm from there's a co-op store. But co-op crafts, where they buy sewings, it's not like it used to be before, cause there's not much orders for white people down south. So you can't really sell sewings there anymore and they—quite a few years back I know this—the only thing that you have to make is the orders. You can't sell your own materials there anymore, they don't need it. So it's hard for people to make money. Some people I know work there and sell their sewings there. So for myself my husband works so it's not too bad, but I like to do some crafts and sell them. So it would be really a pretty desolate place to go out to sell some crafts and all that. So we don't have to look at somewhere to sell sewings, and try and find some crafts to sell. So I would really like to know where they could send sewings and crafts and that and sell them for us. Maybe whoever's in sewing and crafts?"

**Selling work in other towns**

"I have been doing some crafts for sale, selling them before Christmas in Yellowknife, and all over. I brought things for our craft sale from Inuvik Sewing Crafts, and I did pretty good. I make everything—parkas, mitts, slippers, mukluks, little animals, wall hangings, but it's kind of hard to sell sewings when you don't know people. In Yellowknife when I go, stores don't wanna buy sewings anymore much from quite a few years back. Before Christmas when I have a trip down to Yellowknife I sell crafts. I know this lady at Northern Images in Yellowknife, Agnes, so I bring sewings to her every time I go to Yellowknife... She used to buy my sewings and that, and I sold my sewings to her for white people. Just like slippers and mukluks, and mitts and that, I did wall-hangings and all that. If I know I'm going somewhere, I know what I have to do. Well you never know what you're gonna do in future, in a couple of months, but I always plan to make some stuff, otherwise I'll be going somewhere or whatever. I'll have some stuff ready, mostly winter time."
Sewing, artwork, life and pride

"When I do some sewings, like that's your work. When I get onto my sewings, and do some sewings, it's mine. I sell some crafts and make some money for my family or whatever, and buy some groceries, and all that. And I feel good about it when I do some stuff like that for my family." Lena said she considered it 'art'.

"Spring is really hard, summer is really hard to get things like that, because you want to be out camping every weekend, every day. You spend your time outside, and picnicking, or go out fishing and camping, and all that. But soon as it started slowing down, in August or September, until—must be April or March—you spend your time inside the house, until the weather starts getting warmer.

I have my free time whenever I want to at home. Like most of the time, I'm free but I babysit in the afternoon. I started babysitting not too long ago. When you have a small family you're free because there's no kids around and you're--my kids are grown up--so I have my free time to do [sewing]. What to put there and what to do, and what kind of design to put. . . ."

Lena learned new techniques of artwork at the co-op. "I do my wall-hangings, I did some for my sisters and my friends. Myself I don't do drawing so I never thought of drawing anything like that. I worked in the co-op on and off. I do some paintings, screening and all that, prints, aprons, Christmas cards, tablecloth and all that, so I know all about that, but I never planned to have it myself. I worked there on and off for how many years then I moved on to the co-op store and I worked there for four years and then I got out and I've been on and off, whenever they need me.

I know the co-op has really slowed down, must be [because] not much orders. I know that changed because nobody wants to do sewing for the co-op anymore. Not like how many years from now. How many years ago all the ladies used to so sewing, so there's sewing there, but now it's just [a] few ladies do sewing for [the] co-op. Must be that nobody's ordering from down south. They only do some orders from co-op. If somebody orders duffels, mitts or whatever they let them know 'you gotta do the sewings'." Lena says the co-op doesn't buy sewing unless ". . . they need it. If they don't need it, they let you back out with it--they can't buy it. Like if you bring small shoes or mukluks with flowers or sealskin or whatever, they'd say 'Oh we don't
need this,' and you just go back out and bring it home. That's how it works if they don't need it they can't buy it."

**Getting materials**

"The co-op supplies the materials --duffels and all that, that's where we used to get our materials when we need materials for parkas and everything. That's where they ordered the supplies, or through the Northern store. But usually I get my materials from Yellowknife when there's no materials that I want in Holman. So-- you just tell whoever works at the Co-op crafts, or Northern store, to order this and they let you know when it comes in. They put it out and I buy it.

Whenever I go to Yellowknife I buy materials because they're cheaper. Back home you buy a meter of duffle is about 50 something dollars [per metre]." In Yellowknife it is "34 or 38, maybe 37 [per metre], so everything is ... when you want materials you have to buy ahead of time. When you have money. You just buy ahead of time and you get enough to start everything. So instead of buying it all at once... if you know that you are going to do some crafts, or whatever you need, you have to buy ahead of time. I've never ordered from Edmonton."

**Preparing hides and sewing techniques**

"You can tan your own caribou skins, scrape it until its soft and get soft, but you have to send seals to get commercially [tanned]. You sell it to the co-op." Lena says a seal skin costs "about 100 dollars, maybe 108... I don't really know anything about it because I don't sew sealskins.

Some ladies like to do sewings just rush and all that, and don't do a good job. So especially when you have to work on the skins like sealskin and caribou skins and all those hides, you take your time to do them. And put linings and whatever, duffels and everything... you find it different ways. Ladies like to take their time and do sewings... for myself I do sewing and take my time."

Holman is known for the parka designs on the 'mother hubbard' parkas of calico with the ruffle around the bottom. "You make your own design, whatever design you want to put. I never thought of putting
my name on. I don’t know. I did lots of wall-hangings but I never put my initials on. I always was going to make a better parka cover but I never had time. You know, more designs, so.

That’s the new braid that puts stitches in embroidery or just skip stitches—like needlepoint almost.

That’s the new designs that we’re doing in Holman now. We still do it [delta braid], but it’s different... they find it easier I guess. It’s more work. It’s new so it might look better and nicer. I don’t know. Lena said that in the old days "You might just find a braid [and] just put it on to decorate—braid or whatever."

The other ‘old’ way was little pieces of inlaid hide sewn into geometric patterns around the hem of the parkas and sleeves. "It’s caribou fur, those little pieces, from caribou summer—the very bottom so we just soften it and work on it for a long time... it’s from summer caribou."

**Participating in the Festival**

"I really enjoyed staying here, this is my first time. So I really enjoyed it and people are really welcoming and everything. So I’m real glad to be here and I’m enjoying this nice weather but [it’s] too hot. It’s nice to meet other people and see their work and learn a bit looking at them, and what they’re doing. I’m so sorry that I never had much sewing, because I didn’t know I was really coming. If I knew ahead of time I would have made lots of crafts, little things like mitts, mukluks, parkas or covers, anything like that. I never really do much this spring—I’ve been going in and out of town every week and camping. So I didn’t never really do much. I thought I was not going anywhere, but I really enjoyed it. Maybe if I have another chance in future, I will try and make more than what I have."

**The meaning of the artwork**

"I know about printing and all that, but I find it [sewing] easier. When you’re used to doing things like sewing, it’s just my job. It’s just normal in my job, its easier for me. Some ladies say that it’s like hard work, but it’s not. I mean it’s hard work but, it’s my job. So I don’t know, I just like to do some like my own clothes and my kids and my grand kids, so I do a lot of that. A lot of times people ask ‘Who made this for you?’ and ‘Oh, Lena made this for you?’ and ‘Do you make your own clothing?’ It just makes me feel good that you know how to do your own stuff and do your own clothing and all that for your family."
Lena said she considers herself an 'artist'. "Yes, art [is] sewing and all that stuff. Yes, I can do things and all." Lena feels that art should be beautiful. "Yes, or someways else. I don't know for other people."

Lena’s family wear traditional clothing for "Special days. Myself I don't use my clothing but special days I use them. Like Easter time, Christmas time . . . ."

The next generations

In Holman now there are some children’s sewing classes in the school. "There’s some, they must be twice a week, or once a week they have a class. There’s some people, they do some sewing like duffels and shoes, embroidery and all that in school. Once a week I guess, or twice a week." Lena says she doesn’t teach young children, " . . . there’s older people . . . None of my girls do sewing, except for the youngest one, she is learning a bit and made some slippers, and that and duffels at the school. None of my girls do sewing because they like to work and maybe have their free time after work. I did [teach] two of them, my youngest one. Two of my daughters they not [take] up sewing. One says it's too boring to do, my youngest I'm trying to show her how to sew everything. She can make wall hangings, she's been here once so a couple of years ago. She came over . . . 3 years ago from school. When she was still in school about 4 years ago . . . so she's learned to make some wall hangings and all that. . . ."

Learning to sew at home or in school?

"They should learn it at school and home too from their mothers, so they like, it's hard for them when they need money. Like myself, if I need money I just make something and sell it, when I'm somewhere that I could sell it. But back home it's kind of hard because you can't sell it back home if they don't want it. Like if I'm somewhere if I need something I'll just make something and sell it. It would be really better if there were some younger people who learned how to make crafts and everything like that. Instead of just waiting for money from somewhere else. Like from their parents . . . ."

Note: Lena was recognized as an outstanding seamstress by her community and in the Delta region. She died unexpectedly in January 1996 and is deeply missed by her family. She was remembered fondly at a women's meeting in Inuvik in March, 1996.
JANICE RAHN

Non-native printmaker, papermaker, teacher & graduate student
Montreal, Whitehorse, & Inuvik/Iqaluit, NWT

Fig. 33: Janice in 1994 outside The Great Northern Arts Festival, shortly after her daughter was born.
Janice grew up in the Ottawa Valley in "a rural area called Alice, just outside of Pembroke, just outside of Ottawa...it's real Canadian shield country, lots of rock and rivers...I started by drawing, and I still draw. That's still the basis for my love of art because it's spontaneous and it teaches me to observe the world, and I think it gave me purpose for art. I felt that it was a way of observing the world, and [I] started by just drawing things, and getting my little brother to pose. My father's very attached to the land, he lives on the same land that his grandfather farmed, and so I think my whole connection to art is through him—the feeling for the environment."

Learning art

"I was lucky enough to have a good high school art teacher who was a potter. So in high school I hung out in the art and music room. I had a mentor I suppose—it was this woman who lived in the bush and was a Christian Scientist, who had worked with Arthur Lismer, and had a David Milne painting in her living room. And she was very eccentric, and really loved the way I drew. [She] talked a lot about [the] progression of children's art, so she would talk to me a lot about how children learn to see—going through the scribbling stage, and the symbol stage, and she was very much into art as a way of maintaining the child in you. I [visited] with her a lot, because I wanted more support for what I was doing. I was getting a lot of pressure to be a lawyer, and I didn't think I wanted to be a lawyer...My parents didn't encourage [art]—they always said that it's okay for a hobby, but, my mother especially, wanted us to get a degree. She said it was especially important for a woman, because she always worked, and felt that she didn't get as much pay as a man because
she was a woman. So my mother's a driving force for getting education. It's only recently that she's actually supporting the idea, she thinks that I'm a real artist now--I guess because I sell them. Before that she was a bit skeptical.

**Going to university**

Janice applied to Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario. "My brother and sister were already there, so it was just sort of expected that I would go there. Also they had just started a new art program and renovated the oldest building on campus--it was beautiful, airy, [with] vaults, big arches--four stories of renovated studios, [and] very good printmaking. I had a terrible portfolio because I wasn't sure what they would be looking for, so I sort of just holed myself up in my room and painted these pretty pictures, and took them. It was an all day interview--they had 200 people there interviewing, and they just put you in a room and you had to draw the whole time you were there, . . . then just leave your drawings. They would call you in one by one--I think they interviewed for two weeks. They weren't too impressed with my portfolio, but they said they were really impressed by my drawings. And so that paid off.

When I went to Queen's University, that was a very good experience." Janice first learned printmaking from "Jennifer Dickson, who's a very well known printmaker in Ottawa now. She's very passionate about art. And the other professors, they kept trying to clone me into making very academically formal abstract art. But it's not what I like to do. I like to work from ideas from poetry, from drawings, from observations. Anything that had to do with imagery they said was wrong. They wanted you to work totally abstractly--that's all changed now. Now it's acceptable--it was actually acceptable at that time to do what I was doing--but . . . because it's an institution, professors get shown. Jennifer Dickson came in as a visiting artist. I was really turned onto her as an artist because of her passion, and because of the fact that she was coming from the real world. She was a full-time artist, and she taught part-time at Concordia at that time. But she was able to teach and do her art--the other professors didn't seem to."
Printmaking

"It's just the medium that I love--right from the beginning. I just took really well to printmaking. And the hard part was, when you graduated, the professors don't prepare you for the real world. I thought that one way I could make a living and still do art was to go be a nanny, so I went to be a nanny in Boston. I worked four days a week and I still was drawing all the time. Then I worked three days in an experimental etching studio--three days of the week. I wasn't too happy, [because] I didn't have any independence--living with other people looking after their children.

I spent every summer when I was in University in Lake Louise hiking and I really liked mountains, and I worked in Whisky Jack Lodge as a waitress at night in the bar. I hiked all day and I knew I wanted to live in that kind of environment. I saw a slide show on Pangnirtung and Baffin Island. So I left and decided I wanted to go to Northern Canada. I went and got my teacher's degree--Toronto University [for] one year--I took music as a minor and art as a major. That was really a good year. The Music Department was really active--I was actually more active with the music. We made our own musical, I did all the sets, and I just really liked the collaboration of it. I actually ended up doing a lot of that in my teaching."

Going North

"I applied to go to Baffin Island. I went to apply for a job in the North and I said I definitely wanted to teach art, because I was interested in northern art, and especially the native people and their prints. So I thought it would be a way of teaching and still learning about different forms of printmaking. I thought I would enjoy teaching if I was always learning something new. And the school systems in the South didn't impress me, I thought it was very stifling and so I wanted to learn about another culture. But they wanted a music teacher, and I said but I'm really not a musician. I said I played cello and piano, and they wanted me to teach guitar. So they hired me and I had to go buy a guitar and take guitar lessons. So for the next three years all I did was music, I didn't make any art. We started off making plays and then realized we were making sets, and writing music. I was trying to learn more about music and teach the children more by ear than by notes. They obviously wanted to learn that way, and I was getting pressured to teach them by notes because the
Principal was a classical guitarist, and he wanted me to teach classical guitar. He would come into my class and correct hand positioning, and he was very authoritarian. So that's actually why I ended up leaving.

**Building a house**

"While I was in Iqaluit I built a house. If you're a single person in Iqaluit they put you in a high rise, an eight story high rise, it's totally alienated from the native community, and I thought the attitude of the native people was if you live in that building you're a transient. So I really didn't like it, so I built. I bought a shack by the beach and then I moved it onto a lot--it was a beautiful lot by the cemetery looking down on the bay, and I built a two-story addition, I mean it kept growing. It took me three years to build--I was going to put just a lean-to addition, and then I said 'no, I need a studio', so I ended up going up two stories. You could never tell I started from this--they're called 512's because they are 512 square feet--they are actually very sturdy."

Janice was in Iqaluit three years. "The reason I left was because of this principal. He was just too authoritarian, he made me feel like I was being watched all the time, and the whole reason I came to the North was to have some autonomy. . . . I really wanted to teach art, so this art job came up in Inuvik, so I sold my house which was heartbreaking. It was my first house. I flushed the toilet for the first time when I sold it--until then I had a honey bucket. I had to install a tank before the woman would buy it."

**Teaching in the Delta**

"So I came to Inuvik, and I missed my house, so I immediately began looking around here, and I bought another sort of unfinished house, and finished it. I wanted to teach printmaking, so I applied for grants and got a press, the etching press we use here, and so I taught a lot of printmaking techniques.

I really enjoyed working with the native students, in the East and the West. The art room is always a haven for them. I always felt that I was getting the students that didn't fit into the academic stream, and they felt very safe, because art is a part of their lives. They all have parents that carve or draw, and it is a different perception up here, that art usually means money. I was trying to grapple with that idea, because I wanted our program to be more self-sufficient. I did have an art auction--we did auction off the student's work. The
prints . . . looked professional, so people did want to buy them. We made a lot of money, but at the same time I was encouraging the marketing of their work before they were mature.

That bothered me, so I stopped doing that. I did it for two years, and then I stopped the art auction because I could see that a lot of the work that was selling was the typical northern scenes. And I was trying to challenge them more to have other more conceptual ideas, maybe they want to make a political statement, maybe think about themselves, so I preferred art to be more of a personal thing—self-discovery—rather than create pretty images to sell. At the same time I realized that a lot of these students would probably not go on to university, and I did give them something to do—to go back to their community—they could make a living.

Some of the student work here [at the Festival] is from some of the students that I had here, and I can see that they are doing that. So I never came to a comfortable conclusion on that, because, again I see a lot of work shown here is still the cute little images, and that they're not developing. They could learn more about other native groups. If I was to teach up here again, I would teach a lot more about different native groups, different symbols, . . . more about their native heritage and that they are related to other native groups and that it's a very rich heritage, and that they are very lucky to come from that, because they have a lot to draw from. It gives them pride, and also gives them purpose, and that's what children are missing.

I think art education up here is especially important, more so than in the South, because it's a way of teaching them about themselves. The southern school system is imposed up here—it bothered me right from the beginning. When I arrived in Iqaluit, [I] realized that this guy wanted me to teach classical guitar, and wasn't interested in that they maybe wanted to play country and western or whatever. He wasn't interested in their needs at all."

Drama

"I think the other important one is drama. I use drama a lot, because I saw that it was very important to draw from them--[from] their own resources. You can't do that with a math program, because there is a curriculum, and they are going on, or you have to assume that they are going to go on to university, so they need these tools. But with the arts there's complete freedom so you need a person up here who is very
interested in the culture and is very interested in what the children have to offer and where they come from. That's why I brought in a lot of artists, even before there was an 'artists in the schools' program. Bringing local community people or people who are successful as artists—like Abe Ruben came in for two weeks, his brother David came in for two weeks. It was really great for me because I would then learn, and I could see that the students just loved having this fresh person. Because they are more equipped to teach them about their culture than I am. That's what I was always running up against, that I really didn't know enough."

Making a choice—art making or teaching

"The reason I quit teaching was—I always said that I didn't want to be an art teacher that didn't make art. And I wasn't making art, so I felt I was sort of almost drying up. I was losing a sense of what I felt—because I was always using the students as my medium—I was losing touch with myself. I felt I was almost becoming a non-person. So it's taken me until now—my work keeps changing. People [were] criticizing me, 'what kind of work do you do? You keep changing it.' I had to try all these things again. Now I'm coming to terms with why I was attracted to aboriginal cultures, and how that relates to myself coming from a farm community.

So I had a lot of respect for the native way of living, in harmony with the environment. And I don't think that you have to be a native person to appreciate that. I hate to see the world divided into camps where they say this is a native issue, the environment is a native issue, that's ridiculous. We all have to be part of it, so my work is a sort of spiritual quest for myself, a matter of self-evaluation, who I am, finding out more about myself, and my values. . . . You just see so much art out there you just think, 'well, if I am going to create junk, I may as well not be doing it, I may as well be doing something else that makes a living. I may as well go back to teaching'. So I think if you're creating a work of art, I always question what it is I am saying, which is valuable for me.

I enjoy working with the [print] medium, it's very tactile. I think that's my strongest sense, the tactile sense. That's why I like etching because you're working with an object, it's very sculptural, I like what the acid does, you're working with a medium that does things on it's own. Sometimes you're just a medium allowing it
to do things. Same with lithography—I like it because it's very spontaneous, working on stone is a very sensuous object, and you can draw freely on it—you can splash washes, you can etch acid, there's just so many different techniques that you really get addicted to using them. I find I can't just go back to painting. So I think I'm definitely a printmaker, which is unusual. A lot of people start printmaking but very few people stay with printmaking. As soon as you're in a gallery they try to—they say, 'why don't you paint? There's more of a market for it. You can get more for it'. They say people want something that they call original, [but] as soon as they hear of a print they think of it as a duplicate. They don't understand the concept of an original print.

So I'm going more in the direction—I'm not going to edition, I'm making my own paper, I'm embossing, embossing on plywood, incorporating a print with that. I want to get more sculptural with my work, maybe even get into making installations, making objects out of paper, incorporating that with print, so that's the direction I'm going. That's the other reason I wanted to go to Montreal, because there's a big paper mill there, and I wanted to be around artists that are making art just for art's sake, not just to sell. After living in the North all this time, the only feedback I get on my work is 'how much is it?' I need other feedback--I'm interested in selling my work and being an artist for a living, but I want to have conceptual feedback on what I'm doing."

Janice taught in Inuvik for "four years. Well, I was teaching in the high school three years, and the fourth year, I applied to Economic Development, the Arts Council, and the Canada Council, and got grants, and called my project 'Assistance to Artists in Isolation', so I travelled to seven communities, so this money covered my travel, art materials, and so for a year I travelled seven communities. I was just travelling constantly--I had my portfolio and I would go and set up in the community." 

**Going to the People**

"It started off at the Arctic College, except in some communities Arctic College was right in the high school, and in Fort Norman I discovered the artists wouldn't go near the school. They had this thing--they didn't like the school. So I talked to the priest, and I actually set up in the rec room of the church. Then everybody came. So it was a way of going to the community and sort of feeling out the community and finding
one person that would introduce me to all the local artists. The second time around was always more comfortable, I knew what I was doing, and at Fort Franklin, I went back a lot because Helena Tucho there was fantastic. She's an English woman who's moved there, and she's been there 20 years married to a native man. So that taught me a lot about native art. I felt that there ought to be a lot more education and input going on. I could see that art would just degenerate into far more imitation of what they think people want--what they think will sell. If you get that frame of mind the quality of work will go right down very quickly. I think people are always looking for something different, something unique, that has some authenticity to it, some integrity in the work. It's a very difficult thing to teach integrity, it has to come from a person. I think the original artists that drew the images of their memories--their work is authentic to them. If you have another generation that's looking at [art] 'It will sell more if I make it this way, [or] I think it would look, or go better if ...' That's a very difficult issue--more to do with authenticity."

**Trying to find the right place, the right balance in life**

"I always found it difficult to be an artist in Inuvik, because of the isolation. I thought Whitehorse would be better, that there would be a stronger art community, and it would be beautiful. My husband and I went on a canoe trip to Kluane, and it was just too far from Inuvik, and it's so beautiful, we thought 'let's move here'. He had a meeting in Whitehorse, and I went and looked at houses, and I bought a house. We rented it for the year because I had the project to do, and John had his jobs, so we rented the house and planned on leaving in a year. I wanted to live in a community that I thought would be easier. As soon as I moved there, I realized that it was a mistake. I walked into a gallery and it's again, all the same sort of images for tourists. I was becoming very dissatisfied with that. It was actually even ruining the environment for me. If I see enough paintings of cute mountains I start to think of postcards. I start to look at the mountains in terms of postcards. Even the environment was losing its shine for me. And I felt I had to go away in order to see it fresh again."

Janice called Whitehorse home for "theoretically four years, but I was gone most of that time. I guess I wanted to see the world before I settled down. Part of it's just reaching thirty, and thinking 'oh my goodness. I'm not immortal, I want to see the world.' It's just that I got married, and at the time, it was bad timing. My husband
was—he was getting ready to settle down, so we were sort of on a different time clock. He was becoming more and more—that he wanted to settle down, and I wanted to see things.

Part of that is because I was making my own work, I was just craving new ideas. I just realized that I had been living in isolation, and I just wanted to be a sponge, and people are a great resource, and I needed to be around other artists. I'll always be interested in northern art, and just what is creativity, what is art?

Janice came to The Great Northern Arts Festival for several years. "This has been a great week, part of it is because I have been away, I think. It is going to be interesting to be in a totally different environment at school where it's art for art's sake. It's conceptual, it's totally different, I find that too extreme sometimes too. Then it's just making art for other artists, and I'm not interested in that, because I'm interested in communicating to people. So I need to be slightly more balanced.

I want to build a studio. It's always been my dream from the beginning, which is one of the reasons I was investing the money. Wanting to build a studio—to be a printmaker—-involves money, you need a studio, you need presses. Now I'm a papermaker, I need a beater, I need a big set-up. I don't like working in cities, I can always go to a city and use these facilities, because they are available in cities. There are printing studios in every city, but I'm not happy in cities, so I have to build my own. And I have to decide where. And then if it's in a nice location, other artists will come to me to work. So I think that will be ideal, where I can invite the artists that I want to work with. Rather than me travelling around, I can have them come to me."

Recent work

Janice comments about her recent work: "I started making hand-made paper—I was making the paper and putting the etching on top, because I didn't want to work with just the white piece of paper. That led to, instead of working on the paper's background, I made a background plate, to put the pictures on. So that's the direction I'm going. Now I'm working on 4 by 8 pieces of plywood and I'm gouging into the plywood, and putting the pulp on and pressing, as I go I press. I'm working with images, and I'm really conscious of it. I beat up rags—I was able to do each one of these in pulp, you make a base sheet, and lay your colored pulp on top.
Comparing the process of etching with the process of erosion, [you] see your culture, landscape to recreation, to water, and the parallel between the etching process and the erosion of life."

Other work is "a tongue and cheek parody of the bars and the macho lifestyle I experienced in the North. I had a lot of fun with these images, and since I love drawing, I'll always make these kind of things. It's part of my observations. This is making fun of the Americanisms, and its pervasion into our culture. I did some drawings of some ladies playing bingo... showing the unromantic side of life in the North. I think I divide my work into the realistic and the romantic, because the romantic does exist, but I think it's in the landscape, and this exists in the towns. These are my social commentaries. [Other] work... is realism, ...just starting with a sketch and then working it up so it comes, creating a mood, it's like a picture of my dog sleeping. I love doing that--I work with the tree image a lot, the work I'm doing now with the plywood that I'm gouging, it will probably end up being like the growth of trees, and the energy of trees. The poplars were very weathered--the trees in the North are often very tortured."

Janice now lives in Montreal, "getting my MFA at Concordia University. I have most recently moved from Whitehorse--I've been there since 1989. Before that I was in Inuvik from 1985 to 1989, before that I was in Iqaluit--it was Frobisher Bay at that time, I went up in 82 to 85. So people ask me where I'm from, I have a bit of difficulty."

Note: Since 1992 many changes have occurred in Janice's life: she became a mother in 1994, and she earned a Master of Fine Arts degree in Printmaking from Concordia University in Montreal. She is pursuing her Ph.D. while teaching, and she loves the philosophical part of academic life. Janice and her partner, Michael Campbell, also a master painter and printmaker, returned to Inuvik to work for six weeks in the Spring of 1995. They would like to return to the North sometime. I visited them at Easter time, 1996, while I was in Montreal.
SUE ROSE
Non-native painter, festival co-founder, graphic artist,
& former Holman Craft Shop manager.
Inuvik, NWT.

Fig. 34: Sue in 1994 at an exhibit of her work at Cafe Gallery in Inuvik. Her recent paintings combine acrylic paint with other materials, some traditionally used by Indigenous women. Here she stands beside an acrylic painting that includes porcupine quills, beads and thread.
SUE ROSE  
Inuvik, NWT

This is a summary of Sue's comments from an interview videotaped on August 1, 1992, in her business office, Rose Arts, in Inuvik, NWT.

Education

"I live in Inuvik in the NWT. I was actually born and raised west of Chicago. I think probably like a lot of other artists, I just always enjoyed it [art], and moved through the regular grade school and high school doing artwork. Then I moved into college, and took my major in artwork there. I enjoyed printmaking and majored in lithography as a major studio. I took my first three years of university at Illinois Wesleyan. Then a friend of mine said, 'look at this school, it sounds great', and it did. I took my last year at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design. It has an excellent printmaking department... In my last year, ... I actually had to do extra studio credits because NSCAD required more studio than my original college did. So I graduated from NSCAD."

Going North to Holman

"I met my husband at art school in Nova Scotia, and through friends we heard about a job in Holman. My husband asked me if I wanted to go live on an island in the Arctic. The Holman Eskimo Co-operative was looking for somebody to teach printmaking, lithography, and be the director of their print program. It didn't fall to me, it fell to my husband, John, and he was also a printmaker from NSCAD.... We went up there in 1976 in the Fall, and he walked into a shop that didn't even have the ink cans open yet. It was a brand new shop and people keen to learn, and wonderful artwork, it was really a tremendous experience for us."

Father Tardy & Holman history

"Now the Holman Co-op was established by Father Henri Tardy, with the people.... People used to bring him drawings as gifts, and he began to see the potential and the beauty in these things. And sort of hand
in hand, he very gently encouraged the development of this, really trying not to intrude or make any changes, or influence as to how people did things and such. I don’t know [how] Father Tardy, . . . got the idea to start the prints. They . . . started out with stonecut prints, after that they incorporated stencil, then they bought the litho press.

He also encouraged the marketing and the promotion of these. And different products they could try doing. I’m sure he’s full of lots and lots of stories, and the man should really write a big book. He left a year or two after us and lives in Washington State now I think. So their first print collection was I think maybe in 1965."

The Holman community

"There were only maybe 300 souls, so I think a lot of the health of Holman was that people had meaningful work. At the time we lived there, the seal industry was going fine, the fox industry was going fine, so the men had meaningful work that brought [a] significant wage. There were certainly wage-earners in the community, that did construction, drove machinery, drove trucks, fuel delivery, but the co-op paid a lot of salaries.

It was work that people enjoyed, it was getting together as a social group, [it] had a rhythm to it. The plane would come in twice a week and everyone would all go out and meet it because it landed right in the middle of town. There were festivals during the year that had a good community spirit. . . . Of all the places we could have landed in the Arctic, it was one of the nicest places, we could ever have gone, I think. Just because of good luck, if it hadn’t have been for the development of the co-op, the print collection, and all that, it wouldn’t have been as economically healthy, and maybe there would have been more hardships."

Co-ops in the North

"We came in 1976, so ten years they [the Holman Co-op] were well established, and were one of the major printmaking co-ops in the North. There would be Holman, Pang[nirtung], Cape Dorset, Povungnirtuk and Baker Lake. I think he [Father Tardy] taught them printmaking, but I’m not sure how he came about the
idea. There's some small competition about when James Houston started in Iqaluit, or in Cape Dorset. It's . . .
my understanding that Holman came by it independently, but just about the same time."

Managing the Craft Shop

"Shortly after we got there, three or four months, the woman who was running the craft shop had just
had a child, and she didn't feel like doing it full time anymore, and she asked me if I'd want to do that. So I
managed the craft shop in Holman from 1976 to 1980 when I had my first child. When I came, the craft shop
was already a going concern. It was doing fine, . . . the shop employed about 15 to 20 women in the shop
itself . . . . What we did in the craft shop, we silkscreened on fabric.

In Holman, artists would submit drawings to the co-op for purchase. . . . Holman collected--I'm not
sure what the total number of drawings is in the collection--but it's a huge collection of drawings that date
back to the early sixties. We would go over and pull from the drawing collections designs and drawings to be
used on fabric products like tablecloths, wall hangings, napkins. And we'd always make sure to check with the
print director that these had never been used in the print collection, and weren't likely to ever be used in the
print collection."

Work for women

"So it was steady work for 15 or 20 women all through the winter, and as much people as wanted to
work in the summer. But of course, people didn't really care to work in the summer. It was all women because
the men were either employed as hunters and trappers, or they were employed with work like construction
work, or maintaining heavy machinery in the town. I wouldn't say that a man would have been refused . . .
work at the co-op, it just wasn't like that. It was just like where the ladies worked. It wasn't work that would
appeal to them. There is other work in the town that was shared. There were male and female carvers, both
well-respected, male and female artists who did graphic work, and printmakers, and also jobs like janitorial at
the school. But just in the same way that it would be unusual to find a woman driving a cat, it would be
unusual to find a man sewing tablecloths in the craft shop."
Sharing work in the co-op

"In house, ... first we would take the original drawing and prepare it to be used in silkscreening. So we'd make all the screens, cut the film to be adhered to the screens, and I didn't do this, but these women knew how to do this and very well, too. Of course, I'd had some in school too, so I was okay with that, I knew what they were doing. The work would be printed, then the work would be taken, if it was a tablecloth, and sewn around the edges, and the hem would be fringed. Then the work would be folded, kept in inventory, orders would be pulled, people would pack them, and they would be shipped. It was a complete -- I really hate to refer to it as a factory because it was not like a factory at all. It was a co-operative work place.

Quite often they would rotate jobs. Some people would cut fabric, because it would have to be precut for napkins or placements or tablecloths, or aprons or whatever. You might cut this week, you might fringe next week, you might sew after that. But there were some jobs, like the person who seemed to know the most about the silk-screening, it was never like 'she's the boss' it was like 'she's the most knowledgable person', so we'd refer to her. So, she would keep sort of the print schedule. She'd say 'Well, this week we're gonna do tablecloths, next week we're gonna do aprons.' So my job was really -- that was what we did in the shop."

Buying work from the community

"Also we took in a lot of cottage sewing from, it seemed like, every pair of hands in the community. . . We took in a lot of work that was sewing with sealskin, clothing, artwork like tapestries, or little funny stuffed animals that you can buy, little toys. So we took in all that from the community and we would purchase that. Also we bought raw furs also, so I knew a lot of the men because of that. They would bring fox furs, wolverine, seals, and that was the most of it, and we would purchase those and send them out to be tanned and get them back. I would be hiring and firing, I would be managing the budget, purchasing supplies, marketing new products, handling tourists that would come in, although it wasn't very often because you had to fly into Holman. So occasionally, more in the summer, we'd get people who'd come in and want to buy at the craft shop, so we had a retail area. It was mostly wholesale with some retail."
Choosing designs

"I remember usually going over [the designs] with someone. We would look through the drawings, and try and find some designs that we thought were pleasing. I'm sure I had my opinion about what I thought would work well as a design. Say you have a tablecloth that you're going to print. And the way the design is usually put on, it is mirrored in the middle. So you have the design this way and then you reflect it the other way. Now, for sure there are some drawings or shapes that will work better in that than others. Also a lot of the drawings were just pencil lines, there was no indication of where to fill them in... with a full black or to leave white. We would make that sort of decision. I don't remember really doing it by myself. I remember doing it with other people. We would talk about 'well what do you think would look best?' "

Learning from each other

"It was such a pleasant place to work. It was my first experience managing people, I'd never done anything like that before. I learned more from those ladies, but then I had things to offer too. Mostly to do with dealing with people from South, and things like bookwork, which they hadn't learned yet. But they were very quick to learn, keen to learn, happy to learn, and had lots of new ideas to bring to things. When you work with them you feel very much on a peer level. This is not, somebody down there, it's somebody you respect for their skills, and they respect you for your skills. I really enjoyed working there."

Major artists emerge

"Agnes Nanogak [Tales from the Igloo] was one of the core artists in Holman, she did drawings for years and years. I don't remember Nanogak ever working in the craft shop. She did drawings, she may have even done some printmaking at times. Elsie [Klengenberg], I think I remember her working in the craft shop, but she was doing her own drawings, and after a time, then she moved over to the art shop as a stencil printmaker, and has worked there since. Mabel Nigiyok also worked there for years and years in the craft shop, and she also moved over. My husband John didn't say 'Will you come and learn to do stencil printmaking?' Some of the other printmakers would say 'I need some help', or 'so and so would like to learn'."
And it would just be . . . informal, 'Mabel's going to come over and I'm going to show her how to do stencil printmaking' and my husband would say 'fine'.

There were two different buildings. The craft and silk screen shop was in one building, and the art shop was a newer building, it had the co-op office, and the print area with the litho press, the big chubb safes with all the drawings, fireproof safes, and about three stations for stencil printmakers and stonecut printmakers. And when we were there they hadn't started as yet with woodcut printmaking. That came after.

We stayed until 1984, my husband was print director for almost eight years. After I had my first boy, I offered to keep on part time, I knew I wouldn't want to do it full time, but they thought they could carry on themselves, and they did fine. Probably a couple of the ladies took on what I did and worked with the co-op. There was a general manager of the co-op because they also had a hotel, and a hardware store, and did contracts like fuel delivery, so it was a large operation. Probably the ladies worked with him to develop budgets and just carry on and they did just fine."

Archives: cataloging the collection

"It hadn't been begun before we got there. It was a project, I didn't do it all by myself, certainly, I did some of the work. Some of the 'write the number on the drawing' and file it. I believe that was a project that was funded to catalogue the collection properly, because it was getting so huge, and it was certainly a joy. I can remember going back with Charlene [Alexander], when we were going to have a special exhibit of original drawings from the Holman Co-op at the Festival, the first or second year. Anyway we took a trip over to meet with the manager of the Co-op, to go through the drawings, and select a good representation, and Oh God. It was just great to see them again. I don't know, what a wonderful feeling, it's a tremendous [feeling] . . . it's like holding a history of a civilization in your hands."

History in drawings

"So much of the drawings is storytelling you know. If it's not really storytelling, it's representational of like feelings. It's not just 'a man hunts a bear', and you've got a photograph of it. You've got how he felt, and what happened--the happening of the event. So it's like participating in an archeological project. Kind of a
feeling of civilization and culture. And... you really begin to understand... [the] role [of] artwork, and what artists do. Not just the people who draw, but creative people. How much of a role creative people have in civilization, and the advance of civilization. That which is our society. To have it... in a tangible form, and to be turning the pages of people's lives, it was incredible. A lot of what I experienced in Holman I consider such a gift to me personally, I would certainly not be the same person as I am today without the people that I lived with there."

Artwork to market

"We had a big client list of galleries and shops that we dealt with, and then also we sent large orders to Canadian Arctic Producers for distribution farther South. We dealt... mostly with communities down by the border. We had northern Canada, some shops we dealt with directly, and some shops they would deal for us. It was a funny system but that's the way it worked."

Market-driven artwork in the North

"A lot of native artists seem to be caught up in the market. But who's to blame them... It's been market focussed. It's been, in a lot of cases, a medium of exchange. I'm speaking solely from my own experience, and what I know, which is a little bit about how it's been for other communities also. In Holman we had a core of people who were really artists. I would say that the greater portion of them are really artists. I don't know how it is in larger communities, as Cape Dorset, or Pangnirtung, where they have much larger artist bases. I know that a lot of people in the North can learn the skills of printmaking, carving and drawing. We're in a very funny transitional stage now, that has been going on for a number of years."

Changing society

"Of course, the whole society is changing. A lot of the arts are being affected because the market is changing. The people who buy are changing. The work that is being brought to the market is changing, and the society underneath is changing. The society underneath is not what it was, nobody can dispute that. Individuals now, who are my age, say between 30 and 40, [are] people who were born in igloos and grew up in
tents. For maybe the first 12 years of their lives. That way is gone now. Their children did not grow up in that environment. Their children probably have had travelling experiences, camping experiences, storytelling experiences, but it's not the part of their lives and the society that it was."

**Drawing on new experience**

"So the experiences that they have to draw on for their artwork are just simply not the same. So when you take those new experiences, like the famous print with the airplane that Parr did in Cape Dorset, 'Here is a new thing, here is Eskimo artwork with a new technology in it.' You have drawings by Kalvak in Holman, who is part of the old old way, the man is standing there with a rifle. The market doesn't know what to make of this stuff. People who buy—you have to know what they are thinking of. Are they buying to invest, are they buying because they want 'primitive' work? The market is not buying the product of a living changing artistic community, ... I don't think."

**Art patrons**

"Now . . . just as on the one side you have real artists, you . . . have real appreciators of that art. Those are the people who will buy a carving of a man who is using a rifle to shoot a bear, instead of a bow. They will buy something that depicts a modern day drum dance instead of a drum dance where the man is stripped to the waist and he's wearing seal pants and mukluks. They would buy, see the value in the work of people who are contemporary. And it must be a frustration for the artists, once they realize it's happening, that many of the people who are in the market, are not interested in work that is contemporary."

**The artist's dilemma**

"So what we have are artists that are market driven, and yet bound by a market that will not allow them to do their own work. They want them to do the work that they did [earlier], that reflects life long ago. Some artists are comfortable with that. They will do prints of stories that their parents told them, not from their own experience. Granted, a lot of the art and culture comes from myth and storytelling, and these things don't really change with the change of society. The old legends are the old legends."
I saw a very powerful print by a printmaker in Holman, Mary O'kheena, and this is a number of years ago. Mary's really one of those people that developed as an artist. She started out working in the craft shop. She moved over to learn stencil printmaking. Her parents were printmakers and artists, her father. She did a print of a woman and a child that were starving. It was grey, and it was sad, it was full of sharp things, the woman's hair was ragged, her clothes were ragged, but it was sharp like claws. It was painful. I'm interested to see what the sales were on that print. That's another story about marketability."

The Eskimo Arts Council

"I remember in Holman, occasionally prints would not be accepted by the Eskimo Arts Council and we felt it was because of saleability, but that was something else again. It's an agency of the Federal Government, all the co-ops had to send copies to them for approval. Don't come to me for the history of the Eskimo Arts Council because I don't know it, but I know that when we were working in Holman, it was already a well-established fact, the government had appointed this body that would, in essence, review work—proofs.

The co-op would produce proofs of the print collection, all would go down to the Eskimo Arts Council, and they would sit and they would judge these works, review these works. I don't know the word they use, and they would say 'these are approved to be published' and 'these are rejected'.

The year we arrived, in 1976, they had rejected a proof of a print of a woman, with a dead seal in front of her, and she had opened the seal and she was pulling out the intestines. And you had loops of intestines going around her. And this was rejected by the arts council. Now give me one reason. . . . What right did they have to judge the works that were chosen by the artists and by the print program director? It seems ludicrous now when you look back on it. It would have been anything but saleability, it could have been poor design. But people in the arts council stood up and said 'our purpose is not to outline marketability, we are not concerned with saleability, but they certainly--we certainly felt they were. I think that's part of the reason that years later, Cape Dorset was the first to break away and form its own marketing agency."
Canadian Arctic Producers

"Canadian Arctic Producers would not sell the collection unless it had the 'chop' [of] the Eskimo Arts Council . . . A chop is like a seal that a company has, it creates an emboss mark. All the work [had to be approved]; they would reject some, and approve some. The approved ones would come back and get printed, all 50 of each, and they would be shipped to the Eskimo Arts Council for their chop. It would be next to the co-op chop, then the whole collection would then go to Canadian Arctic Producers which would distribute it for the co-op. Some would come back to the co-op to be sold out of the community. But the majority of them would be sold by C.A.P.

At the time I think they had the best interests of the people in the North [in mind], when Canadian Arctic Producers was established, when the Eskimo Arts Council was established. They were established to ensure that a level of quality was maintained, that would ensure the continued success of the arts of the North. Also the saleability and marketability of the arts of the North. I'm sure the Federal Government was concerned that there was a good thing going, and they didn't want to see it diluted."

Changes

"Now the whole market structure has changed drastically. Cape Dorset pulled away, and established an office in Toronto to market their own work. Then one by one [other co-ops] have followed suit. There have been tragedies that forced changes. The destruction of the drawing collection in Pangnirtung, a fire in one community that destroyed their drawing collection. There was a fire in another community that destroyed the print shop. There was a fire in Holman that destroyed the craft shop--about a year after we left. I know it was the furnace. It had a crack in it that you could see through. We used to step over a hose in the back room that was the fuel line to the furnace. So these are terrible tragedies for the communities, because where are the dollars to rebuild? I don't think they carried insurance."

Inuvik

"We've lived here since 1986. When I first came here I was working as an artist, doing my own work. From there I moved to working with The Great Northern Arts Festival, and from there I moved to establishing
my own business as a graphic designer. I work in that now and have for almost three years now. So my work has certainly changed over that time--my own artwork. And I think I've certainly changed as a person too, with all the experiences that you go through."

**Artistic development**

"I did lithography in school, but after I left school, of course you don't have the print shop anymore. So I guess, when you're young as an artist, I wish like everybody else in the world, that I knew then what I know now. And that I were standing in a print shop with time to waste. You don't see your work, in the beginning. To me you just see your work as things you enjoy that come out of your hands. I don't really think that I looked at it in a spiritual way, as a personal expression. I may have with my mind, but I do so more now. My artwork is more a part of me now than it was then.

After I left college, I continued to do drawings with colored pencils, and now that I look back on them, I see them as lithographs without the press, because it gives you the same texture of the stone. It always appealed to me--the texture of the stone, shapes and colors. Then I took up calligraphy for awhile, and got really involved in that. It was a long time--I was still doing calligraphy when we came to Inuvik in 1986. And it was awhile before I felt comfortable doing artwork that didn't have a quote on it. Finally I let it go, and I was doing color pencil drawings again, different though, and then I moved into painting."

**Criticism**

"So, I guess, for my own work, I am not pleased with it. In fact, when I get to a point, I find it very obstructive when people tell you how much they like your artwork. That is one of the greatest obstacles that an artist has to learn to live with. Galleries and individuals coming to you and they like your work, and they want your work, and on a certain level any artist has to learn to live with that. Because if you listen to that too much, you begin to do your work over and over again. You begin to reproduce your own work. It may be a different scene, or you think you are developing. But you are really producing what those people who come to you want to see. Because you think that's what you want to do."
Northern art

"I think a lot of northern artists are caught up in that, to their own detriment. They are caught up in, primarily, working for the market. Working to please the people who buy their work... In the midst of that, you have some very unique individuals who are not affected by, and have never been affected by, or they grew out of this, other people's praise or blame. Other people's praise or criticism has not affected them, they have gone on. And I don't know where it comes within them, but they are really artists. They are really--artists. They are also probably uncomfortable with people who make comments about their work.

Sometimes the praise or the criticism, either way, is--you see your work then, not through your own eyes, but through that person's eyes. I'm sure other artists... feel that way also... I think everybody ought to drop out and not exhibit or sell their work for awhile. We should all just take a break. We should let those mature artists who've gotten over it, have the shows and carry the ball for awhile."

Looking within

"We should all climb back into ourselves, and find what it is inside that made us think that we wanted to do this to begin with. Why do I want to do this? And more properly, why do I have to do this to be happy? If I don't have to do this to be happy, why am I doing it? That's fine too. I think every human has a creative part of them and they express it in different ways. But I think that properly speaking, there are a few people who have to do it in order to be well. Other people can do it to enjoy themselves, but it's those individuals that we should really cherish, and have near us, who have to do it because it's something that is coming out of them, that will not be put under a bushel."

Mature artists

"It's those people, ... who are the most calm about their work, the most humble about their work, the most open and quick to share, and loving to teach. Maybe that's not true of all artists, but it's certainly true of a lot of the artists I've met that seem to me to be mature people. They would never hesitate to tell you how they came by a certain effect in their work, although I have met people who didn't want to tell me. I say 'how
do you get that soft background?' and they say, 'well it's a technique that I've developed.' I think 'Thank you for sharing that with me, I hope ten years from now you're not the same'. I don't know.

There's so much going on across [the Arctic], I can talk to Andrew Karpik for a few minutes at the Festival about how things are going in Pangnirtung, but it's certainly not like living there and working with the people. I lived and worked in Holman, so that's the most of my experience. Everything else I know, I know through reading a few articles, or talking to people. My husband certainly knows much more about the print programs in different communities. But these are things I've learned because I was interested to know them. So I feel like my knowledge is certainly on a superficial level. What it's brought to me as a person, it certainly makes me feel a part of, in a basic sense, a part of other people's lives, and what's going on in different places."

Opportunities to learn

"I don't think you could call it, 'northern art', it's part of a process, ... part of a changing culture. As overworked as that sounds--it really is. I think we really have to make an effort to see it with clear eyes all the time. I know a lot of the artists do. I know people love to see other people's work, they love to learn new things and try them out at home. I think the Arts Festival is one of the best opportunities for that sort of thing, if the only. Individual artists may go out South for shows, or the gallery may invite them to come to the opening, or they may go to something like Expo, or they may sit on councils. A lot of the more experienced artists have opportunities like this. But certainly the young artists don't. I remember my husband, when he would go out for the [Co-op] review of the proofs, he would always take one of the printers with him. So they could see and they could know. But for myself personally, it has been a tremendously fulfilling, worthwhile thing to be connected to, and help with, and to try to be one of those people that fosters the development of. There's lots of people that are."

Giving back

"Every individual has things that they are good at, either innately or that they've learned. I think it's part of the responsibility of every person to give back. To contribute in any way that they can. It's everybody's responsibility to offer whatever they have for the benefit and development of the greater community. And if
you do, you learn, and you gain much more back in the process of doing that. If you don't do it, you're not really a fully functioning individual. You're sort of 'hoeing your own row', and you become sort of ingrown and I don't think people develop as well as if they had learned that a part of living is giving back."

A sense of community

"I am sure that in the greater part it's something that I learned from them [in Holman]. Not only art, but as I say, any skill that a person has. So if you are a good negotiator . . . if you are a good leader, if you are a good hunter. If you are a good mother. If you are a good—anything. [In] everything . . . we are together. I can remember the most tangible way you can see this in action—people and children in the community. It's my experience in Holman.

Fig. 35: One of Sue's earlier acrylic paintings of an elder and child in Holman.

What a gift. My kids were raised in Holman, and my son was four when we left and my little one was one. But I would lose him. I would be in the store, and someone would let him out the front door. I would go looking for him, and be standing on the steps of the Bay store. Somebody would drive up with him on the skidoo. 'I found Duncan he was over there.' It would just not enter their mind, not to pick him up and bring him to me and find me. To drop whatever they were doing and bring my child to me.

Funny stories too, I remember the time when, we used to get the barge in every summer, and so I would be busy off-loading the year's supply for the co-op for the craft shop, and ticking things off on a list, and my boy Duncan
would be running around—maybe three. And you don't worry about them. You worry that they're safe, but you don't perceive anything they are going to get hurt with. No dog is going to bite them, they're not going to fall off a cliff or anything. . . . Somebody came up to tell me that they saw Duncan lying on his stomach, licking sugar from a broken bag! From the co-op stores. And they just thought I should know this.

Everybody minded, took care of, everybody was a part of everybody [else]. You realized that you were a part of somebody's family. You would feel it in different ways. They would come and bring you something, or they would ask John to go out hunting with them. . . . That was, to a person from out away, it's one of the greatest gifts that can be brought to you is that you are, not just like they like having you around, but they actually take you in. They were so easy to do that in Holman."

The sum of experience

"I think that a person who does artwork can't help but be the sum of their experiences. So anything that comes out of me, hopefully, if I'm being honest with myself, is a part of my experience as all my life experiences, including becoming a Bahai when I was in College. That certainly had a big effect on me, and all my experiences living in the North, my experiences out South. All these things are wrapped up in me. So you're sitting in front of a work and you're thinking, 'Well, what shall I do?' I think one of the things that I enjoy most is actually a piece of writing, when Hemingway said when he sat down to write, he would begin with the truest thing he knew."

Getting to know yourself

"And so, I think that I have, in the process of growing as a person, I think I felt for a long time that I didn't know my true self. In the sense that when I came to a canvas or came to a drawing, and you think to yourself, 'what shall I draw?' Really, what I enjoy most is the doing, the painting. It may even be the color and the paint and the shapes. And it wouldn't even matter, I sometimes wonder if I should just do abstract stuff and give up right? But for a long time, in the work that you see here, I did stuff that was around me because I felt that was what I should be doing.
The artist's view

"You have to keep your eyes open all the time, and you have to recognize what strikes you. And then you have to sit and you have to think about it. What is it about this scene, this quality of light, these colors, or lack of them, or this feeling. What is it that has made me go 'Oh, God, there's something there. That is something.' That is something like Monet painting the same scene over and over again, the haystack out his front door. It wasn't the haystack at all, it was the light, that . . . he was just overwhelmed by. The quality of the light. Andrew Wyeth said, talking about a painting that had a basket, 'I was interested in the quality of the light, the quality of the air in the basket.' What are you talking about?

So it has been an obstacle for me to sit and decide what to paint, what to do. I'm sort of stuck in a place where . . . the work is changing so drastically, because I will not allow myself anymore to find a scene that I find interesting, and paint it just for the sake of painting. To me now, I won't allow myself to do that anymore. It seems like the easy way. Although I enjoyed painting these paintings. I enjoy them still, I couldn't paint them again. I couldn't paint anything like them again. They're just, I feel differently now.

I remember taking a photograph of walking down the street in Inuvik, there was a mustard color building, a row of them, [and the] perspective going down the hill, and coming up the hill was a railing that was yellow, and the whole thing was in the sun, . . .the way that it shone in the sun. And I thought 'I'm gonna take a picture of that because it strikes me.' Maybe I should just take a break for a year and take pictures of things that strike me, and maybe then I'll figure out where I am. It's sort of like, once you try to pin it down it's gone.

It's not good enough to paint just because you enjoy painting. I find people's work vacuous . . . when there's nothing behind it. There's no gut to it. There's no feeling that 'I had to do this, I had to get this out.' It's vacuous, it's empty, it's almost like a fraud. If artists get stuck in that sort of a level--that's why people enjoy being around other artists. [They say] 'I want to go out for school', 'we want to have artists come in and give a workshop'. Because it's exhilarating, you get sort of shaken up."
Experience and place

"It's kind of a drawback being a 'northern artist'. Being someone from South who's doing artwork in the North now. Because if you get hooked by the market you'd be lost. As many northern artists are. You don't develop properly as an artist. You cannot deny the fact that you have not been born and raised here. That you have had other experiences. You cannot tie your artwork only to this place. If you do, without realizing it, you're going to stymie your own development. In a way, unless I exhibit my work in the South, which I'm not particularly attracted to doing. Just putting your work in a gallery contributes to the whole marketing--the obstacle of marketing your work. What a drag, you're in the middle of a painting, and you're thinking about where you're going to show it, who you're going to show it to, and what kind of a price you're going to put on it. I have [done that]."

Graphic art business

"My graphic [business] is totally different. The posters--I enjoy doing them much in the same way that I enjoy putting a puzzle together. It's creative on a certain level, it's sort of like putting a puzzle together because you have so many different considerations. You have the budget of the customer, you have the wishes of the customer, you have your own sort of skills that you bring to it, and you put them together until you reach a point where you produce something that the customer's pleased with and you are pleased with. Most of the time you would like to have the freedom to have the customer say, 'this is the budget, whatever you do I'll be thrilled to death.' That would be the best, but most of the time it's not like that. You want to come up with something that you like, that is going to thrill the customer, and serves their purpose.

In a sort of a way it's a funny thing because I think I'm the sort of a person who likes to deal with other people and be helpful to other people. So I found myself establishing a company that does that with artwork. They are very different. I guess, the only drawback is when you take on full-time work, no matter what it is, it saps some of your energy. And if that work takes some of your creative juices out of you, I think it really does exist--the creative pressure that builds up. It's easier to put your own artwork aside. That was something that
at the beginning I promised myself I wouldn't do. But of course I did. My accountant said that to me, 'You'll have deadlines Sue.' And I have, but we're now entering our third year.

I know if I don't paint— I might have done a half-dozen works over the last year, nothing I would really want to show anybody. They are just fooling around, trying to figure out what's in there. I have to. I just got to the point where I could not do what I have been doing. It doesn't satisfy me."

Note: Sue and Charlene Alexander together founded the first Great Northern Arts Festival in 1989. Sue then served on the Festival Board and became more involved in her business. In 1993 Sue began combining acrylic paint with other materials from 'traditional crafts', such as beads, quills, threads, and canvas in an abstract way. Sue exhibited some of her new work at the 1993 Festival and many visitors were excited by it. Other people said "This work doesn't belong in the Festival, it's not Northern." Sue taught a workshop on prints, and said she was pleased for the first time to participate in the Festival as an artist.

In 1994 and 1995 Sue had several exhibits of her newest work at Cafe Gallery, and with a photographer in her house. Her new works are entirely abstract explorations of color, texture and mixed media materials. Sue represented the Delta region on the NWT Arts Council for several years. Sue's company, Rose Arts, continued to thrive. In 1995 Sue did the pricing and inventory at the Festival. She taught drawing and painting to the Fine Arts Students at Aurora College in 1995-96. In 1997 Sue's husband was transferred to Yellowknife so the family moved there, and she will have a wider audience for her artwork.
BERTHA RUBEN
Inuvialuit traditional seamstress, applique artist, & land agreement negotiator.
Paulatuk, NWT

BERTHA RUBEN
Paulatuk, NWT

This is a summary of Bertha's comments in her own words, from an interview videotaped July 23, 1993 at The Great Northern Arts Festival, Inuvik, NWT. Bertha and her husband Billy Ruben are the parents of several famous artist sons including Abe Anghik Ruben (sculptor, living in B.C.), David Piktoukan Ruben (sculptor/painter living in Toronto), and Francis Ruben of Paulatuk. She was one of the elders chosen to negotiate the Inuvialuit Final Agreement, signed in 1994. We were talking in English, not her first language.

Childhood and residential school

I'm Bertha Ruben from Paulatuk. I know my mother sew lots, but I didn't stay with her too long. I was about six years old [when] I went to school in Aklavik. My parents lived in Paulatuk, they were not around, I was there with the nuns. We sew, we do lots of mending in the school that time, cause you know... it was RC mission, so we do lots of mending and we have to take care of our clothing and anything that is torn we have to mend the hole. You know that time we don't waste time, when we got nothing to do we always sit at the table and do some kind of sewing, and make some flowers, make some drawing. I learned how to do my stitches, I never forget the stitches. Knitting sometimes, and a little crochet, and sewing. We do lots of sewing patching holes and such.

We do lots of work in the school, we're busy always. We do clean up and do washing and do kitchen and sweep the whole hostel and its different not like now. Now... the hostel is different... we did all the cleaning and everything up in Aklavik.

And we had to pick up woods too, and the barge, when they cut up wood we had to go down to the river and load up the big barge with logs--winter wood. Not like now. When the kids come from school now they don't have stories to tell. We used to go to picnic washing because we have our own camp, log cabin, on the lake up past cape and make doughnuts and make our own places in the camp, just to have picnic. It's just
nice there. I always think it's nicer than home. It's nothing for them to say, it's so nice. We all learn to do something else.

There's lots of sisters there, different sisters every time. I know a sister Leduc who worked in the kitchen, but there's another one. She was a teacher. I know lots of girls who took from her, lots of sewing. I don't know that name [Beatrice], I just know another sister who worked in the kitchen [named] Leduc. Later maybe she was a teacher, because I was in school earlier. My first girl, Effie, she went to school in Aklavik. My girls were in school and my boys were in school, like Abraham and David, and Travis, but not in Aklavik, they built up this other one. They did learn us to do drawing, but not like now. Now the kids are . . . oh they hate drawing because they just copy when they go to school."

Learning traditional skills at home

"When I go home my mother has different sewing—like leggings and parkys and mitts—they're different, they're sealskin, waterproof sealskin. 1940's we don't have water boots, we make sealskin shoes for water, we have water boots with sealskin top, we have that kind of shoes always. There's lots of things to sew that time. We had to scrape the skins, caribou and sealskins, make it soft for parkys. But I didn't learn from my mum, I was young that time, 13 [or] 14 years old, when my mom died. She lived only one year with me, and she died."

A wife at fourteen

"So my dad gave us to be married—14 years old—and we weren't allowed to stay . . . man and woman. My dad can't do nothing after that, but we had to be a wife, and my brother to be a husband. And I learned more from my mother-in-law, Billy's mum. And she make me work those [hides], tell me to scrape them. Her, she do the sewing—caribou legs too—I scrape them for shoes. . . . We don't throw away things, we have to save everything—keep little pieces for patching, not like now, nobody uses those kind of clothes at home now."
Learning to Sew

"How I started sewing, when I first married, I did sewing just for clothing and us for using. We never make arts and crafts that time, in the 1940's and 50's." Bertha made many pairs of kamiks. "Hundreds, what we learned on. My mother in law learned us on sewing those lots, we did doing lots of braiding too, for parka trimmings. It was long ago before the 'delta braid'. They used to have them strips, it's about this narrow? All the color of that --they used to make parkas for dance, for drum dance. My mom had that kind, little narrow strips she used to make trimmings for parkas. Real nice, lot of colors to make that parka."

Old and new designs

"Some people make different designs with caribou skins, white skin and black skin from caribou, they didn't have rat skin or cowhide, or something that time, you know the caribou hide on the belly is white, and the hide is black, all the caribou, all the trimming. Right now in July they're white, and they take caribou for parky, end of July when it's kind of thin. For parky you can make inside parky and outside parky, different kind but fur on top of fur. And they're warm. Now they're just always using down parkas, and down pants, and they just use homemade parkas and homemade shoes."

Making things to order--Inuvialuit shoes

"People ask 'could you make this for me and I'll buy it?', 'make this kind of wall hanger', or shoes or moccasins or mitts, and 'we'll buy', or seal parky or ? When they ask for something I make it, if they ask for slippers I make little slippers, the sort of slippers like Inuvialuit slippers. Different, they called 'Palayluk', it means nothing on the top of the shoes-- just the bottom. Just like this--the kind of shoes that we have, just a little fur, no top, nothing else, we call the shoes 'palayluk'. It's not mocassins, different.

And then we have other kind of shoes too, we call them 'kauwak'. They're the ones that have flowers on the top, and the men's are long, we call them 'sivualik', right from the top down to the bottom they have flowers on, and wolverine hanging. Men's shoes--from the front, there's flowers, but the sides have wolverine hangings, and the top has flowers, men's have long legs that go close to their knees. Women's, us too, we have
flowers that go around, but they're shorter than men's shoes, We call them 'sauwak', and 'sivualik'. All the men's shoes we call them 'kamiks'."

Influences—new materials and techniques

"So later on . . . it was in Paulatuk, 1956 [or] 57, we finally started something, thinking of something like we knew people liked. The Father was making us to sew--do some project--make us sew some wall hangers, mitts and . . . . He give us a place to sew, the Father's house, we sew upstairs --it was a project, anyway. It was a hard labor to us to make us do that. Even we were already making yarn from muskox. She was teaching us to weave the muskox--she was a weaver that woman. She brought her little [spinning wheel] --it's not electric but, it's easy, you press it in your hand and we roll our yarn same time. That's what she was doing. Since then we don't have another one. We make little rolls with yarn from that, it was cute that time. It was real nice, but we don't knit, so it was sold--they bring it out and it was sold."

Making work to sell

"The first wall hanger I made was a sealskin. We was on the dew line in the fifties. . . . This guy was in the Air Force and he asked me to do a sealskin rug, but they're not shiny like a seal pup. Lots of times the seals are rough, they're not too good when they're rough--just yellow. So I made a big rug for him, with the Inuvialuit village and the dew line up top of it. I put that big one, walrus. I made that for him, I don't know how much he pay for it--I never think about money--how much he gave me.

Since then I start sewing with sealskin. So Father, the priest we have now in Paulatuk, he tell us all you women would like to have sealskin, and it turned out we did that. We made a big doll first . . . he pay us for a couple, he paid us $12 each for dolls out of sealskin. We made a doll, they were pitiful yeah, out of sealskin. So we went that way. He help us to make extra money. We make it by pieces and then we started to buy sealskin, and they started to tan the sealskin. It was easy for us to make some souvenirs with that--doll parkas and wall hangers, we use the sealskin for designs on the wall hangers, and since then we never stop.

It seems there since 1957 or 58 we start to do that. Later we find out from arts and crafts in Inuvik, it was right in the Semmler Building, [they] say we could make little souvenirs and some women say it's not hard
to make them. From there we started and then we keep on like that and come up to the Northern Games in
the Western Arctic. So these guys tell us to do some work like, kind of all the Inuit using, so we made shoes
and mitts and parkys, ookpik, and there's many ookpiks out there, and many dolls, and we ended up with some
wolf mitts, and caribou shoes, sewing. We started that time it was really cheap though, but even that we sell
them."

Traditional themes in her artwork

"We don't ask for designs from people, we think ourselves how we--what kind of world we have in the
North--you know we go out hunting and . . . camping, stay in a camp and snowhouse. I never made a design
with a tent, we make a design for a house--a snowhouse. And an Inuit sitting inside with a Eskimo lamp and
they use that for their stove like. So later I make more of these hunting, seal hunting, fishing, hunting caribou,
and the bears and wolves and seals and some places with snowhouses, all this what they use outside their
snowhouses, their big harpoon and their big spear, and shovel and their dogsled and their dogs laying beside
the sled. And some land that matches that--snowhouse like in the Winter, the North, there's lots of snow and
it doesn't show much of the land, but lots of ice. High ice is around. Then around springtime it would be nice
for the fishing guys in the springtime, the sun is up, and there's some cloud and it's cold and still. . . there's
what we always do in springtime.

So since that time we always look for little money we make something to sell. Now a few years ago,
three four years time, we had a hard time to sell them, a hard time, and who is going to buy them? Nobody to
buy them. And unless you make, somebody want it, there's no place to send them off to.

I do lots of caribou skins, sometimes I do beadings, in the seventies I did beadwork, not for mocassins,
you know those bracelets and chokers, and little picture frames with beads around. Little pictures for babies.
Anybody can do that, I was selling them."

Making work to order

"I do anything. I made lots of wall-hangers. Folks all over say, not the women, say 'I'll buy it from you
if you make something like this or that' so I make it. And I make something they see, or . . .
This is my own design, I see this all over. When I go from my house to town I see this, we don't have streets in Paulatuk.” Bertha chooses her colors carefully. "I could put white on top of white, but this blue is . . . better. I used to use white with blue, sometimes on the beach there is some water, but not right there. I sewed that one right through. When I did this I was in a really quiet place, nobody bother me." [Bertha was trying to sew in the middle of the Festival with people standing all around her talking to her, so I asked her if it bothered her to work in public]. "Yeah, I always take off my glasses.

I have to sit down and do it real neat. Some people say it’s nice, even that other one. Lots of them if I know something happen, and you need it--sometimes it's rush, so much ice in it, and so much clouds and flowers, and things to put on, bigger than this--this is small one--you got to race. Once Nellie Cornyea tell me to make three wall hangers for Tuk, for [a] Tuk . . . sign, big like about that long and this wide, a big sign that said 'Tuk Pingo' same time. They look at the pingo those two kids and there's river, like two kids are sitting here looking at the pingo, and there's geese flying and a sundance--all in front of them--I made three like that. I did all those three, all while it was by request, they paid for materials. I know they paid me cheap, but they pay me."

Sewing as income

"Right now I don't work. My husband does some carvings to make extra money, and I have to sew to make extra money, only what we're living on is the old age pension. And that can't fill up the whole month. That's why we have to do extra sewing--I have to buy this and that. Everything is, if you ask for it I'll make it. If I make it good, then somebody say--'this is nice', and they just look at it and say, 'I wanna better one, different only change this and that.' What they want, I have to make." Bertha says she never refuses or says 'no'. "If they ask then I do it. Even mitts, I have to make wolf mitts for them--for the nurses. And mukluks and parky I have to make, and they want shoes too, I have to make it. It's nice when they do that because it's extra money.

When we had a craft shop in Paulatuk, we made lots of tapestries, and she paid us by the hour. It's good that wage. Later she give us points. One piece like this we bring it home and sew it, and she pay us how
much. By the time I bring in three or four pieces, and I didn't like to sew small, I always sew big ones all the time; I used to get over four hundred, it's a good wage, a lot of work in them."

Recognition

"Since I start in Northern Games, and won 'Woman of the Year' in 1989 in Holman Island, I got a plaque that says I am the 'Good Woman of the Year'. Every Northern Games I try to do my best. I try to set a good example. Billy says he likes to hang out with a 'good woman'! Billy and I join the Northern Games and he used to be the 'good man' and I used to be the 'good woman'. And Billy was King once that time. He was King at Holman once. We like to go there because there's lots of different things to see at Holman. We missed the Spring this year."

Bertha sometimes doesn't sign her work, "I used to sign it, but these ones I was in a rush at home. We made a big tapestry for the circumpolar [Conference]--a really big one--and I had to put my own design in the middle--An Inuvialuit dancing bear--and I don't see it again. That place took that, [the] Circumpolar [conference], the Inuvialuit people--the IDC, it was a real nice one."

Finding a market

"I made some [applique wall hangings] last year and some this year, but nobody buy--just my dolls. I left it at Inuvik Sewing. Just my dolls were sold here--I made seven dolls and all of them sold. I think I put them for $125 each, but they take 25% off. But these [hangings] here--nobody wants to buy them. I don't know what the reason is. . . . This is from last year, this year I was going to make different things like, make a bigger design, all sewn on, these are small ones."

It takes Bertha many hours to sew. "Quite a while sometimes, because I do this and that, and this and that, before I sit down. If I stay quiet for a couple a nights I could do it in about three nights, about four hours [a night]. When we do the stitching it takes a little longer. Work harder. Just before I cut it up, before I stick it together, I sew it. Even those two I sew it before I stick it together. So I don't know, I never try and count my hours."
I never thought—I know lots of women at home that do sewings, and they want to bring it here, but they don't know what's going on with arts and crafts (festival). She was going to make them two mother hubbards, and I tell her I don't know, when I go home I'll let her know about it, but I don't know about it. I hear lots of things but I don't know if it's in Inuvik or Yellowknife or what?"

**Getting materials**

"I get the material from the Bay [Hudson's Bay Company store]. Even that cloth there, just one yard is over $20. My boy is in Vancouver, he know what I need and so he pick [it] up there. He gets them down there, he can buy yards, and he get lots of it, and he send me lots of embroidery thread for sewing all different colors. Lots of that white color and gray, always, I use those lots in my sewing. Only these kind of sewings. When you add it up it's lots. The boundary, the felts, and sit down sewing. . . I was going to make one with a sealskin but it was too late. I had some white duffel left, and I had some sealskin left, already commercial tanned, I was going to use for design but it was too late. They never bother [tanning] sealskin, just the sealskins that are white. They don't get seals [just for hides]—we eat them for food.

But I have no materials. It's hard--there's nothing in the stores. Absolutely nothing in the stores, so how can you? We have to go to Inuvik, and pay our way, come here and get materials that we need. Last year we tried [ordering] with Inuvik Sewing, I pay $417 for 2 parky covers, 4 yards or 2 yards of white duffel, and different material for different women, but it cost that much!"

**Teaching the next generations**

"In school we used to go and they give us little projects for three or four weeks, maybe one hour, kids sewing, we have a class and we learn them how to put the stitches in. They have to learn, the schoolteacher put them there right to the small little girls, not boys. They enjoy that in school, they make small little shoes—just to see how far they could sew. If they don't finish them they could do how far they could. We learn them how to make little design in stroud or make little design on a piece of felt. I cut design for them and they sew it—not good—just learning how to hold a needle, talk to them all the while they sew. Sometime they give us these projects, and lots of them do nice work."
Sometimes at home they don't bother with TV, not unless they get to like a certain show—Don Messer. Even myself, I don't bother much about TV. What I like only—I like to watch an Inuit show. Some girls used to come and watch me. 'Lucky Bertha' they telling me, 'you can just sit down and look, and do that kind of work.'

Fig. 37: Bertha after winning the Good Woman contest in Tuktoyaktuk. Northern News Services, (1997). Photograph by Lyn Hancock.
Note: Bertha and her husband Billy travel from Paulatuk every summer to The Great Northern Arts Festival in Inuvik. They bring one or two whole fresh caribou on the plane to help feed the artists. Billy is a carver who works in musk-ox horn, ivory, caribou antler, and stone, and he also makes tools. The couple are always together and seem to laugh a lot. Bertha looks after Billy and their youngest adopted son, sewing in between. They are always full of smiles.
LORNA STORR
Gwich'in Traditional Beadworker and Teacher
Aklavik, NWT

Fig. 38: Lorna in 1995 as she was taking her last course in the Teacher Education Program at Aurora College, Inuvik, NWT.
This is a summary of Lorna's comments from an interview videotaped August 4, 1994, at The Great Northern Arts Festival site, Inuvik, NWT. I had visited her home in Aklavik in the summer of 1993 with her sister-in-law, Beverly Lennie, where I photographed the eight baby belts she made which were arranged on the wall over her couch in the living room. This was the only artwork I saw in her house. I had asked her if we could talk when she came to Inuvik, so after the Festival in 1994 she came to see me with examples of her work.

"I'm from Aklavik, originally from Fort McPherson. I'm of Gwich'in descent, and I married my husband who is Inuit, so I [have] got one foot in each culture. I live in Aklavik right now, that's where I have lived for the past 15 years."

Childhood learning

"We used to . . . when we used to visit our grandmothers or the older people, I guess because they were losing their eyesight, they used to make us thread their needles. We were thinking about it the other day . . . when we used to visit my grandfather and grandmother, and because they couldn't see, they used to have us thread about ten needles. But that also gave us . . . handling the needle." Lorna was "about eight I guess. So we used to go around doing that, or else they would make us sit and stitch pieces of cloth together. . . these squares. I remember my grandmother, by Christmas time she sewed it together, and you know I'd have a blanket. So, not knowing . . . doing all this work we didn't realize . . . .

But if we didn't do the stitches right, she'd take it out and make us do it again, so we used to have to do it right the first time." Lorna learned most of her sewing skills at home, but in school "I think we started with a sewing machine . . . ." Lorna's mother had a sewing machine "but we really didn't use it, I guess. We did home ec. in school . . . not in the residential school, not in the hostels, just in school where we did a bit of home ec. But that wasn't until we were in junior high grades . . . ."
The tradition of the Baby Belt

The baby belts were, I guess, originally used as [carriers]... the mothers would pack the babies on their back with a shawl, a blanket or a shawl, and... [the baby belt] went under the baby's bum and held them, and the top of the straps went over your shoulders, and you tied them. ... I can remember my mother packing a baby like that all day, and did her housework." Lorna explained that the tassels and beaded designs, "they're just decoration. Back then there wasn't enough time... all work was manual, hand done. There was no such thing as electricity... So they just had... I guess it was just a strip, those embroidered strips you buy, that's how they used to make them. But then the beads came along and now they got fancier, putting names on, and birth dates... they just used them... they had no such things as strollers... .

Fig. 39: The seven beaded baby belts that Lorna made with hers by her mother.
Well, everything had to be hand done. If you wanted a pair of shoes you had to start by going out and getting your moose, and cleaning your moose skin, getting it tanned, I mean that's lots of work. You just couldn't go to the store and buy one, you had to make them. It was more a matter of survival, you had to be a good sewer. . . in order for your husband to survive you had to be a good sewer. In order to find a good husband it depended on your sewing, your sewing abilities, because you had to sew all of the clothing, parkas everything. Mainly out of fur too. . . . They used to do it with quills. . . moosehair, they used to do moosehair tufting and that's a lot more work than beads. This is actually easier, cause the easier ones are done with a loom too. That's way easier than hand sewing. . . . But they had to do all of this work among other work like—handwashing clothes, preparing all their foods . . . so they had a lot of hard work."

**Combining Gwich'in and Inuvialuit traditions**

Lorna as a young Gwich'in woman, married into an Inuvialuit family with their own traditions, but said she did not find the transition difficult. "I guess it used to be, but I never found any problems. Maybe when I first moved to Aklavik. . . . I guess myself, just being new to the community, I never really got out to meet people, but after awhile . . . we get along well." Gwich'in women make baby belts, but Inuvialuit women "they use the amautis. . . . and the Mother Hubbard [parka style]--both Inuit and Gwitch'in women use them." Women of both cultures use 'Delta Braid' and do beading. But hardly anyone does tanning of hides, anymore, so the women have to buy moosehides in order to make slippers or mukluks. "That's how most people get it [hide] now, they buy commercially, or order it from the South, I guess it just saves time. Like I said, it's a lot of manual hand work. It's quite a bit of work. There are very few women that actually do that tanning, which is sad."

**A family of her own**

"I have seven children, and [pointing to a picture I took of the baby belts on the wall behind the couch in her house] that's the beaded belts that I did for each of my children, showing their birthdates and their names. I also have mine--which my mom actually packed me around in as a baby. She gave it to me
because I made one for each of my children. She has given me my own baby belt that she packed me around in."

**Beading techniques**

Lorna holds up cut out pieces of moccasins, some beaded. "This is all hand done, and it's for the high top moccasin slippers, a boy's slippers. The uppers, for this set, my mom kept, and she's going to sew the uppers in, by the time I get this finished, she'll sew that in. You use two needles, and the top part you thread your beads, and with the other needle you sort of sew down in between the beads. Does that explain it? [demonstrating] So you use the top beading needle, which is for the top--this is the beading needle, and you bring it through, you thread your beads on there, and you use another needle and sew down the beads. Every one or two. This thread [with beads on it] always stays on top." It is very time-consuming work and takes many hours to complete. "I just started this at the beginning of the month. If you work on it steady, it'll take you a good week I guess." Lorna uses a wool backing with paper behind it. "Just to make it firmer. This stroud material is too soft, so you make it firmer, and after you're done, you line it with . . . maybe canvas or something to make it firmer. [The paper is] just to sew your beads on, and cut around when you sew it on."

Slippers are still worn by a lot of people "usually at Christmas time, families dress their kids up. At Christmas time . . . and that usually lasts a good year. . . I know that men and women that do a lot of dancing, they usually have quite a few pairs, like different pairs for every time they go dancing I guess. Or when a big special event comes up . . . they usually have a new pair."

Lorna says she calls it 'artwork'. "I guess for myself you would say [yes], because I don't do it that often. . . I have a bag that my mom made, and there's some more beadwork on there. For my mom, she does it, and she also sells her beadwork, I don't know, I guess its a form of craft, but . . . for myself, I think it would be an art because I don't do it often. But my mom would consider this as a craft, because that's all she does. I think it's hard too, because today, you're out working, and I work all day, and then I come home and I have my housework, my kids, everything else to do, so I don't have that much time to do it anymore. I think that's
another problem, most people are out working now." Sometimes when the slippers wear out, the beadwork is saved and sewn onto another pair, so it is treasured and passed on.

The meaning of beadwork

"I just wonder how our parents used to do this. I mean back then ... well in my family alone there was 11 of us children, and that was like every family ... but yet, the mothers had parkas sewn, mukluks, moccasins, mitts out of mooseskin, and it makes me sad because it's sort of dying. Like it's lost ... and even, speaking for myself, I don't think I'd ever sit down and make each one of my kids a pair of mitts, parka, and ... you wonder how they did it. All those children, they had to do everything, there was no such thing as electricity, they had to pack water, and yet they had all this work done. So it kind of makes me really sad, because we'll never see this again. And even my own children will probably never do this, they'll do a bit of work here and there, but never to sit down and actually do something like this." Lorna hopes to help keep a bit of her culture's history by doing the beadwork.

Learning to sew now

Lorna explained that not much sewing is taught in the schools these days in Aklavik "because of all the cutbacks with the government, and cutting staff members off, and there's not enough teachers to do the home ec. part ..." Some language lessons are combined with cultural arts such as beading, but "not as much as they should, and it's so hard now, like compared to the old days where the work had to be done. I mean there was no saying 'well I'll leave it until tomorrow', it had to be done today. If there is work to be done today, it had to be done, and nobody complained. But back then we didn't have the TV's, videos, and movies, and TV's all night you know? We just had to get this work done, and now, even with my own children, they won't do any of this, because it's so much easier to go to the store and buy the stuff they need." Lorna says the girls today are not much interested in doing this kind of sewing. "They're not, because it's not worn as much as it used to be. And it's easier for people to just go to the store ..." Even for special occasions "They're even shy to wear that. Yeah, it's sad, but we're really losing that part of our tradition."
Note: In 1990 Lorna was in my art methods class in Inuvik with several of the other women who I interviewed for this study--Beverly Lennie, and Effie Blake. In Winter 1996 Lorna completed the last course for her Teacher Education Diploma from Aurora College in Inuvik, and she graduated in June 1995. She says in the process she learned a great deal about perseverance and doing her best work.
AGNES & MONA THRASHER
Inuvialuit painters & drawers of traditional life
Quesnel, B.C. and Yellowknife, NWT

Fig. 40: Sisters Agnes and Mona Thrasher, in July 1992, at the end of The Great Northern Arts Festival.
AGNES AND MONA THRASHER
Quesnel, B.C. and Yellowknife, NWT

This is a summary of Agnes' comments from an interview videotaped by Joanne McNeal on July 29, 1992 at The Great Northern Arts Festival in Inuvik, NWT. Mona's comments are included from a written artist's statement she sent to the Festival.

Childhood and drawing

Mona and Agnes Thrasher were born in a bush camp between Aklavik and what is now Inuvik, NWT. Their father's name was Billy Thrasher, and he worked a trapline. Mona wrote in her artist statement to the Festival that "He was the son of a portugese whaler who came to the Arctic during the last century. Billy married twice, after his first wife died, he married her sister Alice, who was an Alaskan Eskimo woman. I was the first child born of that second union. My father died when I was 18, in 1960. . . .At age 10 I was sent to the Roman Catholic school in Aklavik for seven years".

Agnes says their parents "were too busy trapping. My dad was the artist. He didn't do it well, they didn't have nothing here. He used to just sketch on a piece of paper, just drawing here and there. But I didn't know he was a good artist. He never oil painted or anything, but he was very good at doing these priests on a mission boat, when he used to work for the missionary." He drew with pencil "and he used to keep pencils until they turned to nothing, right to the end."

Agnes says drawing "just came to us when we were little girls. My sister Mona used to do a little bit of drawing so we decided to do a little drawing with her. And my brother did the same thing, he's next to Mona, and he's also a very good artist, or was a very good artist. We lost him." The children rarely watched their father draw "... the missionaries used to tell us, we never see him, because we were too much in a convent."

Residential school

While living in the convent they took art classes. Agnes explains "When we had art class, Sister Leduc noticed that we were very good artists. She wasn't an artist herself, but she knew pretty good. And she
used to give us—that's the only time I got—straight A's—for my art, with Sister Leduc." Mona "used to do artwork also in the school. But we didn't do any [oil painting]—there weren't any oils then. Maybe just for the boys—my brother used to do artwork in oils. But she [Mona] didn't until we came here in 1960. She started in the church, with Father Adam."

Mona's accident

Mona's biography at the Igloo Church explains that she has been hearing and speech impaired since a gun accident at the age of 13. A shotgun blast went off near her head and since then she has not been able to hear or speak. Agnes says Mona can't speak for herself now, "Someone has to talk for her." Mona and Agnes are somehow able to communicate with each other, so Agnes speaks for both of them when they are together.

Painting the Igloo Church

It was Father Adam who first asked Mona to paint the 12 Stations of the cross on the walls of the Igloo Church in Inuvik when she was eighteen. Mona writes 'In 1960 the Igloo Church of Inuvik was being completed. Father Adam who was then the pastor, called upon me to do some of the art work that is found in the church. I had no previous experience but Father saw in me someone capable of doing an acceptable job. I went to work and within three months I painted the Stations of the Cross on the circular wall of the Igloo Church, as well as the other paintings that you can see above the different entrances of the church." Agnes explains "Father Adam was the one that was in that department—-it was his department—I couldn't even see her doing that, because I was in the convent at that time. So my parents lived behind the Catholic Church, and my Mother and Dad were there while Mona was doing her artwork with Father Adam, at the Church."

Father Adam got paints for Mona, and Agnes "started [work] at the hospital at the same time, and I didn't realize that I was also an artist. It just picked up nicely. But nobody taught us how to do any [oil painting], we never went to any art school or anything, just three of us appeared to be artists." Agnes says Father Adam gave Mona picture books of European church artwork to use as examples of the 12 Stations of the Cross. Agnes remembers their first reaction to those old paintings—that the colors seemed dull. "They were too dull. Not enough oils to show off the colors too good. It wasn't bright, it looked too dull. No oils."
The meaning of art now

Both women often now paint scenes of an earlier life. Agnes explains "Like [of] my grandfather, and the Eskimo drum dance. It was nice to do him again--Inuksik Bennett was his name. It's pride, it's part of my Eskimo people, and I'm trying to learn more about the Eskimo culture, cause I don't know, I've been living with the Grey nuns and they never taught us anything about our life. I think my parents were out in the bush trapping, and all we knew was English. We couldn't learn how we lived--years ago in Alaska. My mother used to tell me the stories. That's the only time I can really paint [now] is when my mother tells me Eskimo stories, and I can really get to work with my artwork."

Mona writes "Today I enjoy painting different scenes of the Eskimo life of my forefathers. Igloos are a thing of the past, dogteams are on the way out, seal hunting has almost become a sport with my people, but the very fact that I paint those scenes reminds people that not so long ago, men lived that way and survived amidst hardship and found happiness in a climate whose harshness is unparalleled anywhere else in the world. You will notice that my basic colors are white and blue because that is the way my country appears to me. It is made of blue sky and blue water. Even the snow which covers the ground for 9 months out of 12 has a bluish tint on account of the semi darkness.

I get my inspiration from the different activities which are at the very heart of the Eskimo way of life. You will see women cutting fish, men driving dogteams, children playing in the snow. I even try to put a soul into the meager trees of my country, the water of its lakes and rivers, as well as in the beautiful sunsets which linger for hours in the sky during the fall. What I paint is what I see. And I paint it as I see it."

Art education and the younger generations

Mona writes "I never studied in any art school and never had any teachers as such except some of the oblate missionaries who helped me launch my career. My natural abilities and talents have not been refined by an institute of fine arts, but at the same time it allows me to be more natural without worrying about the rules and regulations which many artists surround themselves with, that give greater value and acceptance to their work. I have painted nearly 800 canvases which have been sold throughout Canada and the United
States. Hopefully, I will paint many more in the years to come. It makes me extremely happy to know that through my art many people get a better understanding of the North and its people."

In regard to young people's interest in art, Agnes says, "The younger generation today doesn't seem to be interested. This is the nineties. I'm teaching my daughters to do some art. The oldest daughter's really a good artist. My second oldest, she's trying. And of course my 15 year old daughter doesn't bother."

Mona makes her living entirely from her artwork, and Agnes sells quite a few paintings too. Agnes says she hasn't done much painting the last few years. "The last couple of years I've been sick off and on--lung problem, and [one side of] my heart was beating faster than the other side. They had to electrocute me in order to get the beat to go back. So I have to take heart pills, that's why I don't drink or smoke. That's why I can't sit where people are smoking, it's dangerous for me. That's why I was so embarrassed--I felt so embarrassed to leave [the Festival early]--I don't like doing that."

Note: Agnes and her family now live in Quesnel in Northern B.C., while Mona lives in Yellowknife, NWT, painting prolifically, especially scenes of a remembered lifestyle. I was told that after her accident at 13, the priests gave her work to try and protect her from other kids who picked on her, but nobody wanted to talk about this.

Mona is one of the best-known painters in the Western Arctic. She is on exclusive contract to sell her paintings through an established gallery in Yellowknife. When I sat with Mona one afternoon I watched her draw a beautiful scene of an igloo with dogs staked out all around it. She seemed pleased and responded to my compliments with a smile, and nodded a sort of communication with gestures and her eyes. It seems to me that she communicates the stories of her childhood and traditional lifestyle through her drawings and paintings. Mona gave me this copy of a photo of her at the easel in the gallery.
Fig. 41: Mona painting at her easel in the Yellowknife gallery. Photographer unknown.
VICKI TOMPKINS
Non-Native painter, festival organizer, & art educator
Yellowknife, NWT

Fig. 42: Vicki outside Aurora College, Inuvik, in May, 1995, when she visited the Fine Arts Program.
VICKI TOMPKINS
Yellowknife, NWT

This is a summary of Vicki's comments from an interview videotaped at The Great Northern Arts Festival in Inuvik in July 1992.

"I'm from Yellowknife. I'm an artist participating here in The Great Northern Arts Festival. I also came up as a volunteer, I worked on a Festival myself in Yellowknife, and I've been doing art for years, years, years. I was born up here in the North, and moved out, and then came back and just stayed." Vicki was born in Fort Smith, and "I think we left when I was three, and we were in Yellowknife for a year, and then Edmonton and Ottawa... During one of my university years I came up. Of course I had heard all the stories from my parents and everything, and I came up for a summer to work. And stayed. I came up for one summer and went back for my final BFA, and then was supposed to go back to do graduate work, and just didn't make it. I got offered a good job and I just didn't want to go back to school, I quite liked it up here. I do contract work, and live on grants, and substitute teaching, whatever you can."

Childhood

When Vicki was growing up she was encouraged in her art skills by her parents. "I remember one incident, I don't know, to me this is sort of when it all began, I guess I was always drawing art, doing something, and then one Christmas, just before Christmas, I got into the van with my mother, and there was a big box on the floor, and I opened it up. And she was all mad at me because it was my Christmas gift. It was just full of all these art supplies. And it just started there--I just would make anything. Yeah, that's what I do--painting, and styrofoam, pipe cleaners, and that sort of thing, buttons, and then material, I made anything I could, and glued everything together. My mother's a musician and... none of us had voices or we never took up any instruments or anything. We were just encouraged to do whatever came naturally. It just so happened that I just loved putting stuff together, and sewing, and those were always Christmas gifts, that sort of thing,
and we were encouraged to do that. For each of the kids, whatever came to them, they were encouraged to
do. So, I'm the only one in my family right now that does artwork. I would say that all of them are very
creative, but I'm the only one that has gone into any sort of traditional artwork."

Vicki went to high school, and then went and took a BFA. "I first of all went to art school at Emily
Carr in Vancouver, into art school there, and spent my first year there, and then took a year off school. I felt I
was just too young, I really didn't know anything. I thought it was very funny when I was there.

Everybody was talking about Andy Warhol, and I didn't know who he was. I felt very embarassed.
And there were a lot of things, and I thought I was just too young, so I took a year off and went back to
Montreal. I just worked for a year and entered art school again, I was just going to take general painting and
sculpting, and then we thought well, maybe I should take some education because maybe I could become an
art teacher. So I did a BFA with a specialization in Art and Drama Education, and then finished that and
realized that I didn't like teaching. . . . Yeah, you just try what you can.

It was never suggested by my family to do that. They just, well I would say 'this is what I'm doing this
year', and they would go 'oh that's great,' you know. They always encouraged me in my artwork, though,
always. They were always very thrilled and supportive of what I did. We're a very close knit family."

Artwork now

Vicki works "in mainly watercolor painting. I find it easy. I guess I take it broader than I guess what
it's supposed to be, I use it on canvas, and I use it really thick, and I use it very differently than somebody
who's a traditionalist. I just find it's nontoxic, and I had a studio in Yellowknife I couldn't use my oil paints
because it would give me headaches and everything, so I moved into the watercolors so I tend to use them a
little bit like oils. . . . I find acrylics very flat. When I first started painting I was using acrylics and then, one of
my teachers suggested that I try some oils, and I did and I've never gone back to acrylics."

The meaning of artwork in her life

"Well, at this point I think my focus has been bent over the past year or so, because I've been trying to
make a living off my artwork and it's not working. So you're trying to create something that's appealing to
yourself, and fulfills that need to create, that need to express yourself, visually, yet something that’s sellable as well. And that’s really hard to come by. It’s a really hard balance. And then sometimes it really doesn’t matter, whatever you do, it just doesn’t sell, so I find it’s also interesting that as my verbal skills get better and better, I find expressing myself in painting just, not getting worse, but it’s not as needy. I don’t need it as much.”

Painting Yellowknife citiscapes

"Well, I had a grant last year... from the NWT Arts Council, I worked on citiscapes, and the area around Yellowknife. I really needed to work on the change that was happening in Yellowknife at the time, even though I’d only lived there for four years, I just found this big change in the focus of the city council, as far as like putting up new buildings, and where they were going, and stuff like that and I really wanted, I needed, to exercise that. I felt a lot of frustration through that, this ‘change in my town’ type thing. So I was doing a lot of work like this, where you take it from being ugly to being very beautiful. You know some mornings you wake up and it’s incredible, all these buildings and it’s misty, and the ice fog and everything, and then it will change, within a few minutes, and it will be a hideous ugly town. There’s been a lot of frustration in that way, for me. With all the politics and everything. ”

Beauty and ugliness

"The mine is a really big thing in Yellowknife, there are two mines, and this Giant one, for the year and a half that I was there, I worked out at a lodge and would pass Giant mine every day. And it’s got some beautiful shapes to it. It’s also an ugly part of town, other than the shapes of these buildings, a lot of them are really old and everything like that. ...You can recognize the head frame, and some of the buildings if you knew Giant mine. ... Then the color in the background is the kind of smokiness of the sky and everything like that. Sometimes you come around a corner and these shapes are really simplified, and they’re just beautiful.

And of course, the aurora borealis, the northern lights, you see them all the time ... they’re quite fascinating. Sometimes I lie in my yard, in the Fall and watch them. Talking about northern lights, it seems to me that a lot of artists have the same way of painting the northern lights. I don’t know how so many people
can see the same thing. This is . . . more getting rid of the shape and going more after the aurora. Like I've seen many different colors, now I've really seen a lot of the aurora in green and white. I saw one red one and that was because they released some stuff into the atmosphere, and that's the only reason. I find a lot of the painting of the aurora is very tight—it's like they want to contain it in something. It's constantly changing you know, so I have a totally different style of doing it. Often for that reason, people don't recognize it.

Rather than do things for specific people, because I don't know if it is specific people it just seems to be the focus of a lot of different people, that I try to capture some of the beauty, some of the things that some people might miss. Particularly tourists, because it is not a very nice looking place. Yet sometimes, it is the most beautiful place in the world.

These inukshuks, are also another thing that are all over Yellowknife, they're everywhere and anywhere you drive. . . . If you go camping you try to make your own, and I make my own and try to draw them. . . . Behind this very expensive hotel, the most expensive hotel in Yellowknife, it used to be the old dump site, and a sewage lagoon, which . . . the city's trying to say that they are going to build on this, they're going to build a new subdivision on this and they're aerating it out, and you go behind and there's all these old cars, and it's really stinky. And this big beautiful expensive hotel is right there. I started working with the positive and negative shape of the car in the snow, . . . but I sort of got caught in this trap of doing typical northern trees. Which you do at times."

Living by the light

"I think like any animal you sort of get used to in the summer staying up all night, and then in winter you sleep quite a bit. I mean at five o'clock in winter I'm ready for bed. You go on the schedule of the light, which is not surprising, native people do it up here and it's just natural. I tend to get a little antsy in February, but I try to take a vacation or something at that time. And I think, it's not just myself, there's quite a few people that get like that. Sometimes when you go in a store, they're just uptight when winter is supposed to be coming to an end. It does take a long time, but by March, it's starting to get warmer, and you feel better, and the lights there, and you're really affected by it, definitely. You just live by it."
On 'native art'

"I don't know if it's the way they paint, or what they think, or the need to paint or anything, I think that's different for every artist. I think in the way they're marketed, there is a big difference here in the North. I think the government and the galleries market the native artwork, and if you're white, then it's very hard to get picked up by a gallery, it's very hard to, for people who are tourists, who are buying it, to see your work as an art. Whereas if you were in Toronto or something like that, doing scenes of the North, then that would bring a new twist to urban painting. So there is a difference. I think that a lot of native people are encouraged to stick to Inuit or Dene art and not encouraged to expand. And I don't know if they are encouraged directly but just encouraged because that's what sells. That's what the galleries will pick up, that's what they take to Spain to Expo, that's what will make it."

Furs or carvings, trappers or artists?

"I was just discussing the other night with some sculptors, or carvers as they are called here, and they were talking about why people started carving, and why it became such a big deal in the communities. And somebody recounted this story about how before the head man or head person of that community or family or unit was the best hunter. He would bring in the best or most meat and skins. And then as the fur trade started to go down, particularly because of Europe and that, sort of anti-fur movement, these great hunters were the poor ones in the village because they couldn't sell their furs anymore. . . . Before the carvers would be the poor ones in the village because they weren't good hunters, they couldn't get as much, so they carved to make a living. . . . Now the carvers are the heads of the families because they bring in the most money, because the fur industry has just gone down the tubes. So it's like this total turn around for communities, and they'll have a very very hard time with that. Because they're trying to keep their traditional way of life, yet they're being encouraged to do polar bears and because that will make them a few hundred bucks. Their fur is going to make them $30. So it's a total turn around. A lot of it is definitely motivated by the fact that they can make some money which is not wrong, we've been taught that justifies what you can do. You can buy this T-shirt, and you can put food on the table."
The artist's challenge

Being an artist is "... somehow, it's difficult at times. I find there's periods of intense creativity, and that whatever comes out just works, and then sometimes I really really struggle with it. I find I'm very political, and I get quite involved, and in particular with the city this year because I live in a place where they are trying to kick us off our land, that's the way things are. I'm quite concerned with where I live, and I'm not too impressed with our city council.

I think that any artist anywhere goes through that. It's hard, I've never wanted to live in poverty, and I don't think it's necessary to bring out your creativity. Yet I don't have, that incredible passion that they have to paint night and day for two months, and then they can't paint, they're just totally spent. I don't know, every artist is different, and there's always that struggle, an inukshuk will sell, where a nude or a scene of a graveyard won't. Yet you may want to do that graveyard anyway. I think you do do that anyway, but you do it less now. Particularly if there's a show coming up, you do try and [you] want to make a living at your artwork. I think possibly a lot of artists have to compromise to sell their work, and then once they're accepted into the artist community, then they can go on to doing what they really want."

Gender and art making

"It's hard to generalize ... it seems to me that the men, particularly that I've met here are tougher, well not tougher, but just harder about what they're doing. Like they're not so concerned with breaking a piece off of their carving, or they really understand that concept of money and 'I do this, so get me this much money.' I don't know if this is a male/female thing, but I'm just doing my artwork because I enjoy it, and if it makes me money then that's great but, you try to do things that make you money but it's not my best work. So I don't know. I definitely think there's a lot more male artists up here than female, particularly if they are doing it full-time. Particularly now, I've gone into carving, and last year when I was here at this festival I carved for ten days and it was quite a big deal, because I was the only woman in this carving atmosphere. It was quite strange to see, it seemed, a female carver. The same thing when I was [at] Coral Harbour this winter, the people would walk in and go, 'a woman carver.' So there is a barrier really ... "
Starting the Festival of the Midnight Sun

"I came out of this festival last year, thrilled to death. And I went for a grant and of course I'm going to need money. Money was the big thing. You know there's people who wanted to start this festival in Yellowknife, and I had been to this one so I had a bit of experience, and I knew there would be a paid position in the end, and I wanted to be involved, only to take it out of the control of the galleries and the business people. To make sure that it had a lot of integrity to it. And I like organizing, so I got involved in that way.

And it definitely came out of this festival, the idea that it could be very successful, and we're in a bigger community and everything, so it definitely came out of this one. It sort of gives you the sense that you can-- you're talking to artists, musicians, poets, and they've no idea how to market themselves, and what's available to them as far as grants, or where they can go for a show. And here you have--it's so easy to access that information, and be able to give it out, that's a real sense of helping somebody else.

That's sort of how it feels, that you've really put in a lot of effort and everybody has come, and they were enjoying themselves. It's a great sense of accomplishment and pride--that you've pulled it off. I need to have another grant this year to be able to work, get another body of work for next year. I'm not sure how differently I'd do it, I'd probably just do it different. There's a number of things, all the things that we talked about, about being non-native in this type of environment, and being a woman in this type of environment, and there's a lot of things like that, that I would like to work on, and work out."

Connecting artists through festivals

"The bond that takes place in something like this is just, you can't even explain it. You're meeting people who--this is my second year so I'm meeting people who I met last year, who it's instant--you know we're 'Oh, yeah, I remember we carved' and you don't even talk about the old stories. It's what you've been doing all year, and what are we going to do for this festival, and, there's an incredible bonding that takes place between all the artists. I think that takes place even in our festival to a certain extent. It's a different type of festival in Yellowknife, so there's not this incredible 80 hours together. Some of us know each other, and we're all here to do the same thing, we're all here to work, and you know there's a lot of socializing going on. These people
who come from Spence Bay or Clyde River or anywhere, you know you're never going to see all year, you'd never get the chance, unless they were coming to be at this festival, and you were coming too. It's just --when do you fly to Spence Bay? And the fact that you'll know these people for ever and ever and ever. The North seems very very far apart but it's very close, once you know--Charlie from Spence Bay--you know him. I know last year, I sent a lot of information out to different artists about art, because they don't have access to it. Particularly in the library and things like that, that type of thing, that you can't put a number on and you can't predict, but you know that it happens.

I didn't want to copy what Charlene was doing here, ... what she had created here [in Inuvik, in Yellowknife], we also are in a bigger community so we can include all of those people--the writers, and the drama, we can include those people in different events that possibly you couldn't do here. I don't know if you could but ... all the arts, and the crafts--there was a lot of pottery, and batiking, and things like that. I think there could have been more meeting of artists but I think that just comes with time. I noticed that a lot of artists that we had flown in wanted to try out some different mediums, like pottery and batiking and a lot of that happened which was really nice. That they just got to try something out."

Teaching art to kids

"I teach mostly in Yellowknife. I'm teaching high school or junior high, and they see it as an easy course. There's a couple of serious kids, who I think would maybe continue into art, but most of them have no idea of anything about northern art. Nothing about Inuit art, or anything, which I find is really strange, they're sitting in Yellowknife, and they've never had a carver come in and demonstrate how they work or anything like that. It's really odd, they're here in the North, they could be really close. I'm sure some of them have had that but ... these are mostly white kids.

Most of the native kids who come from the communities definitely know their culture. There's a very clear understanding that if you do this painting or this drawing, then you'll get some money from it. The [role models] they have, have really been successful and they tend to follow their style of work. You know this person has been very successful and he's getting recognition, making a living, so I can do the same thing."
Note: Vicki coordinated the Festival of the Midnight Sun for three years and then withdrew to let someone else take over. While she was involved with the festival, she said she almost stopped making art herself. She became close friends with Inuvialuit sculptors, which gave her personal insight into cultural relations of the Western Arctic. She is now the chairperson of the NWT Arts Council and is teaching tourism courses with a company in Yellowknife.
JULIA & BRENDALYNN TRENNEERT
Inuvialuit moose-hair and caribou-hair tufters
Hay River, NWT

Fig. 43: Julia and Brendalynn at The Great Northern Arts Festival in July 1992, in front of their artwork.
JULIA & BRENDALYNN TRENNERT
Hay River, NWT

This is a summary of Julia and Brendalynn's comments from an interview videotaped in July, 1992, during their first trip to The Great Northern Arts Festival.

Julia's learning in residential school

"I'm Julia Pokiak Trennert, and this is my daughter Brendalynn Trennert, better known as 'Inuk'." Julia was born into an Inuvialuit family in Sachs Harbor and went to residential school in Aklavik. "I learned moose-hair tufting basics from a nun that was teaching in Aklavik years and years ago. Sister Leduc." Julia moved to Fort Providence, where there are very few Inuvialuit people, when "I was an adult and already had my family. I think there was only one woman left that was taught by Sister Leduc, that's still doing a lot of tuftings, that's Grandma Lafferty. . . . She used to live in Fort Simpson, she has really beautiful works, [her first name is] Celine. I lived in Fort Simpson for seven years, but at that time I was not into tufting so I missed an opportunity to learn from her. I'm really sorry about that, but you don't know how your life is going to turn out."

Doing tufting again

"When I left school I didn't even think about doing tuftings. Years later when we moved to the Fort Providence area, I started and took that up again. . . . I used to admire the works of the elderly [Slavey] ladies, the ones that are in their sixties and seventies, and they make really complicated roses and flowers. As I got to know people better, I learned that those same women were taught by the nun [the same Sister Leduc] that taught me how to do tuftings in Aklavik."

Unique work in tufting

"I was trying to make flowers like the women in [Fort] Providence were making and I couldn't, I was not pleased with the results. So I experimented with different animals, and . . . butterflies, and birds. I found
I was really good at making animal pictures, and I was happier with the results. So if I don't have to do
flowers, I keep away from making flowers, and I try to come up with different designs to keep the pictures a
little different from each other."

Influence of the market

"When I eventually settled in that area, I got back to it, because the tourists were interested in the
tuftings, and Fort Providence is famous for that. It started out trying to fill a demand for it, for stuff the
tourists wanted. . . . When they go to Fort Providence, moose-hair tufting is usually what they buy to take
back as souvenirs."

The challenge of tufting

"I've been doing moose and caribou-hair tuftings for about ten years. I work mostly with moose hair.
But it's a very time consuming way to do moose-hair tufting, because you have to sort the hair almost
individually. The caribou hair is very fine to work with, really delicate hair. You have to have a steady hand
to work with caribou, but with the moose hair it's a little courser, so you could shape it better without too
much trouble. Up to now, I do other things, and do the tufting on the side. . . . I don't count on it as an
income, because I'm not doing it full-time. I [sell] everything privately, and it's all by word of mouth."

Being an artist

Julia says she considers herself an artist. "Yes I do. I used to work with oil paints years ago, and
switching over to tufting, it's another way of expressing myself. . . . It's a different medium. So for me it was
easy to switch over from oil painting to something different. I tried doing beadwork but I haven't got the
patience to do that type of work. With the tufting, especially when you work on a blank piece of velvet, and
you start adding things here and there, and the pictures start coming out, it's really nice."

Brendalynn begins tufting

Brendalynn learned to do tufting "by watching my mother. She never really sat me down to say 'this is
how you do it', but I've seen her do it for many years. And it was actually out of a request from one of my high
school teachers after I graduated, to make him four pictures, and he sent me four very large pieces of velvet. It was all connected. He wanted four pictures, so all I did was fold it over four times, and I made pussywillows and ptarmigan pictures. And when I brought them to him, he said all he wanted was four single flowers—very small. But I had made these large pictures! And that's how I found out that I did know how to do it." She had observed her mother working, and says "you could be taught, anyone can do or try tufting. However, some of us [seem to] have a natural ability to work with the tuftings."

Feelings about her work

Brendalynn says that doing tufting makes her feel proud. "Sometimes I sound a little bit conceited. I'm good at my work, and I'm very proud of my work, especially my birds, and my whale, I know that my quality of work is good, and it only can get better. Any one of us would be confident and proud of our work and ourselves when the effort and love is put into it."

Materials and purpose

Brendalynn explains about the materials used in tufting. "Black velvet usually shows the colors, brings out the color. When you work with moose hide or caribou hide, or you have home-tanned moose hide or caribou hide the price goes up automatically, because these are hand tanned. We don't tan the hides ourselves, we have to buy it. So the price on the picture goes up quite a bit. Black velvet brings out the colors and seems to add to the picture."

Brendalynn says that they make their pictures "just to make walls beautiful. Beautiful pictures on [the] wall of your home or your office, something that you won't see anywhere else, a conversation piece."

Creativity in tufting

How is the Trennerts' work different? Brenda answers "from a normal person? We're not normal! From people that don't do crafts and art? . . . Creativity. Being able to . . . I look at a picture, and like watercolors, and I could see things that are in it, I see images in it. Whereas if you ask somebody coming off the street, to look at the picture, all they might see is a bunch of colors mixed together. They won't see what I
can see. With my pictures, they're different. It takes a creative mind to come up with new ideas. To be unique."

Teaching others

Both Brendalynn and Julia have demonstrated tufting at the Festival several years, and taught visitors who asked them how to begin tufting. "In Edmonton... just this past year, I [participated in] a multicultural festival day, and... basically the same as here, I demonstrated how it's done. And if anybody wanted to try it, or learn how to do it they could do it. But as for any workshops, or just solely for a person coming [to learn], I haven't done anything like that." Neither of the women have demonstrated their skills in the schools.

Brendalynn says "the only challenge for my mother and I, [is] because we do such unique pictures... I don't think there's too many young people, I'm 23 years old,... people around my age, that can do different things besides the flowers. I think it is slowly dying out. And even though whenever we have a chance to show somebody, whether it be privately or in an art show, or to do with an art show, you have to have that urge to do it.

You have to want to do it. Not for money, not for anything, you have to be proud of your work. I think it is slowly dying out. There's no way you can force anybody to do it, just because they're Native, or they live in a community that this is where they do it [tufting] to get the money from [in order to live]."

Brendalynn says kids should be taught "when they're younger. They shouldn't be forced to do it. It should be offered, but if it's offered, it should be with somebody that has [the] heart to do it. Because if somebody doesn't have heart to show you, you know..." Brendalynn says "I have never had a student that was bad. ... [they] should be proud, ... they tried"

Note: The following year, 1993, Brendalynn came to the Festival by herself. She was producing some very unique images in caribou-hair tufting, and exploring others. In 1994 both Julia and Brendalynn came to the Festival. The other artists voted Brendalynn's work the 'Most Creative Artwork' of the Festival, among all the carvers, painters, and printmakers. She was really pleased with that honor from fellow artists.
In March 1996 Brendalynn had an exhibit of her work in Yellowknife, and a color brochure of her work was produced by Northern Images. In this brochure Brendalynn states "From the beginning I have not stayed with the traditional style of tufting. I thought I would keep my tuftings and make each one different from the one before. I love to blend different cultures together in my designs. I use traditional tufting techniques to create non-traditional designs of birds, animals, people and 'mind benders'. I try not to set or follow boundaries. Our world is full of colours, shapes and possibilities, which can be combined in art." Brendalynn has created a number of designs that symbolize strength and healing, like the one below:

Fig. 44: 'Rebirth' by Brendalynn Inuk Trennert. "I finished this tufting on an evening when someone I knew passed away. I shall always . . . remember: through the cycle of life--we are born, we live, we die, we are reborn."

Other designs represent a spiritual healing of the inner soul.

(Northern Images 1996).
MARY TRIMBLE
Inuvialuit traditional seamstress and stone sculptor
Inuvik, NWT and Nanaimo, B.C.

Fig. 45: Mary working on a stone carving
at the 1996 Great Northern Arts Festival in Inuvik.
MARY TRIMBLE
Inuvik, NWT and Nanaimo, B.C.

In July, 1993 I videotaped an interview with Mary at her sister's house in Inuvik. Just two weeks later, during The Great Northern Arts Festival, their daughter Carol was killed in an automobile crash in B.C. Carol had lived all her life in Inuvik, had served on the Festival Board for several years, and had just moved to B.C. to be near her parents. Bev Lennie and I went to the Memorial service in Inuvik, which was attended by a hundred or so people. That Fall, I visited Lyle and Mary Trimble at their log home and acreage near Nanaimo, B.C. They had just finished enclosing a carpark to make a small gallery area at the front of their house. Lyle's paintings, Mary's dolls, as well as their stone carvings were on exhibit. We had tea, and then Mary and I walked around the artwork and talked about the various pieces on which she had worked.

Childhood and early learning

Mary grew up in a traditional Inuvialuit family, who originally came from the Alaskan Eskimo or Inuvialuit peoples. "My dad, my father, used to do carving. He didn't carve like this, he did something to live with. He made spoons, and he took a sheephorn, and he made a spoon for my mother. Yeah, he did that, so I [watched] him. That's the way it is here... my mother used to make sealskin clothing, and then something waterproof. We didn't have rubber boots then. I learned to do that, but you can't use those now. I guess you could use it, but rubber boots replaces it now."

Traditional sewing

"You start from the very beginning, when I was married, I didn't really know how to sew, because my mom was teaching me as I was growing up. When I got married I had to depend on my mother to show me what I can do." Mary married Lyle Trimble, a non-native pilot, and they raised their family in Inuvik. "Later on, I did sewing for my family--made mukluks, make parkas. And you try and teach your family, your own family, to do your sewing, and you know they did a lot of things like that."
These are my moccasins, my aunty did these, I don't do this [knitting with beads around the back] but I do these part [beading the uppers]. I can do the beadwork, [but] I don't do very much [anymore]. My aunty gave me this so I got them to make shoes for myself."

Sewing now--old skills for new projects

"These are the dolls that I make. I make the ladies [doll] and delta parkas, and these are the men's [doll with traditional parkas]. I make quite a few a year, I would say 20 [dolls] a year, but last year I made ten, that's how much left I have here. I like doing the dolls, it's something for me to do."

Tragedy affects art making

"But after we lost our daughter, I just didn't want to do anything. I have to get back to it. It is really hard. You just lose yourself from doing work that you used to do, but you gotta get up and go. It's really hard."

Influence from others

There doesn't seem to be much mixing between cultural groups in the Delta. "Not really, like the Eskimos too, they do their own thing, the dancing, the drumming, and the sewing, and different things. And the Indians too, they do their own thing--dancing and sewing, and they do the moosehides and stuff. They live together though, even if they do their own thing. You live there, and he's your next door neighbor, but when it's time to do crafts, they do their own thing, and they want to do their own things.

Like when you go to Inuvik [to the Festival], you see someone else's art, and then you look to see what you can do. And then you try and do things like that. And this way when you go to Inuvik, you learn. If you're an artist, and you see someone else's art and see how they do it, and this way it really gives you some ideas. Things to do, and you learn from each other. You learn--that's an idea."

Making art

Mary and Lyle began to carve after their children were grown, and now they work together on carving various kinds of rock. "We got started when Freddie [their son] started to carve, when we start him off. And we said we would do something, and we started it together. I learned [to carve] as we'd go along."
Their son, Fred Iyak Trimble, is quite well known across Canada and the North for his stone sculptures. "Now you make art, like you [are] making art for a living . . . . But rock is very easy to do, you can just carve it with a knife, and its not hard, it's easy to do."

**Working together**

"These are the carvings that we did, my husband and I together. This comes from a big rock, and then when Lyle got it into shape and started working on it . . . we did both work. Lyle cuts them in big pieces, they come out in big rocks . . . really great big rocks. It depends how long you want to work at it, if you want to take time, you take about three months. If you want to make it fast, if you want to rush, you can make it in about a week. You do these with some files, a lot of filing on these, and then small sandpaper. We've not got prices on them yet. We've done them just after we came back from Inuvik, just for something to do. I didn't really start these ones, Lyle started them, and so I finished them off. I did the fine work. Some he does, and some I do. These have been sanded with sandpaper, this part . . . but the top is rough work. That's all one piece. We [used] just the pieces that we had left over from [other carvings to make inukshuks] we didn't want to waste the rock, so we just started that."

**Trying new ideas, experimenting**

"This is a small piece of rock that we want to do something with so we carved a face on it, and then put some coloring to see how it's gonna turn out. So it turned out pretty good. That [dark coloration in the stone] is already there, but we colored the hair. This one we do with electric [dremel]. . . you know, and this has been sanded. The rest is too rough. Same with this one--it's just the way the rock was, it went that way. It's really nice, [like a parent and child]. Yeah I think so. It's almost like a mother--we don't have them [amautis] in the Delta. You have big hood here and the baby --that's the way the Eastern Arctic [make their parkas]--we don't have it in Western Arctic.

That one I like." Mary picks up a piece of stone that has a young face on one side and an old face on the other, entitled 'Wisdom of the elder.' "I like that one. This one [a young woman's head and praying hands] we had from quite a few years ago, Lyle and I did that. It's just like it came out of the water. This was
about three or four years ago we did that. These little ones [small relief carvings on the flat side of a stone] we did just after we came back. You just take a flat rock and trace your animal, and then carve it with a knife. It's really simple. This is very very simple. This little one here, we just started [putting little feet under the carvings], we just start this not long [ago]. We used to have it flat down, but this way you have this little one [bumps for feet], and you don't scrape your table."

Images of the Western Arctic

"We did this one too [a muskox all in one piece of stone]. We usually put a [separate] horn, but we didn't, so we just carved it out of the stone. It looks pretty good too. Also, it is real easy to do this one, no sanding. This one [a relief sculpture of two whales crossed] we just, simple, same thing, you sand this, and then after you work with rough sandpaper, then just fix it like that.

This one's the inukshuk. We just put the stones together, and make them fit and flatten them, we have them [inukshuks] out there too [in the yard] and then they [neighbors] ask us 'what are these things?' Just rocks piled together, and then they would ask us 'what's these things?' Yeah, and that we call the inukshuk. You just put the rocks together and glue them. Any kind of rocks. Lyle used to pin them, I don't do the pinning, now we just glue them. This one (small muskox) we made when we were in Inuvik. We just got it finished just before we left Inuvik. This is what Lyle and I did together.

Mary and Lyle work on almost everything together now. "I should really do something for myself, but I don't know why I never do. I don't know."

Note: The following summer, 1994, Mary brought some of her own new ideas to the Festival in her latest work. She carved a relief image on a moosehorn and stained it, and that piece won an award for one of the most 'creative artworks' of the Festival. She was really pleased. They have also won prizes for their carvings at B.C. art shows in the Nanaimo area. Mary and Lyle now live most of the year in Nanaimo, but go North every summer for several months so Lyle can fly air tours around the Delta.
PEETEEKOOTEE UGYUK
Inuit traditional seamstress & creator of the 'packing dolls'
Taloyoak, NWT

Fig. 46: Peeteekootee holding two of her creations: one of her first 'packing dolls', 'Thunder Woman with Lightning Baby' and slippers she made at The Great Northern Arts Festival, July, 1994.
PEETEEKOOTEE UGYUK
Taloyoak, NWT

This is a summary of Peeteekootee's comments from an interview videotaped at The Great Northern Arts Festival in Inuvik, NWT in July, 1994. Her comments were interpreted on camera by Mona Igutsaq, also of Taloyoak (formerly Spence Bay) in the Central Arctic.

Early learning

"I am Peeteekootee Ugyuk from Taloyoak. I remember the very first time I started sewing was with my mom. My mom let me try—you know how the kamiks get holes on the bottom? And you have to cover them with a piece? That's how I started sewing, first time, helping my mom."

Peeteekootee was born when there were already white men around, and her grandmother died when she was small, so she didn't hear much about the old days before White people came. "My grandmother passed away so I never heard hardly any stories about then. In the past the men used to sew. Even though if I was a man, I would have still done sewing. I never went to school or training, so I learned all my sewing from my mom at home. Later, after putting patches on the soles of the kamiks, I started making little kamiks for my younger sisters. Just trying. Sometimes they don't fit, but when it doesn't work out, I try another one. That's how I started sewing. I had three sisters and brothers. That wasn't too hard on me because it was a small family."

A family of her own

"After that when I was old enough to get married, I got married and started raising my children. That got harder, because there were too many of them, and I had to pack [babies] and have everything ready for all kinds of weather. Each spring, and summer, fall and winter we had to have seasonal clothes, all the time, handmade. So it was getting kind of hard. I had four sons and three daughters. Seven children in all. I had to hand sew for all six of them, the youngest one, I still hand sew his clothes, but not as much as the other ones. Today I'm still not professional, but I know how to make kamiks now."
The packing animals

"The packing animals, the famous packing animals, it started out, all of us [a group of women sewing] together at the same time one afternoon, we were talking about how the animals packing a baby would look, and we were just laughing. Just joking around. You know, we didn't know we were going to get hooked on it, or something. One afternoon they asked me, if I could try something--an animal, packing a baby. And we just laugh our heads off at it, we thought it was silly. So they let me try a fish, and I came back next day with this baby--fish packing her baby. It looked good. You know we like to try, and that's how it started. We got hooked on it." Not long after that, the women of Spence Bay began making 'packing animals' for sale, and they were a big hit across the Arctic and later down South.

Creativity & designing

"Our grandparents they used to use the same pattern over and over, and over again. Like the same old thing all the time, for the same old--gee it was those years. But today it's different, even with us today, I like to add a little bit of something as I'm sewing--little bit different than other times."

When Peeteekootee starts something new she doesn't draw it out on paper, she just thinks about it for a long time. "When we're trying something, at home, in our community, to us, when we're planning something, we don't draw it, we just think about it. And we see it in our mind. And we forget about it, and then few days later, it comes up again. It keeps coming back, and then you have to try it. It looks so perfect, cause your mind works so fast. You see it in your mind, and it looks so perfect, and you don't try it right away 'cause you're not sure if you want to try it, but you have to think about it before you start something. I do that, and Mona does that, too. Your mind is a fast worker, but your hands can't keep up with your mind, so you have to keep planning, until you start cutting it out. It doesn't always really turn out the way you see it in your mind, but you know, sometimes it just turns out perfect. Other times it's hard, but you have to learn from your mistake and try again."
Perserverance & criticism

"In order to keep the packing animals alive you gotta keep going, you gotta keep adding more, something new. You gotta keep going, you gotta keep adding new pieces, or to keep the packing animals going by adding a little bit, every year add a little bit more there, maybe little bit different next year. It doesn't make any difference to sewing them. I like to see adding little bit each time." Peeteekootee says "I'm always happy when I create something. But I'm happier to ask the question before it's done, before it's finished, I'll ask somebody, 'how is this?' If that person say, 'Oh it's so perfect' I get so--glad--that there's no mistake in it. Or if that person I ask says 'do a little bit more work here and there' I'm still happy about that, it doesn't change that. I always thought to myself that I could do something. Even if I turned out to be a man, I would have been sewing, because I love sewing."

The meaning of artwork & helping each other

"It's exciting. Happy to do, but as you go along, you learn more. 'If it's this way, it would be better', or 'there's something wrong with this and this', I don't know. As you go along you learn your mistakes, or if you hurry, or you should do more, or do less--it's exciting to be the creator of the packing animals.

In order to keep going, you gotta be creative, not just yourself, but with other people, they help each other out. So 'let's be creative, and do something different', let's add something different to this, like helping each other out, and it's different. To keep going you gotta be creative.

You don't need to have a word for it [art] but we do. Always trying something new, or always trying--just call your, gee, how can you say it--artist? I'm one of those."

Teaching the next generations

"Today at home, in our community, we teach our younger children and teenagers and they love sewing. They have somebody to teach each other. We don't think about age today, we don't say 'you're old enough to sew'. Right now, we start it right from the beginning like, when they're old enough to hold a needle--they're old enough to sew. They could try anything. At the beginning you have to watch them though, when they're old enough to, as long as when they say, when they're walking or when they want to try
sewing, just let them try. You don't say 'you can't, or 'you're not old enough.' Last year I was helping in school, teaching the kids sewing, and I taught my daughters how to sew too. They are so eager they learn right away.

Note: A month after this interview Peeteekootee represented her community, and presented a packing doll to the Queen when she visited Rankin Inlet, in the Central Arctic. She continues to work and learn with other women at the new women's co-op in Taloyoak (formerly Spence Bay), where Mona Igutsaq serves as Manager.
MARGARET VITTREKWA
Gwich'in traditional seamstress & cultural teacher
Fort McPherson, NWT

Fig. 47: Margaret in the Teacher Education classroom at Arctic College in Fort Smith, in June, 1992.
MARGARET VITREKWA
Fort McPherson, NWT

This is a summary of Margaret's comments from an interview videotaped on July 21, 1992. A short discussion about her work was recorded in June while she was taking a course in the Arctic College Teacher Education program in Fort Smith. She was excited to see the photos of the beadwork in Kate Duncan's 1989 book entitled Northern Athapaskan Art: A Beadwork Tradition. At the Craft Festival in Inuvik her parkas hung on the wall at one end of the room, and her slippers and other work were placed on several tables. She is talking about her work while she is showing it to me.

Early learning at home

Margaret grew up and learned sewing skills from her mother in Aklavik, "not in school, just from my mother. My mother is a really good sewer, she learned from her mother. She wasn't the one that went to school, and she stayed home most of the time, so she knows her work in the house, and then if they have a little spare time, her mother shows her how to do this. So she could sew parkas very well, beading very well, wool and embroidery. All that, she does it by herself, make parkas, mukluks, mitts, everything, because she hasn't been to school, she knows all that. I picked up most of her sewing. I've been doing beading ever since I was 14 years old.

My sister Mary Kendi is in Aklavik... [she is also well-known for her sewing]. We don't put animals on our clothing, it's our tradition I guess. Ever since I've been sewing it's been flowers, just flowers. It takes quite a bit of time to do the embroidery. I just think them up [the designs]. Then later, as we draw it, we just think of the colors that we like to put them in. Of course, we have more colors now, more than we used to have anyway. I use light bright colors, pink, red, blue and green, I seldom use black and brown. I use white for filling in.
It is very interesting to learn different patterns. I asked the girl from Providence to cut me out some of their stuff. Then I went to the museum to see all the patterns. Fifteen years ago I moved here [to Fort McPherson]."

Traditional skills being lost

"There's a couple of women that [tan hides] but it's hard to get them to work with it. They are trying to get a product going so the women would learn how to get back to tanning skins again. Yeah, a lot of the skills got lost. It's hard for them to get the caribou brains. They soak the hides in the [brains] solution which softens it up, that's kind of difficult at times. Very few women do their tanning."

Getting materials

"We get ideas and then we get our materials for the product we want to make, and get enough of it to finish it. It takes time to order--at least two weeks. This here is wolverine. All this, too, we order from Edmonton--from Ken Belcourt. He sells to northern people and he knows what most people need for sewing."

They don't buy at a wholesale price, "We still pay the same amount, that is why the prices go so high, and it makes it difficult to sell. Mooseskin . . . we order from Edmonton. You could use stroud," [a finely woven wool cloth] but 'stroud' retails at over $30 a metre in the north; and 'duffle', [a thick and fuzzy woven wool cloth like blanket cloth] retails at almost $50 a metre. So materials are very expensive for women to purchase."

Special techniques in beading

The women of Fort McPherson are known for their intricate beading techniques. They bead not only the 'uppers' [top of the foot] of the moccasins or slippers, but also bead a band around the sides and back of the foot, in different ways. "These are 'knitted' by hand, you can make these [beaded bands around the back of slippers] in hearts, heart shapes, or in stripes. [Knitting with beads is done] by using just one beading needle. [You] thread five beads, put it into the center bead of the next. [They are knitted first] without a backing, [like a beaded lace] and then you put it onto this stroud."
This solid work we do, it's on a stroud, and you—press them together so they are the same [design] on both sides, and then start beading--decide on the colors. This at least takes a couple of weeks. Over here, is the zigzag pattern--just use different colors, and the beading here [on the uppers] is solid work again. Then just put the bottom hide on it, [and it takes] not long.

Fig. 48: Knitting with Beads, an example made by Effie Blake of Ft. McPherson.

Other ways of beading include those "done on string on the loom, and you just pick out your own design, you just figure out what you want to make on it. They put it onto white leather. There's the little booties here--one is done on the loom and one is done by hand."

Wearing traditional clothing

"They [women and men] do wear their traditional clothing when there's special events--the leather dresses--with fringes on it. The really fancy dresses, white ones, made with stroud or leather. Mukluks they make their own, and slippers."
Beading and sewing in school

"The young women are not learning much [traditional skills] at home. That's true because they have the home economics teacher, she's a woman from Fort McPherson, and she teaches girls how to bead on the loom, [and] get their own designs.

In the school they started this beading on the loom, with just string. They are making their own mukluks, and slippers, their own handbags, earrings, these are the girls that are in school. The boys sometimes they do too. They learn from age 10 to 15 or so. Yeah, they're quite anxious to learn, they're most interested in those twisted earrings."

Margaret's work at the Craft Festival

"There's the two [pair] there, I got about four or five pairs [of slippers]. These are large men's slippers, with blue [beaded] roses, lined with beaverskin, [the back is] blue stroud and red felt [with beads dotted along the edges]. These are ladies slippers, which are not too difficult. They are usually [priced at] $180. These are with beaverskin, [and these are] lined with white rabbit fur. And then, over here, the sides are with felt and stroud, lined with beaver. There's a hairpin here somewhere. I don't make dolls."

Margaret made several parkas to sell at the Craft Festival, all beautifully embroidered on the yoke, with some embroidery also on pockets or cuffs. "This one has the lining inside--the satin lining. It's very warm. This too is stroud--this child's parka is for a 8-year old. A woman's, and men's parka, they take at least two weeks [to embroider]. This [sewing it together] is not difficult, you can do that in a couple of days."

Balancing time and price

"I've got $200 on it. It doesn't really [pay for the time]. But if we have it [priced at] more than that, it doesn't really sell, because of the price. The work here itself is just really fine and it takes time. This white jacket, it sold all right--and it went for about $300, [it is] white stroud. This one is fur, and I did that one all in roses."

Note: Margaret completed the Arctic College Teacher Education program in 1993. She is well-respected for her beading and sewing skills, and teaches in the Fort McPherson elementary school.
RUTH WRIGHT

Gwich'in paper artist, Fine Arts graduate, and Arts Festival Board Member.

Inuvik, NWT.

Fig. 49: Ruth Wright in April 1996 touring the Canadian Museum of Civilization in Hull, Quebec.
RUTH WRIGHT
Inuvik, NWT

Following is a summary of Ruth's comments videotaped in an interview, in the cafeteria of the Inuvik Hospital, on July 31, 1996. Ruth was overdue to deliver her eighth child.

Childhood and early learning

"My mom had two children before me, but they both passed away, so I am the oldest in my family. Out of all of us there are only four left: that's me, Dennis, Karen and Elaine. Because of the way I am I take over the family whenever I get a chance, I'm boss in my family.

My mother's side of the family comes from Old Crow in the Yukon, and her father came from Circle, Alaska. My Dad's side of the family, his mother comes from Aklavik and that General area, she's Gwich'in as well, but my Dad's father came from the United States, I think it was Indiana. But his Grandmother and grandfather are English. So I have a whole bunch of things in me. I'm a half-breed. I'm from Inuvik, I consider myself a Gwich'in Canadian. Mostly I'm just from Inuvik, I'm just one of those town people."

Learning the old ways

"When I was very very small we lived in the bush until I was about four years old. My mom and dad had a sawmill up past Fort McPherson, and my mom had a big garden out at the back. She used to take us out there every day and in the winter she'd set snares around, and my dad had a sawmill and he had lumber, and we'd go to town and go to different places. Once we moved out of there we moved to Fort McPherson, and then he started his own business. From there we moved from one community to another to another one, until I was about eight years old I think. We moved here, there, and everywhere all over the Northwest Territories. We'd stay in one place for so long, my dad would move 'till school was over then we'd follow.

When we lived out in the bush, my mom always had her cousins from Old Crow come over, and they always beaded and sewed. My mom couldn't bead very much because she had an artificial eye, and it bothered her to bead--her other eye would get tired. So I used to sit around and watch them bead. Of course I tried to
learn, but I could only bead with one needle. And here, everybody was beading with two! Everything I ever
learned I've learned to do a different way from any normal person. I always find my own way to do things. My
aunties and cousins from Old Crow used to come over and they used to sew and bead, when we'd go to Fort
McPherson we used to go to old people's houses so there'd always be something there to do.

This old man used to make snowshoes, and I'd want to learn how to do that. I'm thirty years old, and I
finally learned how to make a dreamcatcher, and that's basically the same thing as a snowshoe dog harness and
bells. I've always wanted to learn how they do things like they did long time ago--like fishnets. I wonder how
they make those fishnets? You can't go up to anybody and ask them because hardly anybody knows how to
make them now. Hardly anybody knows how to make those really nice beaded and embroidered dog packs,
with the little bells on it, that all the dog packs had. People used to make everything--all these brand new
items with as much flowers and colors as possible, and each mother and grandma used to make their whole
family a new parka, new mitts, new shoes, this is beaded and embroidered, and it was gorgeous. Christmas and
Easter they'd sew like crazy, and now hardly anybody does that anymore.

They did not call it art, it was what you wore--it was your clothing. Anybody could go practically
anywhere up in the Delta, and you'd know who made that because it was their style of clothing, their style of
sewing. They didn't even have to sign it. Old people can still find old slippers and say 'Oh you know such and
such did that,' because they remember what she used to do. And men used to do it too, not only women.
Men used to sew as well, as far as I remember, I know lots of men who sew. Try and tell that to men
nowadays, they don't believe you."

**Delta Braid**

Ruth guessed at the origins of Delta Braid. "It probably has something to do with long time ago, when
in the middle of winter, you see someone coming down [the road] their style of parka, whether or not it had a
trimming on it, you could recognize the person because of the style they had on. I'm sure once more and more
material came in, people started making their own design and you could say 'Ah this person made that design,'
and you'd recognize that person because otherwise you'd just see a bundle of fur coming down the street."
Formal schooling

Ruth started school in these various communities. "It was kind of lonely because you never got to stay in one place very long to make friends. So I was always a little outsider. I'm very bad with names. Everybody can remember me, I know their faces, but I'll be darned if I can remember their names. I've known people 20-30 years, and I still don't know what their name is. Of course, I'm too embarrassed to ask. But they know me, I'm like that.

[In school, art] wasn't structured. You could do anything in art, it was fun. I'm going to get off on this, but I always say its fun. I don't mean fun being lazy and not having to do things, it's fun, it's exciting, you get a bunch of energy, you get to go out there and fiddle around, you get to paint. And even if you didn't paint real good, the teacher would always say 'Oh that's very nice'—it was encouraging. If you didn't sculpture, if you didn't know how to do it really good, and somebody over there can make a polar bear or a little man and it looks real, even your little abstract thing, they come along and say 'That's very creative'. It was good, I just loved it. You didn't have to be like everybody else to do that." Ruth was introduced to all kinds of pencils, paints, clay and other mediums in school.

"Mom always tried to get us other stuff to do at home—we're not allowed to be lazy. Like if we weren't outside playing, which she considered good, like we were always allowed to, encouraged to go out and play--40 below weather. Mind you, in those days 40 below weather we used to go out and swing and slide and play around and have fun out there. Nowadays you send a kid out to play and they wait for somebody to turn on a battery of some sort. In those days you had to use your imagination. And you could be warm out there in 40 below, you just had to dress for it. You weren't allowed to come in and just sit around and ho hum the way most kids do now. You had to do something. You either sat there and practiced your writing, you read a book, or you drew, or you beaded or sewed or tried to do something. You weren't allowed just to sit around. They should've thrown televisions out long time ago."
Gwich'in women

In my family, because my mom had TB when she was young, very young, she went to Edmonton and spent years there. So her whole idea of a 'Gwich'in woman', was [different]. Everybody up here [thought] 'you have to do this, you have to get married, you have to have kids and so forth'. She believed in that, but she also believed that women are allowed to do what they want. So she never ever told us we have to do this or that. It was, 'you make up your mind on what you've learned so far, and that's what you're going to be, or that's what you're going to do.' It wasn't that we weren't allowed to dress this way or that way, Mom always believed in God, but she didn't force it on us. She was always there whenever we went to church, she sang hymns at home once in awhile, it was fun. It was fun because you'd know them, and it was just something that, not like most kids now days, like 'church ahhh' you know, it was something we grew up with. Like CBC radio, it was always on in the background--you knew everything if you listened to the CBC.

Church influence

Because we lived here, there, and everywhere, we got involved with a lot of different families that went to church. One year we were settled in Fort Franklin, and Mr. and Mrs. Cummings had a ministry there, and we got to do crafts in their house. So that was really lots of fun. She'd bring out playdoh, 'Playdoh, what's that?' We'd have string art, and painting, and we'd learn to do lots of little things that was just fooling around so we could sit there at the same time and hear our verses, or practice our verses. It was educational but lots of fun."

Ruth talked about customs, like elder women wearing kerchiefs, that may be related to church-going. "It probably [was] a long time ago--in some communities they do [wear kerchiefs] and in some they don't. That's mostly Anglican. But you go down the Mackenzie [River] and mostly the RC [Roman Catholic] communities, they all wear kerchiefs. The women who don't wear kerchiefs in town, will wear kerchiefs to church. Could it have to do with the bugs? You never know--we could have been wearing kerchiefs eons ago, and called them bug protectors! "
School and learning

"I hated high school. I think from grade four on, I really did not like school. In grade four, the teacher had us do a spelling bee, and most children, if you get it wrong, you get to sit down. But she kept on and kept on, and made me stand there and try and try, and I finally sat down and said I was never ever going to spell. Then when I got to high school, you were allowed to do so much more stuff, you were allowed to take shop with the boys if you want, and wow, you were allowed to be a carpenter if you wanted. So away I went—mind you, I was the only girl in carpentry. But it was good, I enjoyed it, I got to learn so much more stuff. With girls you get to learn sewing and cooking and crocheting and knitting and little stuff like that, which you basically already should know by the time you get there. Nowadays they don't, most kids don't even know how to cook by the time they are in high school. Then [with boys] we got to learn shop, we got to do things with metal, on the lathe, lamps. You could do other stuff, you didn't have to be this way or that.

They had music classes, so I took up music, the first day I just, by fluke, happened to get the right notes, and I thought it was easy. As the week wore on, [I realized] that was really a lucky break—'you don't have a voice'. I could recognize when somebody else was playing a good tune, playing the music in tune, but I could never do it myself. It's like singing, I can tell when somebody was off key, but I could never sing properly. But I love singing, and I sing loud. And they had photography classes there too.

One year, in high school we had lots of things to do, we got to do extra science. We got to go in on saturdays, sometimes to do extra school work, extra projects, I don't know how long that went on but it was fun. You could do one whole week of this, and then if you got tired, you got to say, 'I'm not going to do this any more, I'm going to go over here' and they let you! It was beautiful. So I got to do some science and some social studies, learning about the sky and all the planets and it was wonderful. They weren't doing things to schedule. They were doing not what they were supposed to, but a little bit off-beat, which is what I like to do. I never did get to the end of high school.

In my first year of grade nine, I fiddled around a lot, and I didn't quite like the teachers, so of course, I failed. So the second year I thought, 'This year I'm going to go in there and do my darndest, I'm going to pass and I'm going to show everybody.' So I went back, and I ended up getting married on November 1, 1977."
Marriage and family

"I was seventeen. I met George, he was Greek. He came up here for a holiday to visit his cousin, about four or five months later I decided, "Well, he's going to leave soon, if I got married to him I could get my own house." I know it doesn't make sense, but then ... so I went home and said 'Mom I'm going to get married. You have to come up and sign some papers.' She said 'You're going to get married, to who?' So I told her, and she said 'Well, if that's what you want to do, and so they came up and signed the papers for me because I was under age. I went out and got married. I was pregnant. He didn't stay, he had to go back to Greece. He wanted me to go back to Greece with him. He came up on a holiday for about 6 months or so, and he was supposed to go to the States after that, so after about five months we got married, and then a month after that we went to Edmonton. But I was not about to go and leave the country with him, whether to the States or back to Greece, because I was going to get my own house, and I was going to fix it all up, and I was going to have a baby, and aah [live happily ever after] without George. He was going back to Greece, I never thought he might want to come back. And so, bye, away he went."

Ruth got her own house. "We rented in Inuvik. But it was my house--nobody tells you what to do, what time to go to bed, what time to get up, what to eat, or anything. And I got to decorate, oh I had fun, lots of fun. I was all by myself, and at first you hear all these wild stories about having babies, and how hard it is, the labor, and the pain and everything. 'Oh my goodness, what am I going to do?' I was a nervous wreck for awhile. But I thought, 'People have been doing it for years around here, they do it in the bush, they do it in their tent, I'm sure I can survive.' I was only in labor for three hours, and I had a little baby boy [Harley]. I loved being pregnant. You feel so much more energetic, you feel--creative is what you feel."

Ruth's husband George "Stayed there [in Greece] for six months, and then he came up here, and he stayed, and we settled down. He was working at the restaurant with his cousin, who owned the restaurant. We had another little girl [Angela]. He took my boy over to Greece for a holiday to meet his parents, and then he came back. After that, about a year later, we were going to break up, and he wanted to take Harley back to Greece. And I thought, 'If my parents lived in Greece, and I came over here with George, I'd want
them to know my kids.' So I didn't feel any hostility for giving him permission to take him over there, to get to
know them. Well, he did take Harley over to Greece, and then he said he wouldn't bring him back.

So I was really upset, but ... They need a chance to grow up in their culture, and learn their
traditions, and that was okay. They'll eventually come back. And so, life went on.

Visit to Greece, learning another culture

I went over there with Angela two years later. We stayed there for six and a half months, and had a
wonderful time. We had lots of fun. We did a whole bunch of things. When I went over there I couldn't
speak any Greek, my in-laws didn't speak any English, Harley could understand English a little bit, and he
couldn't speak it very much, so we had to rely on neighbors. Thank goodness there's lots of people in Greece
who know how to speak English. It was fun, I got to do a whole bunch of things over there too. I met people
from all over the world, who have gone there to live. Here in Inuvik, alot of people drink and they get drunk.
In Greece, they can get up in the morning, and start drinking and they will be drinking all day long, a little bit
here, a little bit there, and they never get drunk! Honest to goodness, I couldn't understand it. One of the
people I met there, he is from New York, his family's from Greece and he goes back every year, he says
probably their metabolism, their bodies are so used to it. I was there six months and I only saw two drunk
people. Wow.

But they're so traditional, like in the little village we lived in ... At first they consider you American,
until you say, 'No, I come from Canada', and then you just get practically royal treatment. I think that has to
do with the war and everything. But it was wonderful. Being a Canadian in Greece, you don't have to go by
their customs.

They thought I was Greek first of all, but I might have some sort of a face, I just fit in everywhere,
because people came up and talked to me in Egyptian, and in Hebrew, Turkish, they just expected me to
understand. It took awhile, and after they found out I was Canadian, they'd grab someone to translate so it
was good ...
The people in the villages, and how they live [is different]. The people got up in the morning really early, by six or seven, they'd go out and work in the field all day long, and then in the evening, say 5 or 6 o'clock at night, they'd totally change. They look like they come from New York City sophistication or what? They'd walk down on the front of the boardwalk, they'd sit down and have their coffee and french fries, and they are totally different people. In the morning you'd see them in their little kerchiefs riding on their donkeys, and in the evenings they're totally different. And farmers, they'd be out there all day working and slaving, and at night they got suits on and they look like businessmen. That really struck me as strange, just how the people acted. Another thing too, was when a relative comes, and just about one of each family lives somewhere else in the world on that island, my second cousin such and such lives in New York, my third cousin lives over here in Germany. They all come and they all speak different languages and the kids all speak different languages, by the time they leave they are all speaking little bits of each other's [language], so it feels more of a world thinking.

I like independence, I don't like people telling me what to do. He [George] was more traditional than I could handle. So Harley stayed in Greece with George, and I brought Angela back. It was November when I came back, and there was no snow there, I don't know how people could stand it. I really did miss the snow, I thought, when you're up here and its forty below, you go 'Oooh it's cold, I wish it was summer', but when you're actually there and there's no snow, its like 'Holy, what's going on, it's November, and there's supposed to be snow'. And it was raining over there. So I really missed the snow, and when I left Greece it was twenty above, and when I arrived in Inuvik 17 hours later and it was thirty below in Inuvik. Oh I loved it. It was nice to be back home." After Ruth returned, she had Nicki, and "a year later we started divorce procedures, and I gave him [George] custody of both [older] children..."

**Work and single parenting**

"I worked part time. There was me, my sister Karen, and Nicki, we had $75 a month from my work, plus any babysitting job that came along we took it. Goodness we even had steaks sometimes, if you can budget you can survive on anything. It was wonderful—that whole year and a half we stayed there.
I went back to upgrading, and my sister in law dared me--I couldn't get a job. Well, I got a job in Arctic Red, Secretary, mind you I can't spell worth beans. I can spell with the computer check. It was a very good job too, $18 an hour plus extra benefits, for a person who couldn't spell worth beans, I was just wonderfully employed. And it was good...

We stayed there for three and a half years--me and Nicki and [a new baby] Dusty. Then I had Ryan. We stayed in Arctic Red and then Harley came over and stayed with us for three years during this time. Brian [Nicki, Dusty and Ryan's father] was here [in Inuvik]. He wasn't a part of our family, he was just--their father. We stayed in Arctic Red, Harley went back to Greece because his father came and took him back".

During this time Ruth was doing a little artwork. "I wouldn't call it artwork, I always call it crafts, because its not like things people would buy. I mean they always offer to buy my plant hangers or my macrame or my sewing, or other stuff, but I never do that. I'd say, T'll show you how to do it and you make your own.' But I wouldn't sell anything because its too personal. Even now I have trouble selling my stuff, because I have more fun making it. Carving, my God, I don't think I'll ever sell a carving, you put so much of yourself into it, you figure it out, and you chip away, and sand and polish it and everything else, and there it's finished, it's done, it's yours. How do people sell their work? I still can't figure it out--amazing."

Mother dying

"Then we were trying to move back to Inuvik, my mom was sick, she had cancer." Ruth moved to Inuvik to help her mom. "...Because we found that she had cancer early on, we were able to talk about it, we're the type of family, the way we are, we could talk about things that most people up here don't talk about. If they find out somebody's dying, they don't talk about the person dying, they talk about other things. ... I mean, we weren't being rude or anything like that, it was a way to get over all these feelings and get them out in the open and talk about it. Mom died on March 1, 1991."

Land claims

"I moved back to Arctic Red and got a job for the summer there, with the land claims. Inuvik was home, every weekend we came back to Inuvik, well, every weekend except break-up and freeze-up, then we
were stuck in Arctic Red. Every weekend we'd hitchike over, in the middle of winter and the middle of summer, four of us—Nicki, Ryan, Dusty and me—three kids. I learned a lot then, doing the land claims. . . . We had to write everything out in basic English, we had everybody come in and do a little tour, and we explained to them what first happened right through to what we want to happen. It was very informative, and just about everybody knew. We had translators for the old people, and it was very nice."

House fire and death of children

"That summer we came back we were going to stay in Inuvik, and we were looking around for a house. [One weekend] we came over for a friend of my mother's who passed away, Mr. Adams. We had to stay at a friend's house, that night there was a big fight outside, inside and outside, and the RCMP picked up this guy, and we had to go to court in the morning. So me and my sister got up in the morning, and we asked the man of the house to watch the kids, and he said 'yep', he was watching TV, we went off to court. They said 'nobody's here, come back in half an hour'. So we went for a walk, and came back in half an hour, 'Oh they're still not here, they're going to be here in another hour, can you come back?' So we went to the post office, and then we heard that the house was on fire.

My kids passed away. And my sister's kids passed away too. It was Dusty and Ryan, Tamara and Lesliana, and Loretta's little boy, Jimsey. They all passed away in the fire. A little boy had started the fire and got out. Well, when he ran out, there was a child-proof lock on the door—the child-proof lock locked—they couldn't get out. Because it was the old houses, it went poof. The kids tried to rescue the turtles. We got two turtles [out], one of them was under Tamara. The other one that was crawling around, it died as well, a couple of days later. My sister hates turtles now. But me, I can't help it, they're the only things that survived, so I like them. One turtle survived--its the biggest turtle we have now."

Acceptance

"It's like, that's what is supposed to happen. In my opinion, it's—that's life. You can't say, 'Darn you, God' or anything like that, because there's a time to be born and time for you to live and time for you to die, so whether or not we were there, it was still going to happen. So I guess that's how I survive."
That happened on Friday the 13th [of September]. When I went to tell Nicki, she was at school. I walked in and told the front desk what had happened, and they went and got Nicki. She came out, and I went out on the balcony of the school with her. I told her 'I've got some terrible news.'

I got to tell Nicki and she didn't believe me, so my sister told her, and she didn't believe her, and the nurses told Nicki again, and so she finally believed. She was all upset. But [for me] it was like, starting then I was 'Okay, I've got to deal with all these people, no time to grieve.' So I don't think I had ever dealt with that sort of stuff yet. Either for my mom or my dad, or my kids--in my family lots of people have died. It's something normal. Everybody dies eventually. That's what I tried to tell Nicki that time, everybody is born, they live, they die. From the minute you're born, you're just living until you die. It could be a little time or a long time. So she got over that, I think. She got what I was trying to say, but that whole week was a kind of a blur. After that I moved in with Brian. We got an apartment, and I had Ayla a month later... Then we had Kenny, then we moved into the big house with four bedrooms and a big living room, and that is when art school came along.

**Festival artwork**

After the kids died in [our house fire in] September, 1991, that next summer, 1992, I wanted Nicki to do things, because she wouldn't leave me alone, I had to be with her all the time. Everywhere we'd go I'd practically have to hold her hand to the bathroom after this, she didn't want me to leave her. I don't know what she was scared of, she didn't want me to leave her, so I wanted her to get involved with other kids. And she was not the type of person to do that at that point. So I said, 'the arts festival's coming up, why don't you join that, see if you can volunteer to do something?' Well, she wouldn't do that so I had to join with her. Oh I just loved it. Boy I had so much fun, you get to learn little bits of this and little bits of that, I learned so much from them. Then I went home and started fiddling around all during the winter season, and in '93 again we participated, and then '93-'94 that Strings Across the Sky first came up, and I told 'Nicki you've got to learn how to play musical instruments--it's good for you always--fiddling is a wonderful way to live up here.' And so she joined. The first day she went she stayed a couple of minutes and came home, and said 'I can't do it if
you're not going to do it', so I had to go with her. So I learned to play the fiddle a little bit and I still know how. Mind you I never practice. It's Nicki who has to practice—we bought her a violin. Brian bought it for her, she still practices today, she's still learning. Every time I tried to get her involved to get out and spread her wings and leave me alone, she dragged me along with her."

Learning new skills

"This was 1993, and when I came back I took a carpentry course [at Arctic College] and we built a whole house from scratch, which was good. I learned a lot, and I passed. I passed on all the paper stuff, the heavy parts were where I had my trouble, lifting up boards, and drywall, and climbing on the roof to do the rafters, all that stuff was a little bit difficult, but I survived.

Then we did the Fine Arts program, and I found out Joanne was teaching it, and 'I'll be your volunteer—I'll even help' because you weren't allowed to join, [it was limited to age] 18 to 24—that was at first. Then she said 'Put your application in, they've expanded it, and aahhh! We had a wonderful time. All the years I'd been helping with The Great Northern Arts Festival, I'd saved all my stuff I'd been practicing on, that was my portfolio to get in on this class.

Therapeutic artwork

The first sculpture we did, we were given a 4 x 6 x 10 piece of stone, and we had to carve something, having never carved before except fiddling around with a file at the Festival, because it takes too long to carve. You can't do it in two weeks or ten days when you're at the Festival. So I never did accomplish a carving. I thought a simple little curve here and there, I'll just do an abstract and that'll be it. I started and pretty soon there was an abstract woman. And then she was holding a baby. I thought 'Okay, this is really easy, I can really carve.' I was ready to do the scratching out the face of the woman and the baby, and I thought 'Okay, this is my mom holding my kids, this is a tribute to my mom, Dusty and Ryan.' This is mom, Dusty and Ryan, that's what's going on. It just came out all by itself in a carving, you look at it now, and all the lines are just where they're supposed to be, the colors are where they're supposed to be. The carving
representing my mom, the face part of my mom is really dark, the face part of the kids are really light—just the stone that's there, just like it was meant to be. I just had to go in there and find it."

Healing

Ruth said she was able to process some of her grief through the carving process. "Especially the sanding part, and the polishing part, that's what does it for me. You get a lot out, you have to think, you're sitting there for hours polishing it, you think a lot doing it. You're really not doing anything else, but you sit there and you think and it does wonders. Doing that [sculpture] was really the starting of my grief. The starting of my repairing myself. When we did painting we had to do abstract as well. And as I was painting [the piece I] called 'Lonely standing in the window', if you look at it, you can see three colors: white, blue and really dark blue just about black. You can see little planes in the background and this shadow—that's me looking in or looking out, but you're lonely and you're just standing there looking at them. Those two pieces went together.

Then I wanted to do something that I can say 'This is for my mom', because my mom has done everything for us. So I wanted to give something back out there, so I did this little abstract carving, its very abstract, a little woman with one breast missing, but she survived and she's holding up her little flame like the Olympic people. I just need to make a base for it, one of these years I finally will, but I want it to be made out of wood, I don't want it to be made it out of stone, I don't know why. I'm going to donate it to the hospital cancer society, once they start it. They have started it here and there, but they never get it off the ground. Once they do its theirs just to help raise money or just whatever.

There's no use being lonesome or depressed or anything, it doesn't do you any good. I think the reason I [laugh a lot] is because when I am depressed I am very depressed. Its just no good for me either. It just brings everybody down. I'm mad and I'm miserable, and I'm grumpy and everything else. But I figured if you're one of those happy little people, like my mom used to say 'hello' to everybody on the street and I used to wonder about that when I was small. And after awhile I started saying 'hello' to everybody, and everybody says 'hello' and smiles back at you. Everybody knows who you are and they ask how your family is, and they know
everything about you. You might not know who they are or what their names are, or anything about them, but they always say 'Hi, how are you? How's the kids, and what are you up to?' and its nice. It's nice when people say 'hello' to you on the street and you say 'hello' back. Even if they don't say 'hello' back its nice to give this out for you. It brightens up your day."

**Motherhood and creativity**

Ruth always seems to have lots of energy. Ruth said that when she does something creative she feels "energised, . . . when you're doing something creative and artistic it just gives you life. It adds to you. I feel like I have to do it. Even at home, if we're making bread or something, we always save a little piece to be creative with later, to make little men or faces or turtles and we bake that, me and Ayla. Nicki, I try to get her involved in everything I can. She's learned to do a lot of things, and I think she'll be okay. I want her not to be scared to try new things. I want her to go out and try even bungee jumping if she wants to, and not be scared. I would [go first] I'm one of those people, like I said before, you can say 'I bet you can't' and I'll go out and do it just to prove to you that I could. Unless its really really really dangerous.

I hope one day to get more into making things with welding—bigger stuff. I like papermaking now because its different and nobody else is doing it. One day I hope to make something bigger that you can see from a distance."

**The next generations**

"Little threads go through everything. You learn one thing over here and it helps you over there. Its all connected. I think kids should be allowed to just play with pots and pans, bang them around, to play with dirt. Even playing with dirt, just making a mound and pretending its a castle, is a little artwork in itself. Playing with pots and pans, they're creative, they could put them on their head and be a soldier, and that is good. I refuse to let my kids watch cartoons, we don't have cable, I wouldn't let them. I want them to get something up here that's called imagination. I want them to start using it.

Nicki, because I was going to work in Arctic Red, she was just starting grade one, and they did a lot of cartoon things there, they had a computer and everything, but she came home and she watched cartoons.
And then you'd say 'Nicki go play outside', it's like 'What am I going to do out there?' Well, Hello. Kids are like that nowadays, you cannot send them out to play unless you send something out with them, that's going to-it will do this, now it's your turn to do something. I want my kids to go out on a pile of rocks and have fun. Just using their imaginations.

When my older kids were small, I used to take a bunch of kids from the neighborhood. They had to have a dollar, we'd go to the movies, at family hall, walk home and collect things, and iron them between wax paper, and make things to hang up. We'd go for nature walks anywhere around town, we called it 'walk around the world' where we'd walk around the utilidor down by the old west end of town, down by the lake, and we'd collect little junk, and then when we'd get home, they'd make up stories and pretend. Get them out there and do things that's not structured. What I mean by structure, is that someone in authority says you have to do it this way, you have to do this or that. I don't know about this computer stuff-they've got everything computerized.

You go in and some schools have art at a certain time and you do this and this and you go out. You go over to here and you do this and this, and you come out. Although you do get the education they're telling you to get, you're still not really broadening your mind. It would be nice if they said children can stay home until they are about seven or eight, or nine, and learn more how to be interactive with other people. A little bit more of their traditional knowledge. Then when they are a little bit older, then go to school and start having things done this and this [structure].

I was home-schooling Nicki but I stopped last year because I couldn't deal with everything that was going on and continue homeschooling Nicki. It was getting too feathered--and she wasn't able to concentrate properly. So she went to school in Fort Smith with my sister. She went to school in the daytime, and babysat while my sister went to night classes. When she came back here, she wanted to go back to home-schooling, because her, at twelve, she wasn't learning at school what she could learn at home-schooling. They weren't teaching her as much or she wasn't comprehending as much. At home, you go by your own pace. But if you're slow, you still get it. Now days, they go to school, and let them go on. There's kids here in her grade 6 class that missed 90 days out of the year, and they still pass. They don't know how to spell by the time they get to
grade 10 and then the teachers say 'Hmmm, what's your problem? Well, goodness.' I don't know how they could do it nowadays, where they could say 'Everybody--the parents, should stay home and teach the kids, and then [later] go to school'. With all this inflation everybody would be broke and poor. You need basically two incomes to survive nowadays."

Artwork now

Ruth loved participating as an artist at the Festival last year. "I didn't take any pressure being an artist because it didn't bother me not to sell anything. I had fun just making it and demonstrating it. I still have people coming up to me on the street, asking me if I'm going to give another workshop. I still enjoyed taking other workshops with other artists. I can now look at their work and appreciate it a lot more, because I went to school for my first year, and I know a bit more about each technique and each style they're doing. It was really interesting trying to see how things developed. Some people were really a little bit too creative for this time.

I still make slippers every once in a while, every year I make a pair just to prove I can do it. I still sew parka covers, and in my family in Old Crow, everybody still does their mukluks, their slippers, parkys. It would be nice to be rich to have money to [go back to Old Crow more often].

I'm going to start trying to do more of a wider variety of things at home. We've already started to set up a little workshop at home in a closet. The whole family's getting involved, they tear up my paper, we go collecting plants, that's one of their big things to go out for a walk and collect plants. 'What color is this going to make, mom?' I was trying to explain to them that if we make it really flat we can put it inside the paper, and so they are waiting to see how we do that. They try to help do artwork, their biggest thing nowadays is their chalkboard and chalk. I got them big sidewalk chalk. We make papier mache stuff."

Meaning of artwork

"I feel good. There are people out there who appreciate the type of things I'm doing, and I love doing it. I love making paper. My paintings are still abstract, my carvings are still abstract, and I'm sure if I worked on it I could expand it, and people up here they don't appreciate abstract. I like doing things that I can see a
result in right away, instead of like carving, I'm not keen on carving because it takes so long to do. But I like the end result. I'm sure as I get older, I'll appreciate doing it more. I'm getting there. The different things you can do with, like paper. The type of paper I make is unique, I'm planning to make a series for Christmas.

I think women are a little bit more creative than men. I don't know how that's going to sound, but I do. Women are more expressive in what they do, whereas men have learned to hold back, and a few men, you try to explain to them, but they don't want to try. Well, now they don't want to try because they just can't comprehend that it's not work.

I think having another baby is just going to be more creative. The type of work I do, you can do it in a little tiny space as long as you have air space above, you just need a little bit of things here and there. On one little table you could make a hundred pages in one day. I feel really good [when I make art]. I'm not a very good housekeeper, if I could [clean] my living room, I wouldn't feel half as good as if I'd made a hundred pages [of paper]. It feels like you've done something, that you've accomplished something, and somebody's eventually going to look at it and say 'My that's wonderful,' you know. Even if they don't, so what, you feel good, you don't need that. But if they do, it just gives you tingles all over anyway."

Note: Ruth had a baby boy just two days after this interview and is busy with her children and making paper again. She got a NWT Arts Council grant to go to Edmonton for a week's workshop at a Papermaker's shop there. She serves on the Arts Festival Board and at the 1997 Festival, she was given a special award for being an "Outstanding Board Member."
Fig. 50: Ruth with 2 of her children, sorting out the Artist Awards for the 1996 Festival.
CHAPTER FOUR: DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

The perspectives of the women artists in this study were shaped by a variety of factors; some were within their control or choice, while others were not. These 'facts of life' were not the major questions of this study, but they must be acknowledged as shaping the perceptions of each woman whose voice is heard in these pages. From the outset, it was apparent that the women were at different stages of their lives, but I did not directly ask the women for basic information on age, birthplace, marital status and number of children. I asked them to introduce themselves, and to talk about their families and early learning. Some of these facts emerged during each interview, and a profile of each woman grew out of a synthesis of her own words, in combination with widely known facts, information from outside sources, and my personal observations or deduction.

Commonalities among the women include gender and residence: all are women, all are artists or art educators to some extent, and all now live in the Western Arctic. Framing these women as individuals, in the context of their communities and the region, helps us to understand them both as women and as artists.

Factors influencing the women's comments

Some of the factors influencing the women's development include place and year of birth, gender, sibling order and family, first language, culture, inherited lifestyle, cultural/spiritual beliefs and traditions experienced in their childhood. From their late teens, the women may have had some control over factors such as marital status, number of children, level of education, length of residence in the North, and traditions kept, although they may not have believed they had a choice in these matters. Facts of the women's lives and identities are important to the process of
summarizing and analyzing the individual interviews. These essential facts of their lives influenced their personal comments and responses to my questions.

For the purposes of this discussion, as stated earlier, the women may be referred to in three major groups by heritage: The Inuit (including Inuvialuit), the Dene (including Metis), and all others grouped under the term 'non-native'. Sometimes the first two groups are combined as 'Indigenous', 'Aboriginal', or 'Native' women, although all three terms have slightly different meanings (see 'Definition of terms' in Chapter One). The women themselves often refer to particular sub-groups, such as Gwich'in or Chipewyan (Dene). When the women are grouped generally by age, such as 'elders', or according to their marital or parental status, such as wives, mothers or grandmothers, each grouping creates an interesting profile.

**Commonalities and questions of choice**

The women have many shared interests, including their partners, children, extended families, education, religion, region of residence, health, and the arts. All the women were taught Christian (Protestant or Catholic) religion as children, which became part of their home-based values and spirituality. When the women are grouped by heritage and age, major differences appear between the groups. The two major indigenous groups seem to have a number of shared similarities, and both seem to be quite different from the group of non-native women.

The women may or may not have had any control over the factors that shaped their lives, or they may not have perceived their choices as they became women. For example, when the parents of Bertha Ruben and Mary Ann MacDonald arranged marriages for them at a very young age, they said they had no choice in the matter. Their familial and cultural heritage framed their understanding so that they did not perceive any choice in the matter. Considerably later in life,
they saw at least some of their choices: Bertha helped negotiate the Inuvialuit Final Agreement, and Mary Ann decided she could live alone. A very important factor in the women's development is their perception of their choices in these matters. Learning how the women viewed alternatives in their lives helps us understand how each woman's background shaped her education, experience and artwork.

**Age, marital and parental status**

The women in this study ranged in age between 16 and 82. When I began to examine the responses of the women by approximate age and cultural heritage, the women seemed to fall into very different groups: most of the indigenous women are 'elders' over 40 with only a few younger women. The non-native women, however, are almost all in the 30-50 age groups.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Inuit/Inuvialuit</th>
<th>Dene/Metis</th>
<th>White/non-native</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>70-82</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-70</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-60</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-50</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-40</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-30</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The indigenous women began having children early and had fairly large families—5 children or more. Many of this group are still married, others are now alone, and some did not discuss their marital status or number of children. It must be noted that two women in the 'Inuit' group died during the time of this study, one over 80 (Malaya) and the other in her 50s (Lena).

The non-native women have quite a different profile—most are either not yet married, or recently married, and have only one or two children. During the time period of this study the
status of two non-native women changed. Charlene married, and both she and Janice gave birth to first children.

Differences therefore emerge in the order of education, parenting, and careers. The aboriginal women spent their young adult lives raising families, while most of the non-native women pursued advanced education and careers. The result is that the non-native women are almost a full generation behind the indigenous women in becoming parents. The aboriginal women are almost a generation behind in starting careers outside the home.

Two women serve as examples of this difference: Bev Lennie and Charlene Alexander. Both are 35 years old and have made substantial contributions to their chosen community of Inuvik. Bev (Inuvialuit) was born in Aklavik, has been married seventeen years, has five children between the ages of 8 and 16, has been a homeowner in Inuvik for the last fifteen years, has held several jobs in social work and education, is the first aboriginal coordinator of The Great Northern Arts Festival, and is now struggling to further her own education while home-schooling her children. Charlene (non-native) was born in Ontario, travelled the world with her family, completed a degree in photography, has settled in Inuvik for nine years where she runs her own photography business. She created The Great Northern Arts Festival, has recently married, become a homeowner, and given birth to her first child. The wide difference in order experience cannot help but influence the perspectives of these women.

The two indigenous groups, Inuit and Dene, include many grandmothers with years of family-life experience and wisdom, and a few young women with very young children. The non-native group had fewer years of parental experience, and fewer children, but a lot more work and career experience outside the home. I could say that they are wise in different things, depending on their age and experience. The difference in experience framed their perception of their lives,
the influences on their artwork, their education, the issues we discussed, and their response to my questions.

Heritage and choice of arctic residence

The women's residential status in the Arctic is another major factor affecting their comments. The home lifestyle and cultural traditions in which the women were raised influences how they value their education, and how they view their artwork. Gallagher (1993) discusses the effect of environment, taking many examples from Alaskan 'Eskimos' who adapted to the natural rhythms of the arctic climate. The aboriginal women are, by definition, 'indigenous': born and raised in the Arctic--most in the Western Arctic region. They have lived almost all of their lives in one small area or community of the North, and experience close ties to the region through extended family, cultural traditions and the land. Most of the indigenous women have not travelled very much outside their region. They have a wealth of experience in their own culture, but limited experience outside it.

Most of the non-native women chose to adopt the North as adults (Charlene, Myrna, Dora, Lillian, Laurelle, Sandra, Janice, Sue), and may also choose to leave one day. Two non-native women were born in the North such as Vicki, who left for education, and then chose to return. Most of these 'white' women grew up with European-based heritage and values, and have travelled and/or lived in other parts of Canada and the world. Their experiences contribute to their perspective of the North and their choice to stay. These factors of residence, and perceived choice of place to settle, not only affected their comments, but seemed to contribute to their self-confidence, and willingness to discuss these issues.
Family and source of income

Most of the indigenous women's parents were hunters or trappers who followed animals for subsistence, and who spoke very little English. The generation that is now 40 to 60 is the link between the 'traditional' ways and languages of their parents, and the computer age in which their children are learning to function almost entirely in English. Many elder women talked of living 'on the land', of having to hand-sew clothing for their families as part of the expected 'traditional' role of a good wife and mother. For instance, Elsie talked about being born in an igloo out on the land, and has made the transition to living in a community of 400 in a wood-frame house. The change has been dramatic within one generation, and young Inuit women may not ever have experienced an igloo. For these women traditional sewing was an accepted and unquestioned part of their daily survival and culture. As Jane said, 'Now it is called art' (J. Dragon, Chipewyan, Ft. Smith).

The non-native women were typically raised in large cities or towns in Southern Canada, except Lillian, who grew up in urban Denmark. They were raised by parents who were middle class and part of the wage economy. The towns they grew up in were considerably larger than 2000, and some of their families travelled extensively so they had a broad perspective of their region and the world they lived in.

Early education, schooling, and religion

The early learning and formal schooling were quite different for the groups of indigenous and non-native women. Traditional ways of learning in both Inuit and Dene cultures placed children with their parents who gradually educated them in the ways of the land, as they were ready to learn. For the most part, the elder indigenous women's early formal schooling
interrupted their parents hunting lifestyle and brought them in touch with non-natives and the English language for the first time. All of the indigenous women's lives were affected by the conflict between their traditional education on the land provided by parents and elders in native languages, and the formal church schooling in English and/or French. Most of them had to go to residential schools where everything was different—the customs, values, subjects, languages, religion, foods, and the manner in which knowledge was passed from generation to generation. Many indigenous women found these differences traumatic and they were also subjected to harsh and demeaning treatment. Some of the women, however, were hidden by their parents, others were called back home to help out with family chores, so they had little formal schooling (Bertha, MaryAnn M, Mary). Other women did not go to school at all, such as Elsie, until she went to college in 1995/96.

The indigenous women in this study survived residential schools, learning from both sides. After their own children were in school, many of the aboriginal women (Rosie, Jane, Bev, Lorna, Effie, Margaret V., Nancy, and Peeteekootee) chose to return to school, completing additional formal education: some finished high school and others went on to college. Bev and her husband went to Arctic College in Fort Smith and then to university in Ontario. All of these women's comments, therefore, come from their school experience, being torn between family and colonial culture.

Most of the non-native women completed at least high school and some university before getting married and/or becoming parents. They did not experience the conflict and persecution in school that their indigenous sisters bore. They were raised with a set of beliefs and values from the dominant colonial culture, without experiencing overt conflicts over belief systems. In fact,
they may not have been aware of their own culture, or even the existence of other cultures, until much later.

First Language

The languages the women learned as children seem to have affected their responses in another way. The elder indigenous women learned, and most still spoke, indigenous languages at home. Most were forced to learn English by immersion at residential schools without instruction, and were punished for speaking their native language. Some of the younger indigenous women like Bev did not know their parents' language at all. Others learned French at Catholic missions, under duress and threat of punishment. MaryAnn tells of her experience:

They used to give me books in English and I had to read that. It was hard for me because I didn't understand, I couldn't read. If I didn't do it they thought I was just stubborn . . . but I couldn't read because I couldn't understand English. Well, they used to take me to the Sister Superior and she had a strap, and they used to give me a good lickin'. Sister Superior told me 'Well, she doesn't want to read, so put her in the grade one . . . in the other school.' That's what they did to me because I didn't know how to read. It was hard. (M. MacDonald, Metis, Ft. Smith)

The women's language experiences, level of facility and comfort in discussing these matters now in English may be reflected in the length of the interviews. Only three interviews were translated by an interpreter (all on video): Peeteekootee (by Mona Igutsaq), Malaya (by Daniel Qitsualik), and Martina (by Bernadette Irksuk). All these women are Inuit from the central and eastern regions of the Canadian Arctic.

Many of the indigenous women seemed less comfortable talking about ideas and conceptual matters in general, and may even have resented talking in English, or to me, an outsider, thereby resulting in shorter discussions. The indigenous cultures pass knowledge between generations by oral tradition, and there is an economy of words. There also seems to be
a culturally-based reluctance to talk about one's self, and a tendency to state opinions in a very few words. A few of the indigenous women, whose community roles and training prepared them for talking easily, explained things in great detail (see J. Dragon, R. Wright, B. Lennie). Again, questions about language were not asked directly, but the issue of language became apparent during our conversations, or was observed as the interviews were conducted over several years.

All but one of the non-native women have English as a first language, and were educated in formal school settings in English. They generally found it easy to talk in English, and may be more accustomed to explaining things verbally. With a few exceptions, the discussions with non-native women were longer, and more descriptive. Speaking in their first language, English, coupled with the European heritage of discourse, and travel experience, seems to have helped the non-native women to express themselves freely in English.

**Differences: education, research experience, and perceived choice**

The education of the women seems linked to their perception of their life choices. The indigenous women took on the responsibilities of wives and mothers in their late teen years, following cultural traditions that honored their husbands as providers. Decline in the status of men's roles of providing by hunting and trapping prompted the women to see the need for more education in their own adult years, to help support their families.

Some of the indigenous women are now organizers as well as artists, or they have become teachers and managers. However, for many a sense of self-confidence and autonomy seems to have come later in life with further education as they raised their families. From my own observation of life in the North, especially in small communities, indigenous young women often express the idea that they want to get out of their communities and see the world. When they do
leave, most can hardly wait to go back home, and they always seem to live with the pull of both places. The indigenous women have a very strong attachment to their heritage lands, and few choose to leave the region.

Some indigenous and non-native women seemed suspicious of research in general. Their suspicion may reflect the experience of many aboriginal groups visited over the last hundred years by 'white' researchers, who asked lots of questions then disappeared without a word. As a result, they have come to mistrust unknown people asking strange questions.

I observed this phenomenon during the summer arts festivals when the Town of Inuvik was over run with tourists. Video cameras were everywhere, and tourists were huddled around artists until they felt they could not work. The tourists were not aware that the indigenous peoples were brought up in a culture that places great value on sharing with the community, to the point that they feel they cannot say 'no'. I asked a number of indigenous women if they had ever refused to do something. Most looked shocked and quickly said 'Oh no'. During the festival seminars every year, the artists discussed the issue of people asking questions and taking photographs, and being able to say 'no'. Some of the Indigenous women who returned to school had begun to understand the role of research in recording history. Most of the time, when I explained what I was doing, the women were very supportive, and some even said "It's about time somebody asked us our opinion."

Most of the non-native women spent their formative childhood years in a very different cultural milieu than the one in which they now live. On average, they completed more years of formal education, often in southern Canada, which added to their self-confidence. The non-native women made conscious choices to go on to college after high school. They chose to come to the North, or to return to the North as individual adults, for adventure or jobs or other
reasons. They all adopted roles of arts organizers, or educators, who saw a need for something to be done to benefit others, and did something about it. Today they continually choose what traditions they will follow. Their perceived right to choose a place to live, and a way of life, seems to be reflected in their confidence and in roles they adopted in the North.

Although the non-native women worked sometimes at manual jobs such as waitressing or janitorial work for awhile, each saw an opportunity to do something and seized it, moving toward roles of leadership in the arts. For all of these women, their work in the North seemed to enhance their self-esteem, their perception of their roles as women and artists, and their confidence as leaders. They seemed to gain a sense of personal power from exercising their choices. Coupled with more formal education, they also seemed to perceive a greater range of choices. The non-native women I interviewed have now lived in the Arctic for much of their adult lives (at least ten years) but they are still considered 'newcomers' or 'outsiders' to the indigenous North.

The groups of indigenous women and non-native women, seem to have responded to my questions with vastly different experiences in life. Their comments reflect their individual perceptions and choices, regarding their artwork, roles as women, and education opportunities.

**Research themes**

A number of themes evolve out of the women's comments. Most of these are directly related to the initial research questions. These themes include the women's early learning of their artistic skills, their education in general, the ways they learn, how they describe themselves and their artwork, the influences on their artistic work, the significance or meaning of art in their lives, their recognition in their communities, and how they feel the next generations should learn
artistic skills. Most of these themes were explored in discussion with each woman. Some were discussed directly while other issues were commented on indirectly.

**Early learning of artistic skills**

There is no obvious pattern to the age at which the women began learning artistic skills. Some began as early as they can remember, about four or five. Others began when they were a bit older, at eight or nine, while others began around the onset of puberty. Almost all the indigenous women began by learning sewing at home, as they explain:

Everyone learned to sew in the early days because it was a different world then. If you didn't sew you didn't have anything to wear almost... Our parents were trappers and so we made a lot of our clothes... Everybody did embroidery, every family was trying to outdo each other, to see who had the nicest, most embroidered clothes. Beading and quills, and horsehair too... Every girl who was born in the North was taught to sew at home, and when we went to the convent we were taught to sew there too. (Cece McCauley, Inuvik Native Band)

When we used to visit our grandmothers or the older people, I guess because they were losing their eyesight, they used to make us thread their needles... That also gave us handling the needle... or else they would make us sit and stitch pieces of cloth together... If we didn't do the stitches right, she'd take it out and make us do it again, so we used to have to do it right the first time. (Lorna Storr, Gwich'in, Aklavik)

My dad... used to do carving... He did something to live with, he made spoons [from]... sheephorn. My mother used to make sealskin clothing... I learned to do that... You start from the very beginning. When I was married I didn't really know how to sew, because my mom was teaching me as I was growing up. When I got married I had to depend on my mother to show me what I can do. (Mary Trimble, Inuvialuit, Inuvik/Nanaimo.B.C.)

The very first time I start sewing was with my mom. My mom let me try--you know how the kamiks get holes on the bottom, and you have to cover them with a piece? That's how I started sewing, first time, helping my mom. (Peeteekootee Ugyuk, Inuit, Taloyoak)

I remember dressing a doll when I came home from school. I tried to do something I learned, and dressed the little doll with caribou clothes... your young eyes are not seeing the faults... For us sewing was important because your men had to have warm clothes, and a woman that didn't know how to sew wasn't considered a very good wife. They taught us the basics first, it was up to you. (Margaret Lennie, Inuvialuit, Inuvik)
Christina also began sewing for dolls:

Trying to cut a little parky for the dolls, that's what we did at 7 or 8. For the dolls we made parkys... the first [big] thing I made was a parky cover for my mom, it was a Christmas parky. (Christina Felix, Inuvialuit, Tuktoyaktuk)

Some of the indigenous women who began sewing by making dolls and doll clothes learned other kinds of stitches and mending at school. As their skills developed, they sewed other projects for their family's survival, and some later went on to explore other forms of art. My students at Arctic College told me that in some Dene cultures the old puberty rituals included a seclusion in which the young girl was taught sewing by a family elder as one of the essential skills needed in adult life. I asked the women about these rituals, and while some acknowledged the tradition, nobody spoke about them in detail. Several referred to sewing skills as essential to being a good wife.

The first learning of sewing skills for many of the women seems to have formed a skill base and mode of working which they transferred later to other art forms. Mary still makes dolls as examples of traditional dress, but also began stone carving after her family was grown. Cece uses her sewing skills to make appliqued scenes of arctic life, which she sells from her restaurant, and helps women market their work. Peeteekootee used her sewing skills to design and make the Packing Dolls. Christina not only sews parkas for her family, but her small shop in Tuktoyaktuk now fills orders from all over the world. Margaret L. still sews and does beadwork, and she does scrimshaw in antler, and uses her traditional knowledge to guide and teach Delta tourists.

Drawing is mentioned in some of the indigenous women's accounts of their early artistic learning. Julia and Brendalynne Trennert, Elsie Klengenberg, Bev Lennie, Mona and Agnes Thrasher, talked about drawing as another skill that was learned by watching someone at an early age. They talked about drawing designs for beadwork, drawing pictures on paper, or about
drawing patterns for clothing. However, they did not talk about it as a matter of survival, the way they talked about sewing.

Most of the non-native women did not begin with sewing. They talked about early art experiences quite apart from survival and the necessities of life. They were encouraged by parents or teachers in drawing, or in using art materials such as paints. Lillian's fashion apprenticeship in Denmark began at the age of fourteen, and included sewing in a factory setting, while other non-native girls began drawing and painting:

I went into a fashion house where I learned to sew dresses. You were just placed next to a person [who had] already been there for many years, and you start overcasting seams, and that's how you learn, step by step. . . . We were sewing these very expensive dresses, styles from Paris. (L. Kristensen, non-native, Ft. Smith)

My mom has a picture that I drew when I was three years old. . . in paint. . . . Me and my cousins would sit and draw horses. . . . I was so incessant I would just spit pictures out five every hour. . . . I was always drawing in social studies. I'd draw a horse, or an animal of some sort from another country, teachers would always say that I was the artist, I was a natural artist all through. (Laurelle Macy, non-native, Hay River)

I started by drawing and I still draw. That's still the basis for my love of art, because it's spontaneous and it teaches me to observe the world, and I think it gave me a purpose for art. . . . just drawing things and getting my little brother to pose. (Janice Rahn, non-native, Whitehorse/Montreal)

The experiences of the indigenous women with early sewing, and the non-native women with early drawing and painting, gave each group a different attitude about art in the school setting. During their school years, whether they lived at home or in residence, their artistic experiences were shaped by teachers and/or parents, as well as by other students.

Women's general education

The elder indigenous women were educated partly at residential schools, or were called home to help the family before they finished elementary school. In a few cases, they were unable
to go to school at all. Their first language affected their success in school, and most indigenous women were affected also by having to leave home at some point in order to complete grade 12. Most younger women stayed in their home communities through grade six or eight.

It should be noted that to this day, many NWT students cannot finish high school in the small communities. They still have to go away to one of the larger centers (Inuvik, Yellowknife, Hay River or Fort Smith) and stay in residence in order to complete grade 12. Several women told me this is a very difficult time for kids to be away from home and all that is familiar, and that is why so many northern kids drop out. Bev, now in her thirties, explains:

For me to get my education it's been a real struggle. When I was growing up, the school (in Aklavik) only went up to grade nine, and then I had to leave my community. I went to school down in Fort Smith, and I did not like being away from home--being in such a structured environment, so I went back home. Then I tried again and still, I couldn't stay away from home. So I just quit, I was in Grade 10. ... I only carried on with my education after I got married. It's just being away from home. You're not with your family and it's very important. You're with a whole bunch of students and it's just a lonely life. No boarding home parent can take the place of your parents, and it's just an empty feeling, it's lonely. It's not just your parents, it's your other family, like your relatives, and it's lonesome. (B. Lennie, Inuvialuit, Inuvik)

Bev eventually completed her high school courses, and has almost completed the Teacher Education program at Arctic College. Many of the indigenous women I talked to had pursued further education themselves after their children were in school. Efforts are being made to correct some of the inequities perpetuated through inadequate schools, but the impact on northern society will never be fully known.

The non-native women as a group completed considerably more years of formal education, and were able to complete high school without leaving home. All except Lillian finished high-school in southern Canada, all did at least some college or university, and most
have degrees. All but one of these women had English as their first language, with the immediate result that they talked faster and seemed to use English words more easily.

**Different ways of learning**

The groups of women described quite differently how they learned their various skills. The indigenous women talked about learning by watching, and even though they had teachers in school, considered themselves 'self-taught'. They watched their mothers or aunts sew, and said they therefore had learned from them. There is a great respect for silence and learning to observe. Several indigenous women described these ways of learning, and how children had to be ready to learn before they were shown important things. Mary Ann had to sneak looks in order to learn:

> My stepmother used to be a good sewer. . . So I used to watch her and she didn't like people to watch her when she sewed. . . . If somebody didn't watch me, I used to look over there. I could see the way she'd put her beads, and embroidery. Oh she used to make nice work. (M.MacDonald, Metis, Ft. Smith)

There's lots of silent ways to do things. The elders didn't think it was important enough to tell anybody. It was their own thing, their own way.

> . . . You can't approach a person, say 'Okay, show me how you do that'. You have to ask them, and feel honored if they're inclined to let you in on something. . . . All women have their own techniques. (Margaret Lennie, Inuvialuit, Inuvik)

Learning by watching is described in an arctic children's book called *Show Me* (Hanson, 1991). An 11 year old Inuit boy gathers the courage to ask his father to teach him to carve, and the father replies:

> From now on, watch everything around you very carefully. Don't just look, see and then forget. Keep what you have seen in your mind. Look at it from every angle, around and around, from the top, from the bottom and from all sides. (p.10)

Later the father demonstrates his carving technique to the boy with just the words "Watch me" (Hanson, 1991 p. 22).
In both indigenous cultures, the child or person learning, stands or sits beside the skilled person and watches intently until s/he feels ready to try it. The learner does not ask questions, and the tasks are not broken down step by step. Much of the time there is no discussion, the communication of ideas is through silent watching and respect. Learning occurs by observation, by watching an expert, followed by a period of private trial and error, so it can be thought of as self-teaching. I first heard artists describe themselves as 'self-taught' when I was writing biographies for the festival program, and I asked the artists what they meant. They talked about working beside an expert or master and learning a skill by watching how something was done.

Several Inuit women used the word "try" to describe the way they learn: "We learn, . . . we try how to do it. Just try it, and just try to do it better" (Elsie Klengenberg, Inuvialuit, Holman). "I started making little kamiks for my younger sisters, just trying. Sometimes they don't fit . . . I try another one" (Peeteekootee Ugyuk, Inuit, Taloyoak). Mona describes her learning:

I learned by watching, nobody really taught me until a few years ago I started asking questions. At that time, when I was younger, I was scared to ask. . . . Nowadays I learned that . . . when you want to know something it's better to ask. . . . The older people in my culture always say 'If you want your daughter or somebody to learn, don't teach them too much. They learn by watching.' That's what they say . . . they learn by watching and doing it themselves. If they make a mistake they try again. That's how they learn these things so I don't say nothing. If they want to try, they try. (Mona Igutsaq, Inuit, Taloyoak)

The non-native women talked about their learning using very different terms. They talked about formal school art classes, about how their parents encouraged them at home, about mentors, or individuals who had influenced them. They also talked about their personal development, and about using art as a quest to find themselves or a way of expressing themselves. Laurelle explains her reaction to art school:
I was such a novice when I first went (to art school) 'cause I was so used to drawing my own way. . . . What schooling does, . . . they make you struggle through it yourself. Pretty soon you got to look, . . . you have to really look. . . . Then you have to be able to take criticism, if you're an artist. You have to say what you like about it and what you don't like about it, and it's hard to do that at first. . . . It's kind of good for the ego and bad for the ego at one time. You work really hard. (L. Macy, non-native, Hay River)

Janice talks first of being connected to art through her father's feeling for the environment and the farmland worked by his grandfather. Then:

I was lucky enough to have a good high school art teacher who was a potter. So . . . I hung out in the art and music room. I had a mentor I suppose. . . this woman who lived in the bush . . . and had worked with Arthur Lismer and had a David Milne painting in her living room. . . . I visited with her a lot because I wanted more support for what I was doing. I . . . had a lot of respect for the native way of living, in harmony with the environment. And I don't think you have to be a native person to appreciate that. (J. Rahn, non-native, Whitehorse/Montreal)

The experience of the non-native women was not only different in substance from the indigenous women, but was described in completely different terms. The indigenous ways of learning are observable in the Arctic on a daily basis, and were really obvious at The Great Northern Arts Festival. There, over 6 summers, I watched small children crouch down beside elders, and silently watch while the elder performed a skill that fascinated the young ones. No words were exchanged. When the young ones were satisfied, or the demonstration was over, they would go away. Later I saw them working diligently, trying to do what the elder had demonstrated.

Adult indigenous artists could also be seen working beside an artist whose skill they respected, silently observing every move and technique. There was little or no discussion or questioning, although artists were encouraged to talk to tourists, who asked lots of questions. Often the indigenous artists told me that the questions from tourists disturbed their work.
Several misunderstandings occurred at the Festival between indigenous and non-native people over ways of learning. Each artist was required to give a 'workshop' and several 'demonstrations' in their area of expertise. Non-native artists gave workshops by talking about their work as they demonstrated. Tourists seemed to expect a formal presentation, and asked lots of questions. But Inuit master carvers simply kept on working, knowing that others were watching them. I heard comments from tourists from as far away as Germany say things such as "The workshop wasn't organized, there were just a bunch of artists working together, with nobody talking."

Indigenous ways of learning, and techniques of gathering information, are quite different from EuroCanadian norms of learning through verbal discourse, lecture, discussion, questioning, and taking notes. Even though the Inuit and Dene cultures have an oral tradition to pass knowledge from one generation to another, there is an economy of words, and far less verbalization of ideas and techniques. Educators need to understand these basic differences before relevant and effective curriculum planning can take place.

How the women viewed their work

The indigenous women sometimes seemed uncomfortable talking about the importance of their work, but they talked easily about techniques used in doing their artwork. The non-native women seemed generally more comfortable talking about their artwork. The various terms they used provide keys to understanding, community usage, and awareness of the politics of the terms.

Terms: creativity, handicrafts, art or crafts?

The women used a number of different terms to describe their work. The difference in the use of these terms may reflect regional or community uses of the terms. Or it may reflect
awareness of the transition from individual traditional work to a community-based wage economy. Quite a few of the indigenous women used the term 'handicrafts' or 'arts and crafts' to describe their traditional sewing:

Once you start doing something like crafts, like these ladies . . . sitting here together [sewing], working every day, you're sewing all the time, once you start your arts and crafts, you want to do it all the time. Whenever you [are] sitting around . . . like me myself at home, I would just sit and watch TV and just do my crafts. (Rosie Archie, Inuvialuit, Aklavik)

Christina's business card lists the name 'Christina Felix Parkas' and the address, followed by the word 'handicrafts'. Jane said it is really 'art' but then uses the word 'handicrafts' in describing much of her own work:

I make mitts, mukluks, hats, all the handicrafts of the North, wall pictures, moosehair tuftings, beading. . . . The handicrafts is dying off now, it's because the handicrafts that I do I would never get paid for my time. (J. Dragon, Chipewyan, Ft. Smith)

Other indigenous women refer to general skills such as 'my sewing', or 'sewings', or a particular kind of sewing such as 'embroidery', 'tufting', or 'beading' applied to specific projects such as slippers or mukluks. Lena seemed to use 'sewing' and 'crafts' interchangeably:

When I do some sewings, like that's your work. When I get into my sewings, and do some sewings, it's mine. I sell some crafts and make some money for my family or whatever, and buy some groceries and all that. And I feel good about it when I do some stuff like that for my family. . . . I do some paintings, screening and all that, prints, aprons, Christmas cards, tablecloth and all that, so I know all about that. (L. Olofie, Inuvialuit, Holman)

When I asked about 'artwork' many of the women immediately referred to drawing and painting, and then went on talking about what they do specifically. Margaret Lennie talked about drawing flower designs, using the word 'drawing' to describe the freehand outlining of a flower. She used the word 'design' the way some other women used the word 'pattern'.

Sometimes . . . when your mind's wondering what you should draw . . . you just put your pencil on it, and automatically your hand is going, and then you think 'oh yeah, that's the
one I was going to make.' You have lots of designs in your mind. Sometimes I look through books for designs, because I get tired of my own. (M. Lennie, Inuvialuit, Inuvik)

The Thrashers talked about their artwork using the terms 'drawing' and 'painting', probably because that is what they do. Mary talked of specific skills like 'carving', and used the word 'art' to describe the carving work she does with her husband.

The non-native women talked about having to choose between being an artist, an art teacher, or some other work, and about learning to work in new 'mediums'. They used almost completely different terminology from the indigenous women to discuss and describe their work, but they generally did not use the terms handicrafts or crafts.

Terms: art or artist?

I asked most of the women if they considered themselves 'artists', and most said 'yes'. Many of the indigenous women, however, seemed embarassed to talk about themselves, and quickly changed the subject. The answers to that question included explanations which provide a key to their definition of the word or its meaning. The following statements seem to define 'art' as something that you do seriously all the time. "I don't consider myself an artist, I do it because I love it. ... I do it for fun, I never took it seriously" (Cece McCauley, Inuvik Native Band). "I guess I don't consider myself an artist now. I feel I'm more of an administrator. I think I'll probably always dabble in photography, but not take it seriously" (Charlene Alexander, non-native, Inuvik). Jane and Ruth defined art as part of life:

It's art, but it's a way of life in the North. Everything we use, we do, we need it for everyday life. To us it was never 'art' until now it's recognized as art. (Jane Dragon, Chipewyan, Ft. Smith)

They did not call it 'art', it was what you wore, it was your clothing. Anybody could go practically anywhere up in the Delta and you'd know who made that because it was their style of clothing, their style of sewing. They didn't even have to sign it. Old people can
still find old slippers and say "Oh you know such and such did that" . . . Men used to do it too, not only women. (Ruth Wright, Gwich'in, Inuvik)

In discussions with my classes at Arctic College between 1989-91, my teacher education students told me that "Art is that stuff that hangs on the wall in rich people's houses". They seemed to think that clothing or something useful, made by women, perhaps was not 'art'. They were surprised and pleased to learn that some people consider the beaded mukluks they wore daily to be 'art'.

Sometimes the women talked about being an 'artist' meaning that it was the careful way they approached their work, or the 'creativity' that went into their designs or patterns. Margaret said, "In sewing, yeah, [I'm an artist] and I've done carving . . . ." (M. Lennie, Inuvialuit, Inuvik). Peeteekooettee's definition seems linked with originality and creativity: "You don't need to have a word for it but we do. Always trying something new, or always trying. How can you say it, artist? I'm one of those." (P. Ugyuk, Inuit, Taloyoak) Lena seems to mean accomplishment: "Yes, art [is] sewing and all that stuff. Yes, I can do things." (Lena Olifie, Inuvialuit, Holman) Christina concludes that her skills are not at the level of 'artist' as she understands the word:

No, my work is . . . they [other women] do all the artwork . . . they sew better, they cut the patterns better, and make real dolls like real person . . . I can't do it that much. I can make designs and parkas . . . (Christina Felix, Inuvialuit, Tuktoyaktuk)

"No, I just sew. I'm just a sewer, that's all. And to draw, well, I just learn myself. . . . I made up my mind to draw" (MaryAnn MacDonald, Metis, Ft. Smith). Julia considers herself an artist, and talks about mediums: "Yes I do. I used to work with oil paints years ago and switched over to tufting, it's another way of expressing myself . . . it's a different medium (J. Trennert, Inuvialuit, Hay River). Rosie was not sure, but alludes to originality and public recognition:
I don’t know, I guess everybody is [an artist] who do things like that. You know, when you do things like that . . . and you start . . . your ideas, new ideas . . . when they selling and . . . people like it, you really feel good about it. (Rosie Archie, Inuvialuit, Aklavik)

Lorna had a different understanding, and contrary to Cece and Charlene, she concludes that to be considered an artist you don’t do it all the time:

For my mom, she does it and she also sells her beadwork . . . I guess it’s a form of craft but . . . for myself I think it would be an art because I don’t do it that often. But my mom would consider this as a craft, because that’s all she does. (Lorna Storr, Gwich’in, Aklavik)

Most of the non-native women spoke from the assumption that they are considered artists. Sue talked about the experience of being a Northern artist:

It’s kind of a drawback being a Northern artist, being someone from South who’s doing artwork in the North now. You don’t develop properly as an artist. You cannot deny the fact that you have not been born and raised here. That you have had other experiences. You cannot tie your work only to this place. If you do, without realizing it, you’re going to stymie your own development. (Sue Rose, non-native, Inuvik)

Vicki talks about the relation of artists to selling work: "I'm just doing my artwork because I enjoy it, and if it makes me money then that's great" (Vicki Tompkins, non-native, Yellowknife). Janice sums up her intentions: "My goal in art is to communicate within an art community for stimulation and dialogue, but not confined to that" (J. Rahn, non-native, Whitehorse/Montreal). The indigenous women's use of terminology is very different from the non-native women's, which could be attributed to cultural norms, levels of education, or individual differences.

Influences on the women's work

The women's artwork has been, and continues to be, influenced by several different sources and aspects of their lives. Some of the influences are documented in recent histories (Crowe 1986, Clark D., 1991, Karklins 1992, NWT Education 1991). Some women found
influences difficult to articulate. The influences they talked about, or I observed, included necessity, new materials, other arctic peoples/cultures, and arctic newcomers, as discussed below.

**Influence: necessity**

A very important influence for many of the women is necessity. In past years the indigenous women sewed clothing for their families to keep warm and survive in a very cold land.

Lorna explains:

Everything had to be hand done. If you wanted a pair of shoes you had to start by going out and getting your moose, cleaning your moose skin, getting it tanned, I mean that's lots of work. You just couldn't go to the store and buy one, you had to make them. It was a matter of survival. (Lorna Storr, Gwich'in, Aklavik)

Bev explains the women's work and how it was tied to the seasons:

Usually at Christmas time, everyone would get a new pair of mukluks, ... We'd have new clothes for the winter, Christmas and Easter. A lot of people would go out to the bush camps for the season and they would return at Christmas time or Easter time, whenever there was a holiday coming up or when there was feasting and dancing. That's the time when all the family would go back into the community and start their celebrations. I guess that's one way the women showed their skill. (Bev Lennie, Inuvialuit, Inuvik)

The women are still sewing for survival, but in different ways. Now they sew to sell, to get money to buy what they need. Jane said "I sew to sell to the people, because that is the extra money I got to buy runners, and baseball bats, and whatever we needed for the house" (Jane Dragon, Chipewyan, Ft. Smith). The women explained that if they need something that requires money, they have to make something to sell for money. Mary Ann said "I had to sew to earn money for my kids' food. ... I supported my family with my sewing, even with small babies" (Mary Ann MacDonald, Metis, Ft. Smith). Lena does the same thing: "I sell some crafts and make some money for my family... and buy some groceries..." (Lena Olifie, Inuvialuit, Holman). Bertha explains the urgency of her family situation:
Right now I don't work. . . . I have to sew to make extra money. Only what we're living on is the old age pension. And that can't fill up the whole month. That's why we have to do extra sewing. . . . I have to buy this and that. If they ask then I do it. . . . It's nice when they do that because its extra money. (Bertha Ruben, Inuvialuit, Paulatuk)

The non-native women likewise were influenced by necessity, but they often sought jobs for a wage rather than depending on making artwork to sell. For many of them, the jobs they accepted led them in new directions of personal growth, and they often spoke of their artwork in that context. After college, Sue Rose and her husband John took jobs at the co-op in Holman, and eventually helped catalogue the massive Holman collection of drawings. Sue talks about the influence of that experience on her life:

You really begin to understand [the] role [of] artwork, and what artists do, and . . . how much of a role creative people have in civilization. . . . To have it . . . in a tangible form, and to be turning the pages of people's lives, it was incredible. A lot of what I experienced in Holman I consider such a gift to me personally, I would certainly not be the same person as I am today without the people that I lived with there. (S. Rose, non-native, Inuvik)

Charlene came north after finishing a photography degree in Toronto.

I had always wanted to go to the North. . . . I ran out of money and saw an ad in the newspaper for a job in the Mad Trapper Bar. . . . and so my girlfriend and I both applied. . . and we came. . . . After a year I. . . started my own photography business. But photography in a small community is not really very creative. After a year I. . . started the Festival, and I ended up having to quit [work] because the Festival was so much work. (C. Alexander, non-native, Inuvik)

Janice came north to learn about other cultures, and taught art and music in Iqaluit, and later Inuvik. She found she had to make a choice between teaching and making art herself.

I thought I would enjoy teaching if I was always learning something new. . . and I wanted to learn about another culture. . . . The whole reason I came to the North was to have some autonomy. The reason I quit teaching was I always said that I didn't want to be an art teacher that didn't make art. And I wasn't making art, so I felt I was sort of almost drying up. I was losing a sense of what I felt, because I was always using the students as my medium, I was losing touch with myself. (J. Rahn, non-native, Whitehorse/Montreal)
Vicki was born in the North and went South for art education and returned North to work. "I got offered a good job and I just didn't want to go back to school, I quite liked it up here" (V. Tompkins, non-native, Yellowknife). Laurelle lived in northern Alberta and the NWT as a child, went South to university, and moved back North when her mother needed help with a hotel in Hay River. She says she was:

... stuck in life really, in jobs, and not really believing ... there's so many artists everywhere, that ... I didn't want to live on a sidewalk and paint portraits for 20 bucks. I came up North and finally settled down and I was doing all kinds of little bitty [paintings]. ... People found out I painted, and they end up buying it from me, you know the bar cronies. You get to meet them and you know them all by name. (Laurelle Macy, non-native, Hay River)

These non-native women spoke about their artwork as part of their personal development, using quite different terms from the indigenous women who talked of handicrafts, sewing, survival and tradition as part of everyday life and their role as women.

**Influence: new materials and techniques**

The scarcity or availability of materials has a large influence on arctic artwork.

Indigenous artists traditionally used what was available in the natural world around them: stone, wood, furs, bone, and other animal products such as ivory tusks and porcupine quills. Some of the women still use whatever is at hand. For instance, one old way of making decorations on parkas used inlaid bits of colored fur sewn into geometric strips. Bertha and Lena explain:

My mother-in-law [taught] us on sewing those ... for parka trimmings. It was long ago before the delta braid. Little narrow strips (of fur) she used to make, trimmings for parkas. ... Some people make different designs with caribou skins, white skin and black skin from caribou. (Bertha Ruben, Inuvialuit, Paulatuk)

You might just find a braid and just put it on to decorate, braid or whatever... it's caribou fur, those little pieces, the very bottom, so we just soften it and work on it for a long time. It's from summer caribou. (Lena Olifie, Inuvialuit, Holman)
Trade goods including imported calico cotton (a floral printed cotton from Britain, popular at the turn of the century), Hudson's Bay wool blankets, cotton thread, steel needles, and bias tape changed the way women constructed and decorated their family's clothing (Karklins 1992, Hall, Oakes, & Webster 1994, Thompson 1994). Traditional sewing skills were used alongside skills learned at school to make these new materials into something unique. A photo from Aklavik in 1950 shows school girls wearing cotton-covered coats, with fur trim. These girls' coats are called 'Mother Hubbard' parkas. They have calico covers with a ruffle around the bottom, and some are decorated with Delta Braid (Fig. 52). Only the nun is wearing a traditional fur parka, and the older girls are wearing kerchiefs. This photo shows the prevalence and acceptance of traded materials in the Delta region, even before the Town of Inuvik was built.
Delta Braid

The indigenous women told different stories about the origin of 'Delta braid', the regional decorative innovation using a traded material—cotton bias tape. This new way of decorating parkas seems to have grown out of the old intricate geometric fur patterns described earlier and shown in Fig. 53. Christina's husband Emmanuel Felix and Cece both explain the innovations and techniques:

_now it's changed over to [cloth]. . . . The design it might be fancier too now all kinds of colors. There were bias tapes already when I was a kid, but they don't make it like this [Christina's pattern]. They make few lines . . . but her and her sister, they're the ones that started these, make it like this. 'Delta Braid' they called it._ (Christina Felix, Inuvialuit, Tuktoyaktuk)

In this area the women do 'Delta Braid' and they're very proud of it . . . It started here with bias tape when it came in. They didn't have the trimming for coats now that you can buy by the yard. So some of the women started to make their own designs. This is what I heard, they cut the bias tape in little pieces . . . it takes a lot of patience to do a real good job. (Cece McCauley, Inuvik Native Band)

Fig. 54: An example of Delta Braid made of 12 bias tape strips and pieces, copied directly from the fabric strip made by Polar Parkas, YK.

Delta braid is one of the unique innovations of the women of the Delta. When a new material like bias tape was introduced, they formed it into their own original designs. Sewing for survival also meant sewing had to be adaptable. They created a completely new design tradition,
using their traditional sewing skills and techniques. Delta braid got its name because it is made mostly by women from the communities of the Mackenzie Delta.

Tufting in moosehair and caribou hair

New materials expanded the options for making and trimming warm clothes for indigenous women, and later for all women. Another unique innovation is the tufting created with moose and caribou hair, although there are different stories about the origins of this unique artform. There are evidently references to tufting in the journals of Alexander Mackenzie, which places tufting as an indigenous tradition before contact. Nancy LaFleur refers to tufting as a family tradition passed down from her grandmother and great grandmother. Other women told me it was 'revived' by Sister Beatrice Leduc in her teaching of sewing and French embroidery skills in an Aklavik Convent School. Tufting has now become a unique art form sewn either in traditional flower patterns, such as those sewn by Nancy LaFleur, or in new designs like those by Brendalynn and Julia Trennert.

The artwork of non-native women was not influenced by new materials in the same way, as they were already purchasing materials with which to make art. Many women borrowed design ideas from one another, and some women discussed being protective of their designs and patterns.

Influence: Learning from other arctic peoples

The influence among the groups of women can be observed but it is not often acknowledged. I asked about influences, the origins of particular ways of sewing, and about where materials came from. Many of the women were a bit hesitant in discussing this. They
talked about their own experiences, or they told me about individuals who created a certain way of working. Cece explained her early wall-hangings:

I started because I saw the Inuit do it. . . . because I was here [in Inuvik] I did all Eskimo [designs] because that's all I saw around here. Until somebody said to me 'You're Indian, how come you're doing only Eskimo work?' And I said, 'Well, there's only Eskimo animals up here', so I started doing Indian designs. (Cece McCauley, Inuvik Native Band)

Margaret L. said she was privileged to learn some of the Indian ways:

An Indian woman from Arctic Red. . . she told me she was going to show me something that was forgotten. This is Indian stuff I'm telling you, from Arctic Red. . . . She didn't speak English at all, she was Loucheux, and she knew I was trying [to learn]. (Margaret Lennie, Inuivialuit, Inuvik)

Some indigenous women learned different sewing techniques from other girls at the hostel while they were all in residential school. Mona explains her experience in Inuvik at Stringer Hall, the school residence in Inuvik:

We were doing a lot of beading in Stringer Hall back then. We would pick these willows and bend them and put string across and make necklaces and put names on them. The students that were there with us, they taught me how to do that, because they were from around here in Aklavik and Fort McPherson. That was the first thing I learned how to do. . . . the girls would start doing something, and bring them to the hostel with them. (Mona Igutsaq, Inuit, Taloyoak)

So there was some cross-learning of skills between indigenous cultures, and these new skills were incorporated into each culture's designs.

Now, both Inuivialuit and Dene women make Delta Braid and do beading, and different communities specialize in different forms of work (Duncan 1989). Paulatuk is well-known as a centre for applique wall-hangings, Ft. Liard for its birch-bark baskets, Ft. Providence for its tufting, Holman for its applique patterns on Mother Hubbard parka covers, Rae-Edzo and Ft. Simpson for embroidery, but very few women now do quillwork. Many indigenous women talked about learning particular sewing techniques at school from the Grey nuns.
A few non-native women have learned some of these techniques. I was told about an enterprising English woman in Inuvik, who began making 'native-style' parkas, and rows of them were for sale in a store in Inuvik. Cece comments: "The native women resent it when the white women do it, but I keep telling them, it's their own fault, because they're not doing it" (Cece McCauley, Inuvik Native Band). Many Indigenous women engage in hand-sewing individual garments, which continues the traditions but makes items very expensive. I tried to learn beading with two needles, and asked the indigenous women to help me learn the technique, and some laughed at me, but they were glad to help. Several women talked about being protective of personal patterns and designs, but they were happy to share techniques.

Only one non-native woman discussed the influence of family as well as new materials and equipment. Lillian received a loom, which prompted her to learn weaving:

My husband had given me a loom, a 36 inch. I had never asked for a loom, but my husband decided it was a good old fashioned type of look, that his wife should sit there and do weaving. And it fell right into the sewing and that, and I liked knitting and crocheting and whatever, all these different things. So I got this loom and didn't know what to do with it. (L. Kristensen, non-native, Ft. Smith)

Her husband's gift of a loom inspired Lillian to take a weaving class at night school, and to find a neighbor to help her learn how to set it up, and then she began to create new designs with the newly woven material.

Influence: The land, northern life, and climate

Most of the non-native women were influenced by northern life and climate. They discussed the influence of surroundings in cities, issues like garbage disposal, or the rural relations with the land that became part of their work. In some of their artwork the influence is obvious and observable. Sue Rose painted and drew Holman elders, and is now using strings of beads,
leather thongs, porcupine quills, and arctic rocks in her acrylic paintings. She said when she went to the store, she found large strings of beads hanging up for sale, so she used what was most readily available. Lillian used local sub-arctic plants and grasses in her weavings. Vicki painted discarded junk against the northern lights.

Many of the non-native women paint or photograph images of arctic peoples, animals and landscape. Janice discussed the unromantic side of life she saw in the North, the isolation, climate, lifestyle, and the tortured trees. She did a number of etchings of people playing bingo or in northern bars. Myrna Button talked about being influenced by the changing quality of the light in different seasons, as she ran her dog team across the tundra. Now she uses the theme of light in her watercolor paintings and stained glass. Laurelle explains her fascination and respect for northern peoples and the land:

When I started painting people... I didn't see a lot of paintings of northern people, Dene people... everybody... says 'why don't we paint these people that hang out in our bar?' You see all these characters, regulars... and you get to know them... It's raw land... it's absolutely unbelievable that people actually lived here and they had their landmarks and they walked through this land unmarked... and lived all winter long having to hunt... to think that some of the people that I paint... like this interesting native man, really pure from the old school... Oh the stories he'd tell, unbelievable, someone should have written his memoirs down. (Laurelle Macy, non-native, Hay River)

Charlene has taken school photographs of children in the Delta and Sahtu regions for more than six years, taking portraits of families and elders too.

For me part of [the appeal of the North] is the landscape, it's really open, clean, I always feel like I can breathe... Life is so much more simple... it's a more leisurely pace. We women are the organizers, the helpers, it's just part of our nature. (Charlene Alexander, non-native, Inuvik)

In all of the women's artwork the strong influence of the land and the environment can be observed. There seems to be a fascination with the mix of traditions, the animals, and the northern way of life.
Influence: Gender

I observed that many of the women focus on subjects such as women, the family, children, the community, and the way of life in the Arctic. I asked some women about the images they used and if their artwork was different from men's artwork. They replied that they didn't consciously think about it, but they guessed that perhaps their images were different from that of male artists, perhaps more focused on families or people in general. Laurelle said "I just naturally gravitate to women ... when you get to know them they've got so many stories" (Laurelle Macy, non-native, Hay River). Laurelle also commented on how painting was easy to schedule around her mothering of two young daughters. Sue was impressed with the way the whole community helped take care of children in Holman. Charlene commented that organizing comes naturally: "We women are the organizers, the helpers, it's just part of our nature" (Charlene Alexander, non-native, Inuvik).

The indigenous women who made traditional clothing did so as part of their roles of wife and mother, so the influence of gender dictates medium, form, and often even regional patterns or styles. Cece talked about her sewing as part of the social structure of visiting with other women. The Thrashers paint images of traditional life, families, and their children. I asked the seamstresses and beaders why they work so many flowers into their designs, and the answer was often 'because they are so precious'. Women seem to play a key role in maintaining indigenous culture, maintaining community, and educating and nurturing families. These commitments show in their artistic images.

The non-native women showed evidence of the same influence of their roles as women on the subjects they chose to portray. Janice commented that becoming a mother affected her artistic work and her images: "My daughter made me feel connected to my own family history, so
I began . . . making work about it" (J. Rahn, non-native, Whitehorse/Montreal). There is
certainly much observable evidence of the influence of gender in the women's artwork.

Influence of arctic newcomers—churches and religion

There were many newcomers who influenced the arts of the North, and one large group
of individuals represented churches. The Catholic and Anglican churches established missions
throughout the Western Arctic beginning in 1820 (Fumoleau 1973, Marsh 1991). France was
undergoing a needlework revival before the turn of the century, at the same time as England was
experiencing the Arts and Crafts Movement (Callan 1979) with an emphasis on floral patterns
on textiles.

Arctic newcomers bring French embroidery techniques and tufting

Grey nuns came from Quebec and France to teach the young and nurse the sick
beginning in 1867 (Sutherland 1984). The influence of the needlework heritage they brought
with them can be seen in the work of arctic women. The nuns taught different sewing skills than
the indigenous girls learned at home. Some of the indigenous women told me about a particular
Grey nun, Sister Beatrice Leduc, who taught them sewing and embroidery. She became well-
known in the Western Arctic for teaching French embroidery techniques in Aklavik and Ft.
Providence, and she is credited with introducing (or reviving) the art of tufting. Julia said "I
learned moose-hair tufting basics from a nun that was teaching in Aklavik years and years ago,
Sister Leduc." Years later, Julia moved to Fort Providence, and she relates how she got interested
in tufting again:

I was an adult and already had my family. I think there was only one woman left that was
taught by Sister Leduc, that is still doing a lot of tuftings, that's Grandma Celine
Lafferty. . . . I used to admire the works of the elderly ladies, the ones that are in their
sixties and seventies, and they make really complicated roses and flowers. As I got to
know people better, I learned that those same women were taught by the nun that taught me how to do tuftings in Aklavik. (Julia Pokuik Trennert, Inuvialuit, Hay River)

Mona and Agnes Thrasher, and Bertha Ruben also talked about learning embroidery techniques from Sister Leduc. Other Dene women, however, said that tufting was a skill passed down in the family.

My mom made me sit down and sort the hairs with her, the moose hairs, the white from the black. I was thirteen when I made my first one [tufting] to sell. She trimmed it better for me, 'cause it was not cut good enough. And then I started to sew whenever I have time. . . . My mom said she learned the same way as her mother, my great grandmother taught her, and then her mother taught her. (Nancy LaFleur, South Slavey, Hay River)

The church influenced the style of needlework done by groups of women (Duncan 1989). The experiences of many of the residents of the church-run schools are beginning to be told, and they are not all traumatic and painful. Many women talked about how the priests helped them. They saw that the indigenous people needed a way to support themselves, and tried to help by providing materials, ideas, and a place to work. Father Adam gave Mona Thrasher paints when she was 16, and asked her to paint the Stations of the Cross for the new Igloo Church in Inuvik, for which she is now famous. Sue explains the influence of the church in Holman, when the art co-op was established:

The Holman Co-op was established by Father Henri Tardy, with the people. In the early sixties . . . there was absolutely no economic base and, he told me, people were starving and they needed to do something. People used to bring him drawings as gifts, and he began to see the potential and the beauty in these things. He very gently encouraged the development of this, really trying not to intrude or make any changes, or influence as to how people did things. . . . They . . . started out with stoncet prints, after that they incorporated stencil, then they bought the litho press.

He also encouraged the marketing and the promotion of these, and different products they could try doing. . . . There's some small competition about when James Houston started in Iqaluit, or in Cape Dorset. It's my understanding that Holman came by it independently, but just about the same time. (Sue Rose, non-native, Inuvik)

Bertha talked about how the priest helped the women in Paulatuk:
The Father was making us to sew, do some project, make us sew some wall hangers, mitts, and... He gave us a place to sew, the Father's house, we sewed upstairs. It was a project... we were already making yarn from muskox. He helped us to make extra money.

(Bertha Ruben, Inuvialuit, Paulatuk)

Bev explains another way in which the churches influenced the women:

Years ago there used to be a group for quilt-making, the WI or Women's Institute in Aklavik, a group of women first started by the Anglican Church. They would all gather on a certain night and learn how to make quilts. I think it was something that was passed on from the people... the RC [Roman Catholic] priests and nuns were usually French-speaking, and Anglican ministers were usually English. (Bev Lennie, Inuvialuit, Inuvik).

There is no doubt that the churches influenced the arts and artists of the Western Arctic in many ways. The sewing skills taught by the nuns, although different from traditional sewing skills, built on many of the same concepts of stitching with pride. Sutherland (1984) documented the history of the diocese in the Western Arctic for the Catholic church and recently wrote a history of the Grey nuns. Their influence was felt not only through teaching in the residential schools, but through involvement with the communities in which they served.

Arctic newcomers--Trade goods, beads and cloth

Using available materials, women traditionally decorated fur and hide clothing using bird bones, seeds, shells, colored bits of fur and natural dyes. The introduction of beads and wool from Europe, fine steel needles and thread gave women more ways of constructing and decorating their clothing (Duncan 1989, Hall, Oakes & Webster 1994, Thompson 1994). Fine beading added another sewing technique to the already highly developed sewing techniques of the indigenous women. The Dene women are recognized as the largest group of regional experts in beading (Duncan 1989). Some Inuit women learned beading in their communities, and specially beaded amautis can be seen at traditional dances and ceremonies. Other Inuit women (M. Igutsaq) learned beading techniques from Dene girls in the residential schools.
The availability of certain colors of beads and threads along with personal and local preference created regional and individual styles that contributed to a woman's personal recognition as a seamstress. Margaret L. talked about how the colors she used in beading have changed.

We really used to mix our colors long time ago... now they are all new, the style. Sometimes you are drawing and your mind is telling you 'it's going to be this color.' They call that the 'Lennie Design' because of this... dark blue and light blue and another shade of blue. (Margaret Lennie, Inuvialuit, Inuvik)

Lorna is a Gwich'in woman who married an Inuvialuit man. She brought her family sewing skills to her new community of Aklavik, and made a fully beaded baby belt in the Gwich'in tradition for each of her seven children before they were born. These baby belts now hang on the wall above the couch in her living room. She explains the development of beadwork on baby belts:

I guess it was just a strip, those embroidered strips you buy, that's how they used to make them. But then the beads came along and now they got fancier, putting names on, and birthdates. [Before] they just used them... they had no such things as strollers... everything had to be hand done. If you wanted a pair of shoes you had to start by going out and getting your moose. (Lorna Storr, Gwich'in, Aklavik)

There is tangible evidence that the arctic indigenous peoples traded materials and techniques, and even copied each other's designs in a number of ways. This mutual influence produced some unique individual styles, and some very recognizable community styles, within a region that has a mixture of two indigenous cultures as well as non-native influences.

Arctic newcomers—business, markets and patrons

In the past women created clothing for their families and chose colors and designs just to please them. When strangers asked for work, sometimes they made specific demands for new and
different things. There is now considerable influence from buyers and markets on the arts of the Arctic. Bertha explains:

The first wall hanger I made was a sealskin. We were on the DEW [Distant Early Warning] line in the fifties. This guy was in the Air Force and he asked me to do a sealskin rug. So I made a big rug for him, with the Inuvialuit village and the DEW line [sewn] up top of it. Since then I start sewing with sealskin. (Bertha Ruben, Inuvialuit, Paulatuk)

Julia says she started doing tufting again because of tourist demand:

I got back to it because the tourists were interested in the tuftings, and Fort Providence is famous for that. It started out trying to fill a demand for it, for stuff the tourists wanted. . . . When they go to Fort Providence, moose-hair tufting is usually what they buy to take back as souvenirs. (Julia Pokiak Trennert, Inuvialuit, Hay River)

One of the criticisms of northern art is that it is market-driven. Most of the indigenous women did not comment on markets generally, but they talked about 'making things to order' as in Bertha's comments above. Several of the non-native women (Sue, Janice, Charlene and Vicki) discussed the effect of the market on northern art. Janice articulated a major concern that 'art' is produced to sell starting at an early age, without time or regard for artistic development. Sue talked about buyers being thousands of miles away in the South, and that the artists never hear comments on their work to help them grow. In fact, that was why Sue and Charlene started The Great Northern Arts Festival in 1989--to give northern artists a chance to learn from their patrons and each other. Many Northerners are concerned that the market has a huge influence on its artists and what they produce.

Arctic newcomers--government and business

There is a lot of influence from government through funding, development programs or training of art-related skills on the development of the women's artwork as well as on market opportunities. Many of the art co-ops like Holman, Tuktoyaktuk and Fort Liard were originally
set up through government grants. The indigenous women's artwork initially prompted Charlene and Sue to start the Inuvik festival, followed by Vicki who initiated the *Festival of the Midnight Sun* in Yellowknife, and Sandy who started the Inuvik Women's *Crafts Festival*. The arts festivals pay artists' expenses to participate through partial funding by government grants. These festivals, in turn, influence the development of artwork in a number of ways: through exposing art and artists to the public, by widening their markets, introducing them to other artists, giving them a forum for discussing common issues, and allowing them to gain new confidence in themselves and their work. Mary sums up her festival experience:

> When you go to Inuvik, you see someone else's art and then you look to see what you can do. And then you try and do things like that. . . . This way when you go to Inuvik you learn. If you're an artist, and you see someone else's art and see how they do, this way it really gives you some ideas. . . you learn from each other. (Mary Trimble, Inuvialuit, Inuvik/B.C.)

The NWT Arts Council provides grants for artists to do approved projects, and both Vicki and Laurelle got NWT Arts Council grants to paint elders or certain aspects of life in the North. Business also influenced the development of the women's art by providing market sources. Jane Dragon helped organize a co-op for women in Fort Smith, to help get materials at a reasonable price, but the women needed business skills to run it. Lillian ran several businesses in Fort Smith and purchased other women's work to sell. Sandy runs a sewing store in Inuvik which has sewing supplies, and she also sells local women's artwork. Bertha and Lena said it was impossible to make things when there was nobody to buy it, and wool and other materials are expensive to buy retail. In many small communities the co-op is the only buyer of artwork in town, as well as the only supplier of materials.

Another influence of government is through sponsored training programs such as the Fine Arts Program mounted at Aurora College in 1995 in Inuvik, Fort Simpson and Hay River. Ruth
was a student in that program, and Janice, Sue, Charlene, Laurelle, and Lillian all taught parts of that program. A government-sponsored Fur Garment Arts program (ironically also under the name Fine Arts) was offered in Aklavik the same year. Rosie Archie was a student in that program even though she had worked in the Aklavik fur parka factory for many years. Earlier, Rosie was sent by Government to Montreal to a fur-coat manufacturer, to learn how to make fur-coats. Many influences were observed and discussed that had an impact on the women's artwork. Many of these influences become obvious as I observed the arts of the region.

**The meaning of art in women's lives**

What art means in a woman's life is a difficult question. Many of the women did not seem comfortable discussing this, they seemed embarrassed and quickly turned the topic away from themselves. For the indigenous women this may be the result of cultural learning, as they generally do not talk about themselves. Their reaction could also be partly due to the Christian belief that it is vain to talk about oneself. However, those that did answer this question told me that it gave them pleasure, that it relaxed them, that it made them proud, it made them 'feel good', or that it was part of visiting friends. As previously discussed, many women told me that selling artwork helped to support their families. Lorna talked about art as a connection to history, while others connected it to cultural revival:

I just wonder how our parents used to do this? . . . In my family alone there w[ere] 11 of us children, . . . but yet the mothers had parkas sewn, mukluks, moccasins, mitts out of mooseskin, and it makes me sad because it's sort of dying. Like it's lost . . . you wonder how they did it. . . . They had to do everything . . . and yet they had all this work done, so it kind of makes me really sad, because we'll never see this again. And even my own children will probably never do this, they'll do a bit of work here and there, but never to sit down and actually do something like this . . . It's sad, but we're really losing that part of our tradition. (Lorna Storr, Gwich'in, Aklavik)
Now the children are being taught traditional arts and crafts. . . . The culture is being revived now, because of people recognizing that they don't have to be ashamed of who they are, or what they are. I think they are realizing that it's something important. (Bev Lennie, Inuvialuit, Inuvik)

My sewing . . . it relaxes me. I enjoy sewing, so whenever I am very busy, and I want to take a break from everything else, I usually pick up something and make something. . . . Right now, as it is, it's a dying art. What I learned I want to pass it on, so they [children] can pass it on, later on, themselves. . . . I think when we show them these things they learn the value of them, the animals and that. It's very important to have your values. . . . It's not only just the culture, it's a way of life in the North. (Jane Dragon, Chipewyan, Ft. Smith)

For Cece, sewing is connected to pride, but also to social gatherings:

Even though I was chief, with a lot of paperwork and office work, going to meetings, you have your leisure time, you don't work 24 hours a day. . . . I always have my sewing there. I can't sit and visit now without my sewing. It relaxes you. Most of the older women who sew do that, they sew while they visit or watch TV, you're creating. (Cece McCauley, Inuvik Native Band)

For other women the meaning of their art is stated as financial or connected to reputation, although the obvious pride is left unspoken:

I did sewing for lots of people. . . . Native and white people too. Lots of natives they can't do any sewing around here, so I been making for them too. But the white people, they're the ones who I always sew for. . . . I never did keep my sewing long. When they come here and they see, they buy. (Mary Ann MacDonald, Metis, Ft. Smith)

Mona talked of trading skills with a cousin, and Elsie alluded to confidence and respect from peers:

Yeah, it makes me feel good too. She was the one I used to ask, and now today she asks me. . . . Now I know that I could do it . . . I could do something, and if I want something I'll go and do it. (Mona Igutsaq, Inuit, Taloyoak)

It's so hard to say it. I feel good, you know, I like it. They always start to . . . when they like my prints, and say it's nice, you know, it feels better. (Elsie Klengenberg, Inuvialuit, Holman)
The non-native women spoke of their artwork using quite different terms, they talked about the need to create for personal reasons. The sense of pride gained from their artwork is embedded in their comments. Lillian said:

Even if it was not a great income, it was a great feeling. . . . One day I counted seven women walking in my woven jackets . . . and it was such a neat feeling, that I had created those, it was all my idea, and here were these women walking around very happy . . . it was a good feeling. I now long to create, I long for my loom, I long for my time for my sewing. . . . I am ready to burst, I am ready. (L. Kristensen, non-native, Ft. Smith)

Laurelle, Janice and Sue talked about art as part of a personal journey:

I have just recently done 25 paintings, it was great, and very exhausting. I really got into the process, the inner self that leads me via process. The product was not what I was seeking, the process was! It is so exciting to paint that way. (L. Macy, non-native, Hay River)

Art and life always have to be connected for me, and so my work changes as I change environments, like moving from Whitehorse to Montreal, and having a child. . . . My daughter made me feel connected to my own family history, so I began . . . making work about it. (J. Rahn, non-native, Montreal)

We should all climb back into ourselves and find what it is inside that made us think that we wanted to do this [art] to begin with. Why do I want to do this? And . . . why do I have to do this to be happy? I think every human has a creative part of them and they express it in different ways. . . . There are a few people who have to do it in order to be well. Other people can do it to enjoy themselves. But it's those individuals that we should really cherish, and have near us, who have to do it [art] because it's something that is coming out of them, that will not be put under a bushel. (S. Rose, non-native, Inuvik)

Brendalynne talked about what it takes to produce art:

It takes a creative mind to come up with new ideas. To be unique. . . . You have to have that urge to do it, you have to want to do it. Not for money, not for anything, you have to be proud of your work. I think it is slowly dying out. (Brendalynne Inuk Trennert, Inuvialuit/German, Hay River)

Although it was hard for many women to talk about the meaning of art in their lives, I could observe their obvious pride as they discussed their work. It seemed to me that making art gave them a great deal of power: the power to support themselves, to be autonomous, to be
respected, and to contribute to their communities and their culture. Their sense of self-esteem also seemed to be connected closely to their recognition as artists, as women, and as leaders in their communities.

Recognition by the Community

The women have been recognized by their communities in many different ways. Some were recognized as artists just by the fact of selling their work regularly, or by being chosen to show their work at festivals, or having their work shown at galleries, or being chosen for special exhibits. Many of the women talked about the honor of being chosen to make something special for an important person or occasion. Peeteekoootee was the designer of the 'Packing Dolls', so she was chosen to make a very special packing doll for the Queen and was flown to Rankin Inlet to present it to Her Majesty in 1993.

Some women are well known for their sewing, but also received more general community awards: MaryAnn MacDonald was chosen 'Elder of the Year' in Ft. Smith, Lillian was chosen 'Citizen of the Year' in Ft. Smith, and Bertha was selected to negotiate the Inuvialuit land claims, and won 'Good Woman' Contests in Holman, Paulatuk and Tuktoyaktuk. Other women gained more quiet respect in their communities for their artistic work and everyone knows their skills in particular techniques.

Some of the women have gained national or territorial recognition: Jane Dragon was asked to make two sets of traditional clothing, a man's outfit and a woman's outfit, for the Canadian Museum of Civilization in Hull, Quebec. Elsie's stencil prints have been part of the Holman Print Collection for the last eight years. Cece McCauley was elected the first woman Chief of the Inuvik Native Band, she writes a weekly newspaper column, and is known for her
advocacy of women's artwork. Christina Felix is world famous for her parkas, and the Town of Tuktoyaktuk has placed a brass sign outside her parka shop to notify visitors of her contribution. Mary Trimble has won prizes for her carvings at art shows in Inuvik and B.C. The NWT Arts Council provides recognition as well as grants: Laurelle, Vicki, and Ruth received grants; and the Festivals are supported partly by NWT Arts Council grants. Three of the women have been chosen to sit on the NWT Arts Council: Sue, Vicki, and most recently Charlene.

Some women have gained recognition through business or organizations. A few are represented by a gallery: Laurelle, Mona Thrasher, and Mary; while Sue and Charlene held exhibits of their work locally. Two of Sue's paintings were reproduced and copies were sold as fund-raisers for Mental Health. Most of the women I interviewed were participating in the festivals because they were chosen to represent their communities.

Other women gained recognition through organizing: Charlene, Vicki and Sandra created festivals to help other artists, and obtained national arts support. Bev became the first indigenous Coordinator of The Great Northern Arts Festival in 1996. Mona Igutsaq and Jane organized co-ops to help other women. Some women have their own art-related businesses and have gained recognition through their business skills: Sandra owns Inuvik Sewing, Christina owns the only parka shop in Tuktoyaktuk, Mona Igutsaq manages the co-op in Taloyoak, Sue runs her own graphic arts business in Inuvik, and Charlene has a photography business. Bertha helped to negotiate the Inuvialuit land claim more than ten years ago.

A number of the women are recognized by their teaching of art and other subjects: Laurelle, Sue, Charlene, Vicki and Janice teach art in schools and to adults in college. Jane, Nancy, Bev, Lorna, Vicki and Margaret Vittrekwa all are teaching regularly in elementary
schools, some combining art with indigenous languages. Bev is home-schooling her five children, and Mona, Peeteekootee and Elsie also do some teaching of children.

There are many forms of community recognition, and all of the women interviewed for this research project have gained recognition in their own communities and the region. They were chosen for this project on the basis of their recognition as community experts.

Teaching the next generations

Most of the women felt that sewing skills and other art forms should be taught in the schools as well as learned at home. The indigenous women talked about sewing and traditional skills, explaining the situation in their own community. Some women were concerned that the knowledge of traditional skills is dying out, and that most of the younger generation are not interested in learning. Mary talked about passing on traditional sewing skills at home: "You try and teach your family, your own family, to do your sewing, and you know, they did a lot of things like that" (M. Trimble, Inuvialuit, Inuvik/BC). Bev spoke about the responsibility of parents and grandparents:

A lot of the skills, like the sewing . . . is happening through the schools . . . They're trying to revive the culture of each group by implementing it into the school system. I think that is okay in some ways, but then in other areas, I think these skills should be taught at home . . . by the parent, and not by the school system. It is something that all kids should know. . . . I feel it's the parents' responsibility to provide those skills that are needed to survive out on the land, and also for sewing. . . . As parents we . . . take our children out on the land, and with their grandparents they learn the skills. . . . A lot of the skills are being passed on to other groups through night schools . . . they have sewing classes, and that's one way of women passing on their skills. (Bev Lennie, Inuvialuit, Inuvik)

There's some people they do some sewing like duffels and shoes, embroidery and all that in school. Once a week I guess, or twice a week. . . . They should learn it at school and home too from their mothers. (Lena Olifie, Inuvialuit, Holman)
Margaret L. explains that sewing is still important to women of the North for survival, and that the approach to teaching is also important:

Even if they are not interested in it, they still sew because you have to know a little bit. Like if you're out in the middle of nowhere and something rips, and it depends on someone's life, and it's going to be used, it's got to be done. That they have to know, just a few stitches. There's some people that don't even know a few stitches. It all ends up survival.

If you find someone who is interested, push it, push them to doing it, and from there, if they learn the basics, they could find their own mistakes and learn from them. Everybody must learn without knowing you're teaching... Even if you see their mistakes, they're going to make mistakes, but you have to back off, let them. Mistakes are the best teachers. (Margaret Lennie, Inuvialuit, Inuvik)

Several women pointed out the relationship between interest, readiness, respect and/or encouragement before children will want to learn.

My sister had two girls... about 12 and 13, and she just let them use the machine, and those girls were just sewing like mad, because she encouraged them... and let them do it.... My son when he was about 6 or 7, he'd come home frustrated, he had to make mitt strings and sew, I guess it's just a waste of time. They should teach them the ABC's then. Where they should learn crafts is in the high school, if they want to, if they want to teach it in the school. (Cece McCauley, Inuvik Native Band)

The younger generation today doesn't seem to be interested... I'm teaching my daughters to do some art. The oldest daughter's really good, she is really [a] good artist, my second oldest, she's trying, and... my 15 year old daughter doesn't bother. (Agnes Thrasher, Inuvialuit, Inuvik/BC)

Mary Ann talks about the skills learned by people in her family, and then about how she helped others learn in a class setting:

My sister's kids didn't learn to sew beads and embroidery... not one of them. I taught my daughters... four of them, they know how to sew. My daughter Mary, too, she can draw good. With all that paint and canvas too, she can do that. One of my sons carves... he can draw too, really good. They had [a] sewing class for making parkas and jackets and they told us to bring... our sewing... These were not young people... they didn't know how to sew with beads, so they would sit close to me and I showed them how to sew beads. (MaryAnn MacDonald, Metis, Ft. Smith)
The indigenous women who are teachers, were concerned that sewing was not being taught much at home, and that all children should have the opportunity to learn traditional skills at school. The women explained the various situations in their home communities. Lorna, who is teaching in Aklavik, explained that not much sewing is taught in the schools there "... because of all the cutbacks with the government and ... there's not enough teachers to do the home ec. part." She said young girls today are not much interested in doing this kind of sewing "They're not, because [traditional clothes are] ... not worn as much as it used to be, and it's easier for people to just go to the store" (Lorna Storr, Gwich'in, Aklavik). Margaret Vittrekwa, who teaches in Ft. McPherson, told of the situation there:

The young women are not learning much [traditional skills] at home. ... They have the home economics teacher, she's a woman from Ft. McPherson, and she teaches girls how to bead on the loom, [and] get their own designs. In the school they started this beading on the loom with just string. They are making their own mukluks and slippers, their own handbags, earrings--these are the girls that are in school. The boys sometimes they do too. They learn from age 10 to 15 or so ... they're quite anxious to learn. (Margaret Vittrekwa, Gwich'in, Ft. McPherson)

Jane, who teaches in the elementary and high schools in Fort Smith, said students need encouragement from parents to keep an interest in learning:

It all depends on the parents ... on how much they encourage it. I think the small communities still have a lot of handicrafts ... people still wear all their [traditional] clothing. If you wear your clothing and be proud of it, there will always be some. But the more they buy it from the store, they will slowly just lose it ... Some of them [children] have seen it at home, [but] there's lots of them that never did. So it's always a good thing to have it at the school. (Jane Dragon, Chipewyan, Ft. Smith)

Nancy, who teaches in Hay River, explained the government policy in training indigenous cultural and language teachers in the schools, as one effort to help the indigenous people revive their language and culture.

That's what they're trying to do now, to get a lot of native teachers, and ... that's what they're trying to train aboriginal teachers, to teach cultural and traditional skills. So the
kids will learn their language and other traditional skills. (Nancy La Fleur, South Slavey, Hay River)

Some of the women, regardless of their level of formal education, have been asked to teach traditional skills to classes in the schools, because they are respected as elders. Bertha explains how sewing is taught in Paulatuk:

In school we used to go and they give us little projects for 3 or 4 weeks, maybe 1 hour, kids sewing. We have a class and we learn them how to put the stitches in. We learn them how to make a little design in stroud or make little design on a piece of felt. I cut design for them and they sew it—not good--just learning how to hold a needle, talk to them all the while they sew. . . . lots of them do nice work. They have to learn, the schoolteacher put them there right to the small little girls, [but] not boys. They enjoy that in school, they make small little shoes, just to see how far they could sew. If they don't finish them, they could do how far they could. (Bertha Ruben, Inuvialuit, Paulatuk)

Peeteekootee and Mona Igutsaq explain how sewing is taught at an early age to girls in their Central Arctic community, when they want to learn:

We don't think about age today, we don't say 'you're old enough to sew' . . . We start it right from the beginning like when they're old enough to hold a needle, they're old enough to sew. They could try anything . . . when they want to try sewing, just let them try . . . Last year I was helping in school, teaching the kids sewing, and I taught my daughters how to sew too. They are so eager they learn right away. (Peeteekootee Ugyuk, Inuit, Taloyoak)

There's going to be a grade 10 added to our school in the fall, next month they start . . . and they'll be coming over learning some points from us [at the women's co-op] . . . and we'll be going up there. It's going to help our students too, to learn some points from us . . . In our home community we all help each other, we all support. Whenever . . . somebody needs something. . . we help each other. (Mona Igutsaq, Inuit, Taloyoak)

Elsie has taught in the school, even though she never went to school herself:

School time we always teach them . . . [They] go to our work, I mean to art shop and learn . . . and we have school day, school hour . . . We let them draw first, and let them cut out (stencils). Some of them are easy to learn, and some of them are hard. . . . We just talk to them and we let them go and . . . they're gonna learn. (Elsie Klengenberg, Inuvialuit, Holman)
Rosie was asked to show her work at the school in Aklavik. She said the young people's interest depends on the circumstance of the experience:

Sometimes we tried teaching them and they are just not interested. Some are, older ones, but younger ones nowadays, they [were] just not interested. Even my own daughter, she's not interested in sewing, no patience. They should be [teaching kids in school].

This winter I was asked to go down one afternoon to show what I was doing to the children, and they were really interested. All ages, for about two and a half hours, and they asked lots of questions and to see how it was done. They want to know how I sew it together. (Rosie Archie, Inuvialuit, Aklavik)

Some of the women have been asked to demonstrate their skills at public festivals, such as the Great Northern Arts Festival in Inuvik. Julia and Brendalynne Trennert demonstrated tufting at the festival for several years, teaching visitors who wanted to learn. Brendalynne explained her concerns and the relation to pride, and readiness to learn:

I demonstrated how it's done. And if anybody wanted to try it, or learn how to do it, they could do it. But as for any workshops ... I haven't done anything like that ... I think it [tufting] is slowly dying out. ... You have to want to do it ... you have to be proud of your work. ... There's no way you can force anybody to do it, just because they're native, or they live in a community that [does tufting]. [Kids should be taught] when they're younger. They shouldn't be forced to do it. It should be offered, but if it's offered, it should be with somebody that has heart to do it. (Brendalynne Trennert, Inuvialuit/German, Hay River)

The non-native women talked about art education using very different terms. Charlene talked of giving children broad art experiences in the schools:

I think if they [students] had a stronger background in just the basics, it would give them more freedom ... and just the ability to try new things. ... The majority of them [northern artists] don't know the color wheel, they never had any training in perspective, that's why so much of the art is two dimensional. ... If they at least knew how to do it, then they would have the ways to [draw] two dimensional or three dimensional. They don't think of art as personal expression, an experiment, or something they do for the love of it. From day one it's money, and there's always people there to buy. Maybe I'm wrong in comparing northern artists to southern artists in that way. (Charlene Alexander, non-native, Inuvik)
Lillian taught sewing skills and weaving in Ft. Smith in several situations and also in Inuvik at Aurora College. Lillian said she prefers showing to talking: she had an apprentice for awhile, and at the women's correctional center she taught any women who wanted to learn.

Laurelle teaches art classes to children in schools and to adults in evening classes. Her class is ... a real mix, native and non-native, young and old. Anybody can sign up for a basic drawing class. . . . Native people get frustrated a little bit easier, they had definite topics that they paint about scenes or flowers . . . it's nice to give everybody encouragement, they come to an art class to refine the little bit of skills, they don't want to be put through hard core teaching—hard core criticism I guess. . . . The younger natives are always drawing the same style . . . I feel its almost influenced by southern markets. . . . The Dene seem a bit different, they seem more raw than all the southern natives, . . . the Dene . . . seem to belong to the land. (Laurelle Macy, non-native, Hay River)

Janice wrote some additional comments about ways of learning:

In art instruction I found I was most effective when I showed through example rather than talk about it in theory. I think there is a respect for doing and for skills and a distrust of talking. . . . My best art students were very quiet and extremely perceptive in picking up skills that I would demonstrate in my own work. I also experience this when I teach in the schools here (in Montreal and Ontario) in the 'artist in the school' program. I always produce work while I teach, not to tell students 'this is the way to do it', but to: gain respect from them that I make work, illustrate what I am teaching, and provide an example which will challenge their assumptions about what art is.

The difference in the South is that few students see art being made at home unlike the north, where, depending on the community, every other person is making something and trying to sell it. Therefore there is a respect for learning skills, and there is no better way to learn a skill than through demonstration. (Janice Rahn, non-native, Whitehorse/Montreal)

Vicki teaches art sometimes at the junior and senior-high level in Yellowknife, which she explains is very different from other communities:

. . . most of them [Yellowknife students] have no idea of anything about northern art. Nothing about Inuit art, or anything, which I find is really strange. They're sitting in Yellowknife, and they've never had a carver come in and demonstrate how they work or anything like that. It's really odd, they're here in the North, they could be really close. . . these are mostly white kids.

Most of the native kids who come from the communities definitely know their culture. They don't seem to have a lot of role models, but the ones that they do have,
have really been successful and they tend to follow their style of work. (Vicki Tompkins, non-native, Yellowknife)

Vicki alludes to teaching by example, and the need for indigenous students to know their culture. Sue talked about learning from the community people in Holman, and also about being honest with herself in searching for meaning and expression in art. She taught several weeks of drawing and painting in the Fine Arts Program in Inuvik in 1995/6, and said she really enjoyed the teaching experience. She concluded:

Every individual has things that they are good at, either innately or that they've learned. I think it's part of the responsibility of every person to give back, to contribute in any way that they can. It's everybody's responsibility to offer whatever they have for the benefit and development of the greater community, and if you do, you learn, and you gain much more back in the process of doing that. (Sue Rose, non-native, Inuvik)

The groups of women in this study have learned a great deal from each other, and from their common experiences of shared life in the North. Most of the non-native women have been in the Arctic for more than ten years and some are good friends, and there has been some exchange of skills. Most have come to respect traditional indigenous ways, especially of learning by example, observation, and trying. Many have adapted their own philosophies of art education to accommodate this style of learning. The indigenous women have also learned and understand some of the Eurocentric colonial culture's ways: they have learned to discuss, to be assertive to a degree, to document and question. Some have even learned to say 'no'. However, the way the non-native women spoke about their art, the terms they used as well as the approach, was in general, very different from the way the indigenous women spoke about their art as a part of everyday life.
Observations about the unspeakable

In addition to the powerful comments of these women, I observed several issues about which few people spoke openly, but which I found both puzzling and problematic: cultural polarization, racism, family violence and abuse.

Cultural polarization and racism

There is a polarization of cultural groups which I observed as I lived in both Fort Smith and Inuvik. Non-natives largely live in one end of town while indigenous peoples live in the other. I was actually told that the 'native' housing in Inuvik was situated near the sewage treatment plant, because the white people wouldn't live there. I observed that some community activities have participants from only one cultural group or another, although everyone is said to be welcome. For many years the volunteer Fire Department crews had no indigenous people, only non-natives, who had to commit to weekly practices in emergency procedures. When they sponsored a Fireman's Ball and banquet every year, costing $40 per ticket, it was attended almost entirely by non-natives with very few indigenous people.

Old-time dances in Inuvik are held at Ingamo Hall, a beautiful large log building, and they are attended by aboriginal people of all ages, but by only a few non-natives. The admission to the old time dances is free, and everyone brings something for the 'feast'. These dances are also 'dry,' no alcohol is allowed, the music is country fiddle, and families with babies to great grandmothers visit and get up to 'jig' to the music. Feasts of 'northern foods' (buffet-style) are organized by indigenous people, formal sit-down banquets were organized by non-natives. At first these different activities are somewhat understandable--these traditions come from different
cultures. However, they spill over into daily relations that demonstrate a lack of understanding and perpetuate prejudice on the part of both groups.

For example, *The Great Northern Arts Festival* was criticized in 1992 for not including the community and the two major indigenous cultural groups in its organizing and planning, and because it had no aboriginal people on its board of directors or staff. Yet, it was created to assist northern artists (largely aboriginal) to learn from each other and meet their patrons. Part of my Festival position in 1993 was to get the community involved in order to address this criticism. I went out and talked to business owners and to Gwich'in and Inuvialuit officials, asking for suggestions. The two aboriginal groups said they had never been invited to participate, that it was a 'white' event, and even though the venom of their comments surprised me, we talked about how they might become more involved. One suggestion was a cultural display by each group, which never materialized, and another suggestion was awards, which I began in 1993.

We set up awards for the most promising emerging Inuvialuit and Gwich'in artists, and the groups agreed to donate prize money and certificates. During the Festival when it came time to decide on the recipients, we gathered a group of Gwich'in and Inuvialuit people and art experts together as judges. We discovered, however, that there was only one Gwich'in artist participating (out of 65), according to a list registered with the Gwich'in land claim, and they were very upset. The Festival had to examine why this was so, and we discovered two important reasons. First, the artists from the Gwich'in communities of Arctic Red River (now Tsiigehtchic), Fort MacPherson and Aklavik that produced traditional beadwork and embroidery were women, they did not call their work 'art', the participation of 'crafts' was discouraged by Festival organizers, and a commission was charged on all work sold. So the women did not apply to participate in the Festival.
Second, the male carvers from Gwich'in communities did not come forward to apply to participate because they sold their carvings directly to the public and did not want to pay a commission. There was always a lot of discussion and resentment expressed at the Festival artist seminars about the commission of 40% taken by the Festival on the sale of art works. The artists had a hard time understanding why it was so high even though the Festival paid airfares that might run as high as $1600 to bring artists into Inuvik, and paid all meals and lodging expenses. Local aboriginal artists were even reluctant to sell to local galleries and gift stores except when they were in need of emergency money. So the different terminologies, biases, and ways of doing things often got in the way of truly cooperative activities.

In early 1993 I suggested that Bev Lennie be hired in one of the staff positions for the Festival, and she served as Artist Needs Assistant in 1993 and 1994. With her help we also organized a fashion show of traditional and northern designer clothing in both those years, which became an important part of the Festival activities. In order to contact people in the Delta region who are out in the bush, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) makes announcements every noontime which include birthday greetings and upcoming activities in various indigenous languages. Bev explained that the indigenous women would not respond to an unknown person as the contact, so we used her name. Even though very few people called her ahead of time, five minutes before the Fashion Show was to start a whole lot of people arrived in their best traditional 'fancy' outfits! To me that was both wonderful and amazing, and somehow we got it all organized at the very last minute. I got to observe first hand a whole different way of doing things. Bev was the Coordinator of the entire Festival in 1996, and was later elected to the Board, along with Ruth Wright and another Gwich'in artist, so some progress was made toward representation of indigenous groups. By July 1997, there were 5 indigenous Board members.
Although it is rarely discussed openly, I also observed a number of incidents that pointed to blatant or disguised racism, both by whites against indigenous people, and the reverse, aboriginal peoples against whites. One example comes from a meeting of the Western Arctic Tourism Association in the Spring of 1995. With the Gwich'in land claim recently signed, there was a discussion of land access rights for tour operators. One Gwich'in man stood up and reportedly said "This is our land now, you whites have no right to travel on our rivers and land. Get off our land!" The often unspoken divisions between peoples are leftovers of colonialism, and will take years to eliminate.

The activities that now seem to bring the polarized groups together are community events like Festivals that have both indigenous and non-native traditions as part of the activities. During the winter festivals there are dog-sled races, snowshoe and cross-country skiing races, snowmobile races, and drum dancing in which all peoples participate. Competitions for indigenous women are skill-based, such as tea-boiling and seal skinning or muskrat skinning. Bertha Ruben won several of these competitions, receiving the title of 'Good Woman', which she talks about in her interview. These activities seem to bring the groups together and help everyone to celebrate co-existence in arctic communities. The published NWT Tourism Guide booklets list the various community festivals and their dates each year.

Power and respect, family violence and abuse

In class my students were able to discuss issues of power and respect in general terms, but when it got close to specific personal situations, the conversation became uncomfortable. These other unspeakable issues are family violence and abuse. Some of my students both in Fort Smith
and Inuvik talked about their experiences in class and I also observed what happened to them. Sometimes the women confided in me and asked for help, and at times I unwillingly got involved.

Without embarassing the women personally in class, I tried to approach the issue as one of power and respect, discussing the issue of family violence openly so the men in class could benefit from the women's point of view. We were comfortable enough to do this toward the end of each year, and I found that talking about my own experience of abuse helped. During the interviews for this research, women also confided stories of violence and abuse.

The Native Women's Association of Canada has made this issue one of its top priorities (Voyageur 1996), but there are a number of legacies that make it hard to address. Some of these are outlined by both Barman (1996) and Voyageur (1996) including the submissiveness taught by residential schools, the inequality of both male and white dominated society, low self-esteem from having no rights as women, the very silence and acceptance of the women, and the cultural belief that it is not permissable to say 'no'. All of these legacies have messages for women that contribute to their abuse.

Several recent collections of writings by aboriginal women voice their perspectives on their lives including family problems (Silman 1987, Allen 1989, Jaine & Taylor 1992, Perreault & Vance 1990, Birchwater 1991 & 1993, Brant 1984). This is just the beginning of healing. At least one woman interviewed here talked about the role of art in the healing process.

I also observed a community perception that all kinds of abuses are somehow the problem only of the indigenous peoples, so they do not like to talk about it with non-native people. While I was at the festival in 1994, I exhibited the series of soft-sculptured artworks I created on healing from abuse, and they were hung way up high and at the back, so that if people reacted they could do so in private. During the Festival, a few days after I interviewed Cece McCauley, she came in
to see the exhibit. She looked all around and went over to the series I did. She said to me: "Who did these, some white person?" I said to her, "Well, as a matter of fact, I did them." She said "Where did you get that idea?" and I said "From my own experience." She said "umm" and did not say much after that.

These are not easy issues to talk about, but the truth of women's stories is beginning to be told. The place of art in healing, and the recovery of self-esteem, is just beginning to be understood (Belenky 1986, Steinem 1992, McNiff 1981, Anderson 1979, Brafford 1992, Cameron 1992). The tension between cultural groups in the Western Arctic is starting to break down as all people share common problems and find community solutions to help in the healing process.

The collective voices of these women are very powerful, and they teach us not only about their lives but also about ourselves. The women's statements about their artwork, and the artwork of other northern women, contribute to our understanding of the meaning of art in Western Arctic women's lives specifically. An understanding of the similarities and differences between the cultural groups may enlighten economic policy, encouraging the arts industry in the North. The women's collective voices offer strong views on the way art should be taught to future generations, and may help to confirm the place of art in the schools of the Arctic. Understanding the importance of art in these women's lives has broad implications for the classrooms of Canada and beyond. We have a social responsibility to learn from each other, to understand and assist the process of upsetting the inequities of colonialism, and to enlighten and help heal the unspoken social issues that still plague arctic society.
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

The socio-political history and artistic background of the Western Arctic region was described in Chapter One, along with the rationale and basic questions of this research project. The research strategies were reviewed and discussed in Chapter Two. The large central section of this dissertation, Chapter Three, contains the comments of women artists from interviews which were originally recorded on video and audiotape. These women artists are representative of three large cultural groups that co-exist in the Western Arctic: The Dene and Metis, the Inuvialuit and Inuit, and non-native or EuroCanadian peoples. The presentation of this data is followed by an analysis and discussion of emergent themes in Chapter Four. Finally, based on these interviews collected over five years, and my field observations over seven years in the Western Arctic, I draw conclusions, identify implications, and make recommendations for action and further research.

I began this project with the idea that there was a strong connection between women's artwork and their concept of self and individual power. I had observed my women students making artwork, which seemed to give them a quiet pride and an economic power to provide for their families when other sources did not. Recent books focussed on the artwork of the region (Duncan 1989), but the women who created it were invisible. I wanted to know who these women artists were, how they learned their skills, how their education contributed to their work, and about influences on their work. I also wanted to know what art meant in their lives, and how they thought future generations should be taught.

It is hard to step back far enough to view the women as a single group, but what I found were a number of fascinating individual women creating art in different media. Each was making
a difference in her community in some meaningful way. Some had created festivals or co-ops to help other women, others were helping to teach cultural traditions in schools. Each seemed somewhat isolated, but worked within a complex interwoven society which spanned several cultures. Sometimes they worked together, helping each other, at other times they worked independently, and sometimes there was tension between them. The women were often quietly and patiently doing artwork, each making a contribution to the rich fabric of life in the Western Arctic region.

I observed and talked with individual women, each providing her personal perspective. I talked with them either in their homes in Fort Smith and Inuvik, or at several festivals in the Inuvik region. I videotaped all of the interviews except for a few women who preferred to be audiotaped. It was not possible to talk to every woman artist in the Western Arctic, but I feel these women represent the range of cultural views present in the region. Most of these women were chosen to attend the arts or craft festivals in Inuvik as representatives of their communities. The following conclusions are based on my personal observations as well as a review of the womens' comments from our conversations.

Conclusions

Cultural identity--how the women describe themselves

Some of the indigenous women were aware of the changing usage of terms for the cultural heritage groups, while other women seemed less aware. The terms are confusing and are used differently in each community and region. A brief overview of terms and meanings was presented in Chapter One. Sometimes both groups of indigenous women used the contemporary terms 'indigenous' or 'aboriginal' to describe themselves as different peoples from non-natives.
However, none of these women used the terms 'first nations', 'tribes', or 'treaty Indian' to describe their cultural group. These terms are, however, still used by non-natives, who are a minority in the Western Arctic, especially in the small isolated communities.

**Eskimo, Inuit, or Inuvialuit women**

These women used several terms in describing their cultural heritage, and some had a clear preference for one term over another. For instance, some Inuvialuit women used the broad term 'Inuk', meaning a person of Inuit descent, saying it was simpler. Some of the Inuvialuit women still called themselves 'Eskimo', because, they said, that was what they were used to. They said they did not perceive the name 'Eskimo' to be an insult. However, Bev was surprised when she was told by an Inuit carver, that the term 'Eskimo' is considered to be an insult in the Eastern Arctic. The Inuvialuit women used the term 'Native' to describe 'Dene' or 'Indians' as a group, but seemed uncomfortable talking about names and categories.

**Indian or Dene women**

The women of Indian heritage, however, did not use the term 'Indian'. They often referred to themselves as 'native' or by one of the regional group names, such as 'Gwich'in' or 'Slavey'. Sometimes they used a specific sub-group or community name such as Fort McPherson Band or Inuvik Band, both sub-groups of Gwich'in. A number of the women used the term 'Dene' to refer to their larger Western Arctic regional heritage group. Women of mixed French and Dene heritage are grouped as 'Metis', but sometimes the term is used more broadly to designate any person of mixed Indian and other heritage. The exception is that women of mixed Inuit and other heritage are never called 'Metis'. Some women who talked about their mixed-race ancestors were not registered as Metis, but as Gwich'in or Inuvialuit.
A number of women were puzzled by the descriptive terms as many families have ancestors from both groups, and/or a European (whaler) grandfather, in their family histories. Most spoke proudly of their European ancestors, yet they still considered they belonged to one of the aboriginal groups. They talked candidly about their choices now that land claims have been settled. They explained that their heritage is legally defined by which group they register with for land claims. Some have to choose between sides of their families, and/or on the basis of where their established land rights are located for hunting and trapping.

**Non-native**

The women of Euro-Canadian heritage are often referred to as 'whites' in general usage, or as 'non natives' or 'other' or even 'indigenous non-aboriginal' on NWT government forms. This groups all peoples other than aboriginals together to describe them as one group of outsiders or newcomers. This group may, however, include people of European, African, Asian, and Middle Eastern descent. While this group of people does not come from a single heritage tradition, the largest number do come generally from European heritage. The most accurate term seems to be 'EuroCanadian' but this is rarely used except in writing.

The terms used to describe peoples of the Western Arctic are important and changing. How they are used provides a clue as to the understanding of the different cultural traditions.

**Choice and power**

The groups of women made choices in life in a different order, and they seem to draw power from different sources. An individual's power, defined as the ability or right to act, the capability or capacity to control his/her life, is related to awareness of choice and the opportunities available. A woman may have the legal right to make a choice to stay or leave
school, choose a husband, take a job, train for a career, or even decide on a medium of art within which to work. She can choose to travel, to live far away from home, to go to college, or to have children, and the number and spacing of children (with birth control). However, these are not real options or choices unless a woman is aware of them. Individual power to act is shaped by factors such as culture, traditions, family responsibilities, and personal experiences. Both consciousness and opportunity for choice appear to be important factors influencing women's choices in life.

The choices for the indigenous women were very limited, especially in decades past, as their parents focused on family survival, culture and community. They had marriages arranged for them, some as early as age 14, or they chose to marry and have children early in their young adulthood. As Bev pointed out, for indigenous students to get through high school was a real accomplishment, because high schools only existed in the larger centers. Students had to leave home and live far away for several years, so most of the indigenous women did not complete high school until later. When they did complete high school, few jobs were open to them without further training, and there were very few real opportunities to get further training without moving South. Postsecondary programs were scarce in the North until the last decade.

The non-native women had a broader range of choices growing up in southern Canada, where they could live at home and access many more opportunities for training and further education. They could choose to leave home, but they didn't have to. They seemed to be conscious of these various choices, and exercised their individual power to choose relatively early in their adulthood. When they came North, the non-native women already had the additional training sought by their indigenous sisters, so when they competed for jobs they were favored.
These inequities have begun to decrease through affirmative action, and by increasing educational programs and training opportunities for northern residents.

**Indigenous women**

Some of the indigenous women spoke of having no choice at all early in their lives, as marriages and decisions were made for them. Some Inuit women spoke of girl babies being left on the ice to freeze to death because they were valued less than boy babies who could become hunters. Although they could not control such decisions made in their childhoods, a woman's place in indigenous traditional culture was firmly established (NT Education 1991). The introduction of colonial patriarchal values and Christian teaching in residential schools devalued women and espoused deference or obedience to hunter husbands (Voyageur 1996).

The indigenous women's limited choices, framed by community, family, children, and traditional values within their cultural group, were further denied by residential school teaching. Their quiet acceptance of life situations, and reluctance to say no, worked against their awareness of choice in these matters. There were few chances for them to develop healthy self-respect. This led some women eventually to accept situations of subservience or even abuse. However, traditional sewing and artwork was an accepted way to show pride, and the indigenous women seemed to gain power and maintain a sense of self through knowledge that their skills were essential to the survival of hunters, families, and their communities. For many indigenous women their artwork became their key to economic survival, as well as to self-esteem.

The indigenous women have recently realized their powers: the power of birthright, of belonging to a place, of being rooted in a land; the power of being strong women, of being creative, of being educated, and of choosing to retain some of the traditions of a lifestyle based on
the land. The indigenous women's artwork seems to be a common thread tying the old to the new. These women know that they are the custodians of their cultural traditions, and they believe strongly that they must keep traditional skills alive. They also know that they need to adapt and learn new ways, in order to continue to survive in today's world of change and cultural diversity.

These indigenous women are learning about the colonial-imposed structures of government, and many have now completed the formal education required to participate within it. They are competing and winning positions of power with good salaries, enabling their families to flourish while still upholding many of their traditional values. They also retain deeply-embedded ties to their communities and the region, which seems to increase their confidence and strength. Now, elder indigenous women are respected and honored as extremely powerful and influential in arctic communities. Their artwork keeps old traditions strong while creating new ones.

Non-Native women

The non-native women were encouraged by parents to develop as individuals through postsecondary education, travel, or starting careers. They had more real choices and demonstrated their power of choice by getting postsecondary educations early. Then, many chose to travel and work in the Arctic, often as single women. Moving and travel are acts of choice, and gave them a sense of their individual power, their freedom to choose a place and way of life, along with the realization that they could choose to move away again. This individual sense of power is evident in the approach taken by non-native women to their daily work and their artwork, but may contribute to their need to search for self, for personal growth, and
belonging to a new community. These women saw a chance to help other arctic artists, and acted upon it, either by teaching, and/or creating festivals, or organizing outlets for artists to sell their work.

As all the women became aware of their choices, whether early or later in life, they all opted for further education and wider life and career opportunities for themselves and their children. The indigenous women found strength in their culture and power through their communities. The sense of self and self-esteem for the non-native group of women, seems to have come from challenging themselves as individuals. This is heard in their talk about their quest to find themselves in relation to their art and lives. The choices and experiences of the indigenous and non-native groups of women seem to have been exercised in a different order, and result in very different sources for their self-esteem, and approaches to their artwork. The wisdom they gained through experience is evident in their quite varied artwork.

**A balance of power**

A power struggle is evident between the groups of indigenous and non-native peoples that is seldom spoken of, but which I observed on many occasions. For more than fifty years the positions of power in all communities have been held by 'whites'—police, teachers, doctors, nurses, government workers and store managers. The government affirmative action policy now gives preference to indigenous people and businesses on all contract bids and job postings. Once in a while the heritage groups or sub-groups polarize over an issue, and racism is openly voiced. Through education the indigenous women are learning techniques to scale the walls of colonial power, and acquiring management skills to stay at the top. Non-natives are learning to respect
the skills and cultural traditions of indigenous peoples. The groups are learning to respect each other as they co-exist in the Western Arctic, but tension still exists.

Womens' general education

The women's formal education occurred in different sequences, and was completed to various levels, but by the time they are middle-aged, the indigenous and non-native women appear to be contemporary equals. The women, however, may not be conscious of their equality. The mature indigenous women who experienced residential schools, as Barman (1996) concludes, were trained for submission and inequality. Their chance to continue formal education later in life was fraught with difficulties in leaving their communities and providing for families while going to school. However, college learning enhanced their understanding of their skills, and therefore increased their sense of power to affect their lives. Besides being parents and wives, they are taking their hard-won places as cultural teachers in schools, as leaders in communities, and as artists worthy of note.

The non-native group of women continued their formal educations soon after high school graduation and some waited a considerable length of time to marry and/or have children. They took training or degrees in art or arts related fields, and also worked in other careers to support themselves, which increased their sense of personal power. They explored other places to live and work, before choosing to come to the North to settle for awhile. They tried to balance careers in art with the need to support themselves. Their education enhanced their awareness of their skills, and their appreciation of other ways of life. They do not have the same ties to the land that the aboriginal peoples have, but they value the beauty in the environment around them, and seek involvement in their new communities.
Early learning of artistic skills

The women began learning different artistic skills, often sewing or drawing, and some are still producing art in the medium in which they began. The indigenous women usually began by learning basic sewing skills as part of their roles as women in aboriginal cultures. Many women continue to work in these traditional ways, sewing dolls for tourists to help them understand traditional clothing, making slippers for family and for tourists, and sewing wall hangings as reminders of traditional life. The non-native women also began with a basic art skill such as drawing, and many still work in this way, although they create artwork in other mediums as well.

Many of the women, however, have used their early learning as a basis for skill development in other art mediums, or in arts-related fields such as management, teaching, arts administration, and tourism. The implication of their early art learning and continued success, is the transferability of both skill and confidence to other areas of learning and life. Problem-solving, and ways of thinking which are fostered in the process of creative activity, may be transferred to other areas of life in later years. Sanford and Donovan (1984) write that in order for a child to develop self-esteem, she needs to feel both significant and competent at something. Steinem (1992) also equates self-esteem with a sense of personal value. Early art success appears to nurture a sense of significance and increase a sense of competence, building self-esteem in life experience as well as artistic ability. Many teachers and parents believe that the aim of education is development of self on all levels (Belenky et al 1986), and these women's artwork seems to contribute to that process.
Different Ways of Learning

The way indigenous people learn is vastly different from the European-based school norms of North America, based on lecture, discussion, questioning, reading from texts, writing, and step-by-step instruction. Aboriginal people learn by silent observation, by watching, observing details, and then trying new skills on their own. Facts of history and group values are passed down by example and oral tradition with an economy of words. These indigenous ways of learning are finally being accommodated in the curriculums of contemporary school systems today in the North. They need to be understood more widely across Canada in order to facilitate the success of indigenous peoples in all formal schooling. Feminist scholars have documented the unique ways in which women learn and know, and these also need to be understood and accommodated in today's classrooms. The women of this study cooperated, assisted and supported each other in new experiences.

How the women viewed their work

Art or artist, crafts & handicrafts

Most of the women considered themselves to be artists although a few did not. However, almost all of the women considered their creations to be artwork. They spoke of individual skill, original ideas, creativity in designs, and beauty as factors contributing to their artwork. Some women also used the term 'crafts' or 'handicrafts' to describe their work, while others used more specific terms such as 'sewing'.

The division of fine arts from crafts is relevant in the Western Arctic because it reflects the value of the artists who create it, and often their gender. Although the indigenous people are not aware of the European arts and crafts debate, it has affected the prices they get for their work.
The indigenous women's artwork is often used in everyday life, and it reflects their culture and way of life. Yet they cannot ask a price that will pay them even minimum wage for their work. The European notion that art is most valuable when it has no purpose or use other than to decorate or elevate, has become part of Western Arctic cultures. The sculptures or carvings largely done by men in the Arctic are valued most highly in the South. The paintings done by both men and women are valued more highly than a wall-hanging made of cloth even though both are designed as wall decorations. The Western Arctic struggles with this division of form and function and with status of various art forms, yet it is the women, and their artwork, who hold the key to cultural survival. They are therefore fighting for status, recognition and equality in the arts as in other areas of their lives.

Influences on the women's artwork

Necessity

Much of the indigenous women's artwork is created out of necessity—either for wearing for survival in arctic climates, or for money to buy other necessities. A factor in art production for many indigenous women was their changing economic situation, due to the decline of the fur industry and its devastating effect on their men. Many supported their families with their artwork. The non-native women discussed their motive for art production in quite different terms. Creation of artwork they said is more a quest for personal development and growth, and yet many still contribute to family incomes through their artwork.

New materials/techniques

Most of the women incorporate new materials and techniques into their work, although some guard their regional traditions and own personal patterns as precious. Delta Braid is one
example of a new creation using traditional sewing techniques with new materials to create a product unique to this region of the Arctic now made by all cultures. New materials and techniques are used alongside old ones, such as in tufting, a French embroidery technique, using local moose and caribou hair. Both non-native and aboriginal women use local materials in new and creative ways. The indigenous women adopted new fabrics like blanket cloth—they call it duffle which was originally traded as Hudson's Bay Blankets—and calico cotton into their designs. They incorporate new good ideas in technology and materials into their designs, using sewing machines, velcro and zippers alongside furs. The Inuvialuit women who were expert at skin sewing and piecing now work also in wool with embroidery thread using applique techniques.

Arctic Peoples

All the arctic peoples influence each other in some way, and they teach and learn from each other. Non-native women learned traditional techniques, and taught new techniques to other women. For instance, the nuns taught French embroidery techniques, the use of sewing machines, and began quilting classes. Non-native people brought new art forms to the North: silk painting, stained glass, pottery, weaving and printmaking, and photography. The indigenous people taught each other skills like sewing and beading. The paintings and images of all the women reflect traditional cultures as well as modern life. Newcomers continue to have a wide influence: the church, traders/stores, government, markets and patrons, and even Festivals and galleries.

Arctic land and environment

All artists are influenced by the beautiful but harsh arctic land and climate. Some elements of the old traditional ties to the land are reflected in the art of the indigenous peoples,
and some of the old ways are idealized and adopted by all cultures co-existing in the Western Arctic. The artwork of many artists, including women's traditional sewing, reflects a fascination with the arctic climate: the light, the midnight sun, the dark season, the cycles of life in animals, fish and birds, and the communities of people. The struggle to survive in this harsh environment is a continual theme in artwork as well. Symbols of arctic lands and lifestyle are also used in spiritual and cultural ceremonies such as drum dances.

**Gender**

Gender appears to influence not only the subjects of women's artwork, but the medium in which the women work. Women now produce artwork in almost every medium imaginable, including stone carving. Although stories are told of men sewing in years past, women now are the exclusive makers of art using sewing as the technique of creativity. In the Western Arctic only women now work in cloth making Delta Braid, parkas, packing dolls, slippers, and applique wall-hangings out of furs and cloth. The influence of gender has broadened to allow women to work in all mediums, but still excludes men from sewing anything beyond the basics. Gender and culture dictate that women have the right to sew, along with the 'right' to be underpaid for their efforts. Many women in the Western Arctic continue to choose the needle instead of the brush or other tools to 'paint' pictures of their lives.

**The meaning of art in women's lives**

Through their work as artists, women gain respect for their artwork and ideas, their skills and contribution to organizations, their hard work, their time, and support of their families. In observing the women artists, it seems that art contributes to their self-confidence and sense of power--their power of choice, autonomy, and survival in their chosen land. The women
themselves concluded that their artwork brings them joy, satisfaction, recognition, financial stability, and it is sometimes a bridge to social comfort. Some women also found that art helped them connect to their inner self. The meaning of art in these women's lives was sometimes evident in their status and the recognition they received from their communities. It seemed to empower them to accept positions of leadership in their families and communities.

**Recognition by the community**

The women were recognized by their communities and the region in a number of different ways: by being elected to council or as Chief of a local Band, by selection as negotiator of land claims, or by awards and honors from outside sources like newspapers and festivals. Other forms of recognition include success in business and organizing events, or selection to government committees. Some recognition comes in tangible forms like payment of salaries for continuing jobs, such as teaching, performed within the formal government system. One of the most tangible forms of recognition comes in the form of continued support by patrons who appreciate their artistic production.

**Teaching the next generations**

The women agreed that the next generations should learn traditional and new skills both at home and at school in order to allow students a variety of opportunities to learn from a range of sources. Most of the women also agreed that teaching should be done not only by trained and inspired teachers from all cultures, but by respected elders who are expert in particular traditional skills. They acknowledged the need for formal training to validate and certify the skills already acquired, and recognition already received from the community.
Some of the implications of the broader focus of education not only spread the responsibility for education across the community, but also require new teaching methods. Awareness of the learner's cultural background, social milieu, physical and emotional needs as well as academic skill requires teachers to adopt more sensitive and culturally aware methods of teaching. Using some of the indigenous ways of learning like silent observation, trying, and sharing, will help equalize student success in classrooms. The women acknowledged the need for both formal schooling and learning at home.

**Art as a discipline**

The place of art in the economy and cultures of this region is very strong. However, we still have to ask 'Why do we make art?' and 'What is art for?' as Chalmers (1996) suggests, connecting the role of art to society.

The women talked about the need for local histories and for skills to be documented and recorded. There is a need in this region to get to know the artwork of the region, and place it in the context of the larger Canadian and world art scene. The students of this region cannot understand their place in history, or in rewriting history, if they have no sense of the larger picture. So there is a need for broader art and cultural history in the schools, for looking, seeing, experiencing art, and then examining and comparing it to the art from other world cultures.

For instance, women who do beadwork may be very excited to learn about mosaics, pointillism, or cross-stitch patterns created in other parts of the world. Making the connection to artists across the world might make them feel important, and give them a sense of belonging to the larger picture. We could ask: do they create images for the same reasons? The local arts need to be examined first for their own characteristics, and then examined in the larger context.
Reacting to imposed colonial educational norms and irrelevant books, education authorities began creating curriculum materials unique to the North or a region that almost deny the existence of the outside world. Students rarely see arctic artwork alongside that of European masters, and they do not understand how they fit into world art, and they seem to devalue their own work. They need to see how a Michaelangelo marble sculpture is similar to an Inuit stone sculpture. We must continually ask of all art: why is it created? What purpose does it serve? These questions need to be pondered and discussed.

The women acknowledged 'criticism' from elders in learning their early sewing skills, and having to 'get it right'. Looking at art and discussing what makes something 'right' contributes to our understanding of what is good or bad art, but these discussions rarely happen in northern schools. There is a need to view a variety of art examples, to describe their elements, and to think about what makes something art. What makes quality in artwork now? Is there any collective agreement on this issue? The women discussed some aspects of valuing, but other women noted that the criteria need to be expanded beyond 'what will someone pay for it?' Making art to sell can get in the way of making art to express feelings or statements. Northern Artists can allow themselves to grow, to experiment with trial and error, and to learn from 'failures' which don't sell. Yet ironically, almost everything sells in the Arctic.

The women discussed beauty in their artwork, and the 'aesthetics' of artwork in the Western Arctic. They were quite comfortable talking about how something looks, or whether it brings pleasure to the eye. They even talked about their views of creativity and why they create art. The women talked about how they used color, their meanings and designs, and techniques of accomplishing a particular look or pattern.
There is a need for all these aspects of the disciplines of art to be expanded in the classrooms of the Western Arctic, as it can only enhance the understanding of art at the local levels and beyond. Although discipline-based art education is an outsider's label, the women agreed that all peoples make art, talk about it, and acknowledge its history. Some artists at the Festival expressed a fear of being changed by new ideas, and they wanted to do things the 'old way'. The women artists are now beginning to understand that knowing other ways gives them the power to choose which way they want to create something. All of this reflective thinking will only enhance the art of the Western Arctic.

Implications and Recommendations

There are many implications which develop out of the conclusions stated above. Some of these translate into one or more recommendations for action. Following are brief statements of some of the implications, followed by specific recommendations for action.

There was an expressed need for more understanding and cooperation between cultural groups of peoples, to foster pride, understanding, and mutual learning, increasing respect and eventually eliminating racism.

Recommendation:

to encourage and promote community activities, such as arts festivals for all media, community cultural activities, and cultural exchanges that promote cooperation and learning between groups and individuals of all ages that make artistic products in a range of artistic media.
There was an expressed need for teaching traditional skills at home, as well as artistic skills in the schools by local experts most respected for their knowledge of a particular skill. Some local elders and other experts are now teaching successfully in schools, both occasionally and full-time.

**Recommendation:**

to encourage respected community persons or elders (not necessarily with teaching credentials) from different cultural groups, to teach a variety of arts skills in the schools—from drum dancing, embroidery, beading, tufting, quillwork, basketry, canoe construction, and snowshoe making, to painting, quilting, embroidery and stained glass. This may be similar to the 'Artist in Schools' program in effect across North America.

**Recommendation:**

to expand arctic curriculums and teacher training programs to include local and world art history, discussion of art criticism, aesthetics, and cultural contexts of art in addition to explorations in art production media.

Indigenous people traditionally learn in quite different ways from European and North American norms, so allowance for learning about, and accommodation of, these ways of learning should be taught to all teachers and students alike, and be accommodated in all curriculums.

There are number of ways that this new awareness can become part of our school curriculums. First, we need to become learner-centered, and to begin from the perspective of the student. We must at least try to understand and cultivate a sensitivity to the student's culture, circumstance, or context, so we can better understand the tools needed to help him or her learn.
We may have a classroom of students from several cultures, and we need to accommodate all of their perspectives, and learn about all of their contexts.

Second, we need to be aware that we are teaching whole individual students, not just their rational brains. Students have emotional and physical needs that we should be aware of, and that may not be being met. We may not be able to accommodate all the student needs at all times, but we are not doing our job in helping students develop if we ignore these aspects of their individuality. We need to find ways to respect and validate the whole student and help them grow and develop self-esteem on personal, emotional, physical and rational levels of their beings.

Third, as teachers we need to learn different ways of teaching and cultivate more sharing and observational activities. Sometimes we use language to communicate much more often than necessary. We demonstrate skills accompanied with verbage in a dominant language. Sometimes we break down skills into parts or steps on a chart, using language. If we teachers lost our voices, we would be forced to develop other ways to help, communicate and motivate students' learning. If we demonstrate without talking, like the artists I observed at the Festivals, we put more emphasis on the visual.

We need to be aware of how we teach. We cannot afford to assume from a teacher-centered position of power, that teacher talking and lecturing is effective or the best method. The indigenous method of learning by watching and trying is a legitimate mode of learning as it personally engages the learner. This observational and experiential mode builds responsibility and self esteem, and assists classrooms with multiple languages. The visual, experiential and personal are effective communicators.

Fourth, we need to develop new ways to reframe our power as teachers, to become facilitators of student learning. The indigenous model of consensus, or circle of sharing
information and listening to each other as equals, can be used to change the power structure of classrooms. We need to find ways to motivate, and connect the personal and emotional with the tangible, such as in reflective journals or personally focussed artwork. We can make more use of investigation and individual research skills, of elders relating stories from the past, or use videos to visit and observe other places. All of these techniques divert the power away from the teacher as the cultural expert source of knowledge, and transfer the power and responsibility onto the individual student to choose to exercise power to learn. This honors the students, increases self-esteem, and teaches them to honor themselves.

Recommendation:

to include indigenous ways of learning (traditionally by example, silent watching, observation, trial and error, and sharing) into school and community curriculums, teacher education programs, and teacher orientations at all levels, including college and university.

Recommendation:

to include a thorough review of local and regional history, and indigenous ways of learning, at required pre-service orientations for all new teachers to the region, so they can plan programs to accommodate these ways of learning.
Recommendation:

to write new art and social studies curriculums that focus on local cultures and social histories in the context of world cultures, eras, and movements which have influenced the exploration and settling of the arctic.

Recommendation:

to expand art education practices to include the learning styles of indigenous peoples, based on student readiness, observation and interest. To use the already highly developed powers of observation in new ways to learn about other cultures and their artistic production.

The power of art in women's lives is evident in their life stories, in spite of their isolation. Women working together in groups is common to many cultures, and is often comforting, educational and empowering for women. Leadership is needed to organize groups, to facilitate mutual learning, and to assist in ordering bulk supplies at wholesale rates.

Recommendation:

to assist the organization of a women's art workshop or co-op in every community in the Western Arctic, to assist in the provision of a clean, common space for women to do creative work and support each other. This would enable groups of women to learn from each other, to gain pride, and facilitate the ordering of bulk supplies at wholesale rates.
The power of art to enhance self-esteem, and provide a key to familial and community respect, is also evident in these women's stories. Assistance is needed to re-educate communities about the need for respect in the treatment of all peoples, to listen and learn from others, and to assist women who are in crisis situations.

Recommendation:

to create and promote a series of community education projects in which the respect and equality of all peoples is encouraged, promoting the cooperation of all levels of communities, business and government in joint projects.

Recommendation:

to create a women's support group and safe house in all communities for those who have been or are being abused, including expertise in counselling and techniques of art therapy.

Recommendation:

to make training available in the healing power of art and art therapy, taught by a trained art therapist, to Life Skills coaches, counsellors, teachers, social workers, and drug and alcohol workers. Anyone interested should be encouraged to take training in art therapy, and it should be widely available in the Arctic.

The women interviewed for this project have lent their voices and expertise, sharing information about important aspects of their lives. There is much more that could be learned, however, by enlisting the help of teachers and students in Western Arctic classrooms, from
kindergarten through college level, to learn about and share the experiences of long-time residents.

**Recommendation:**

to encourage the video and audio recording of oral histories of all elders in all communities before they pass on and the information is lost forever. This would gather and document the cultural production of elders of all groups who have contributed to community arts and development. A starting place is the seniors home in every community. Copies of the tapes could be available at the local library with originals stored in the archives at the Prince of Wales Heritage Centre in Yellowknife. This would create a valuable legacy for future generations.

The Western Arctic region of Canada may seem isolated and far away from the rest of the world, and yet the situation is similar to many places and peoples that were subject to colonization. Many wrongs were perpetuated in the past through colonization, and it is only through listening, study and understanding that we can learn new ways of respecting each other and healing our future as a global community. Art is a powerful and positive force linking the past to the future and bridging cultures.

These women's voices provide a first step in listening and understanding the importance of the arts in other cultures. Through this study they have shared their perspectives on their childhoods, their artistic skills, their educations and influences on their work. They have commented on traditions, new ideas, politics and materials which affect their artwork. They reveal what art means to them, and how they think future generations should be taught.
Many of these women artists have experienced tragedy and hardship yet they remain courageous, positive and full of laughter. They continue to produce art which inspires creativity, strength, and courage in others, while building their own self-esteem. They continue cultural traditions and create new artistic ones, while cooperating and assisting each other and their families. We can learn from them how to improve and empower the lives of individuals, families, and communities to benefit our children's future.

This is only a beginning. There is so much more to be done to foster our understanding of this one region of Canada and of humanity world wide. We need to learn how we can help each other, to value and respect the events and years of the past, and the artistic contributions of peoples that have gone before us. Listening to the voices of these women from a remote corner of the world, and looking at what they make with their hands, helps us understand the place of art in personal fulfillment, cultural continuity and change, and pride within families and communities.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


APPENDIX

Lists of women artists by media, age and community

Research Licences from NWT Science Institute

Letters of support for the project
# Western Arctic Women Artists: contact record

Women Interviewed for Ph.D. Research, Summers 1992-93-94-95-96-97 by Joanne C. McNeal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Woman Interviewed</th>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Cultural Group</th>
<th>Art Media or work</th>
<th>Documentation method, date, and follow-up years</th>
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<tr>
<td>Malaya Akulukjuk</td>
<td>Pangnirtung, NT</td>
<td>Inuit elder</td>
<td>pencil drawing</td>
<td>Long VT Interview (translated by Daniel Qitsualik) 1992 GNAFestival, Inuvik, (deceased)</td>
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<td>Charlene Alexander</td>
<td>Inuvik, NT</td>
<td>non-native</td>
<td>photograph/Organizer</td>
<td>Long VT Interviews 1992/3 at GNAF, updated 1994, follow-up Interview Nov. 94, Vancouver</td>
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<td>Bertha Allen</td>
<td>Inuvik/Yellowknife</td>
<td>Gwich’in elder</td>
<td>Beadworker/Native</td>
<td>Several talks and notes over four years, interview requested, (no time)</td>
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<td>Martina Anece</td>
<td>Arviat, NT</td>
<td>Inuit elder</td>
<td>dollmaker/carver</td>
<td>Short VT interview 1992 (translated by B. Irksuk), updated at GNAF 93 &amp; Inuvik hospital</td>
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<td>Myrna Button</td>
<td>Inuvik, NT</td>
<td>non-native</td>
<td>painter/stained glass</td>
<td>Long VT Interview 1992 in her home/studio/cabin, updated 93/4, Inuvik.</td>
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<td>Mary Bryant</td>
<td>Yellowknife, NT</td>
<td>non-native</td>
<td>art gallery manager**</td>
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<td>Jane Dragon</td>
<td>Ft. Smith, NT</td>
<td>Slavey/Dene elder</td>
<td>sewer/cult. teacher</td>
<td>Long VT Interview 1992 in her home/at school, updated 1993/4 in her home, Ft. Smith</td>
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<td>Susie Evysgotulik</td>
<td>Coppermine, NT</td>
<td>Inuvialuit</td>
<td>seamstress/teacher</td>
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<tr>
<td>Christina Felix</td>
<td>Tuktoyaktuk, NT</td>
<td>Inuvialuit elder</td>
<td>C Parka designer</td>
<td>Long VT Interview 1994 in her Parka Factory, Tuktoyaktuk.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mona Felix</td>
<td>Tuktoyaktuk, NT</td>
<td>Inuvialuit elder</td>
<td>Traditional seamstress</td>
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<td>Mona Igutsaq</td>
<td>Taloyoak, NT</td>
<td>Inuit</td>
<td>C Sewing Co-op Mgr.</td>
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<td>Dora Jones</td>
<td>Ft. Smith, NT</td>
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<td>Mary Kendi</td>
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<td>Trad. seamstress</td>
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<td>Elsie Klenenberg</td>
<td>Holman, NT</td>
<td>Inuvialuit elder</td>
<td>C stencil printmaker</td>
<td>Long VT Interview, 1993 at GNAF, Inuvik, updated 95 in college teaching. carver</td>
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<td>Sarah Kuptana</td>
<td>Sachs Harbor, NT</td>
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<td>Beverly Lennie</td>
<td>Inuvik, NT</td>
<td>Inuvialuit</td>
<td>teacher/organizer**</td>
<td>Long VT Interview 1993, notes and correspondence, 1992-5, Inuvik. Updated ’93-96 Inuvik</td>
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</table>
Laurelle Macy  
Hay River, NT  
native  
C  
painter/teacher  

Joyce Majeski  
Whitehorse, YK  
native  
printmaker/biologist  
Short VT Interview 1992 at GNAF, Inuvik.

Cecile McCauley  
Inuvik, NT  
Gwich'in elder  
Chief/teacher  
Long VT Interview, 1993 plus weekly newspaper columns for 1993-95, Inuvik.

Sandra McLeod  
Inuvik, NT  
native  
Festival organizer**  
Long VT Interview 1992/3 in her sewing shop, Inuvik, updated 94-95 in Inuvik.

Terry Norwegian-Sawyer  
Arctic Red River  
Gwich’in elder  
sewer/organizer  
Long VT interview at her sales table in Inuvik.

Lena Olifie  
Holman, NT  
Inuvialuit elder  
spinner/designer  
Long VT interview at GNAF, 1994, Inuvik.

Sue Rose  
Inuvik, NT  
native  
painter/organizer  
Long VT Interview in her Graphic Arts Office, 1992, Inuvik, updated 94-95 Inuvik.

Bertha Ruben  
Paulatuk, NT  
Inuvialuit elder  
sewer/applique  
Long VT interview 1993, updated conversations/newspaper articles, 94-95, Inuvik.

Pat Stacey  
Yellowknife, NT  
Inuvialuit  
painter  

Lorna Storr  
Aklavik, NT  
Gwich’in elder  
cultural teacher  
Long VT Interview 1994 at GNAF, after visit to her home in Aklavik, updated 95 in Inuvik.

Agnes Sutherland  
Fort Smith, NT  
native senior  
nun/writer/research**  

Gina Sydenham  
Fort Smith, NT  
native  
museum curator**  

Mary Ann Taylor  
Tukttoyaktuk, NT  
Inuvialuit  
carver  
Long VT Interview at GNAF, 1993, Inuvik.

Agnes Thrasher  
Inuvik/BC  
Inuvialuit elder  
painter  

Mona Thrasher  
Yellowknife, NT  
Inuvialuit elder  
painter  

Vicki Tomkins  
Yellowknife, NT  
native  
painter/organizer  

Julia Pookiak Tremmert  
Hay River, NT  
Inuvialuit elder  
moose-hair tuffer  

Brendalynn Inuk Tremmert  
Hay River, NWT  
Inuvialuit  
caribou-hair tuffer  

Mary Uyariaq Trimble  
Inuvik/BC  
Inuvialuit elder  
carver/sewer/painter  
Long VT interview at sisters home, Inuvik, 1993, Long VT Interview at home 94 Nanaimo BC.

Peecteekootee Ugyuk  
Taloyoak, NWT  
Inuit elder  
designer/sewer  

Margaret Vittrekwa  
Ft. McPherson NT  
Gwich’in elder  
sewer/cult. teacher  
Short AT Interview 1992 at Arctic College, Ft. Smith, updated VT at Craft Festival Inuvik 92.

Ruth Wright  
Inuvik, NWT  
Gwich’in  
Papermaker  
Long VT Interview 1996 at Inuvik Hospital.

Symbols:  
AT/VT—audio/videotape  
GNAF—Great Northern Arts Festival (Inuvik).  
C—Complete transcript summary.

# Women with whom I have less than a formal interview, but some documents or notes.

* Communities located in the eastern arctic, but which are included for additional reference on ways of artistic learning and knowing, (Arviat, Pangnirtung, and Taloyoak).

**Secondary Sources: Women who contributed comments on cultures or artistic learning, but who may not be recognized as artists.
Western Arctic Women Artists
and other contributions to their communities.

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<th>Heritage</th>
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<td>Malaya Aklukjuk</td>
<td>Inuit</td>
<td>Pangnirtung</td>
<td>designs for weave shop</td>
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<td>Agnes &amp; Mona Thrasher</td>
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<td>Vicki Tompkins</td>
<td>non-N</td>
<td>Yellowknife</td>
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Painters/Drawers 2-D (watercolors, acrylics, oils, pen/ink, color pencil)

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<td>Elsie Klengenberg</td>
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<td>Joyce Majeski</td>
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<td>Whitehorse</td>
<td>Biologist</td>
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<td>Janice Rahn</td>
<td>non-N</td>
<td>Montreal</td>
<td>teacher &amp; Ph.D. student</td>
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<td>Sue Rose</td>
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<td>Inuvik</td>
<td>co-founder GNAF,</td>
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<td>Mary Trimble</td>
<td>Inuvialuit</td>
<td>Nanaimo</td>
<td>carver with husband</td>
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Printmakers 2-D (drypoint, etching, papermaking, lino, stencil)

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<td>Arviat</td>
<td>teach apprentice/throat singer.</td>
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<td>employs others in Parka shop</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sarah Kuptana</td>
<td>Inuvialuit</td>
<td>Ft. Smith</td>
<td>Sach Harbor sculptures that tell legends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary Ann MacDonald</td>
<td>Metis</td>
<td>Ft. Smith</td>
<td>Sach Harbor sculptures that tell legends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bertha Ruben</td>
<td>Inuvialuit</td>
<td>Paulatuk</td>
<td>negotiated land claims</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary Ann Taylor</td>
<td>Inuvialuit</td>
<td>Tuktoyaktuk</td>
<td>from family of carvers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary Trimble</td>
<td>Inuvialuit</td>
<td>Nanaimo</td>
<td>carves with husband, also dolls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peeteekootee Ugyuk</td>
<td>Inuit</td>
<td>Taloyoak</td>
<td>designed packing dolls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margaret Vittrekwa</td>
<td>Gwich'in</td>
<td>Ft. McPherson</td>
<td>beadwork &amp; teacher</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sculptors 3-D (including stone & bone carvers and dollmakers)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Woman</th>
<th>Heritage</th>
<th>Town</th>
<th>Other contribution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Textile Artists 2-D: apply wall hangings, weavings, &amp; beadwork.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Bertha Allen</td>
<td>Gwich'in</td>
<td>Inuvik</td>
<td>Slippers/Life Skills teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosie Archie</td>
<td>Gwich'in</td>
<td>Aklavik</td>
<td>fur designer/seamstress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effie Blake</td>
<td>Gwich'in</td>
<td>Ft. McPherson</td>
<td>slippers, shoes boots, beading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane Dragon</td>
<td>Chipewyan</td>
<td>Ft. Smith</td>
<td>Parkas, slippers, hides, beading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christina Felix</td>
<td>Inuvialuit</td>
<td>Tuk</td>
<td>parkas, began shop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mona Felix</td>
<td>Inuvialuit</td>
<td>Tuk</td>
<td>parkas, slippers, beading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary Kendi</td>
<td>Gwich'in</td>
<td>Aklavik</td>
<td>parkas, slippers, beading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lillian Kristensen</td>
<td>non-N</td>
<td>Ft. Smith</td>
<td>weaver, makes coats/jackets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nancy La Fleur</td>
<td>S.Slavey</td>
<td>Hay River</td>
<td>tufter, language teacher/Interp.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margaret Lennie</td>
<td>Inuvialuit</td>
<td>Inuvik</td>
<td>Fish camp/tourist guide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary Ann MacDonald</td>
<td>Metis</td>
<td>Ft. Smith</td>
<td>Elder of the year 1994</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cee Cee McAuley</td>
<td>Gwich'in</td>
<td>Inuvik</td>
<td>First Woman Chief, business.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lena Oliffe</td>
<td>Inuvialuit</td>
<td>Paulatuk</td>
<td>clothing, applique pictures</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bertha Ruben</td>
<td>Inuvialuit</td>
<td>Aklavik</td>
<td>beading, baby belts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lorna Storr</td>
<td>Gwich'in</td>
<td>Hay River</td>
<td>Moose/caribou-hair tuftings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julia/Brendalynn Trennt</td>
<td>Iniv.</td>
<td>Nanaimo</td>
<td>applique wall hangings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary Trimble</td>
<td>Inuvialuit</td>
<td>Ft. McPherson</td>
<td>applique, embroidery, jackets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margaret Vittrekwa</td>
<td>Gwich'in</td>
<td>Ft. McPherson</td>
<td>applique, embroidery, jackets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>Heritage</td>
<td>Town</td>
<td>Other contribution</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Other media (including photography, stained glass, dancing groups)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Charlene Alexander</td>
<td>Non-N</td>
<td>Inuvik</td>
<td>Photography, created GNAF</td>
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<tr>
<td>Myrna Button</td>
<td>Non-N</td>
<td>Inuvik</td>
<td>stained glass, pottery, ed. assist</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cathy Cockney</td>
<td>Inuvialuit</td>
<td>Inuvik</td>
<td>drum dancer organizer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dora Jones</td>
<td>Non-N</td>
<td>Ft.Smith</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bertha Allen</td>
<td>Gwich’in</td>
<td>Inuvik</td>
<td>beaded Moccasins</td>
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<tr>
<td>Martina Anoce</td>
<td>Inuit</td>
<td>Arviat</td>
<td>soft sculpture fur dolls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosie Archie</td>
<td>Gwich’in</td>
<td>Aklavik</td>
<td>beaded boots, hats, mitts, belts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effie Blake</td>
<td>Gwich’in</td>
<td>Ft. McPhers</td>
<td>beaded boots, mitts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kathy Cockney</td>
<td>Inuvialuit</td>
<td>Inuvik</td>
<td>dancing parkas/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane Dragon</td>
<td>SSlavey</td>
<td>Ft.Smith</td>
<td>parkas, beaded moccasins, hides</td>
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<tr>
<td>Suzie Evyagotailak</td>
<td>Inuvialuit</td>
<td>Coppermine</td>
<td>boots, mitts, parkas</td>
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<tr>
<td>Christina Felix</td>
<td>Inuvialuit</td>
<td>Tuk</td>
<td>parka shop owner/designer</td>
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<td>Inuit</td>
<td>Tuk</td>
<td>parkas, slippers, craft shop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mona Igutsaq</td>
<td>Gwich’in</td>
<td>Aklavik</td>
<td>sweatshirts, slippers,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary Kendi</td>
<td>Inuit</td>
<td>Sachs Harbor</td>
<td>storyteller, traditional life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah Kuptana</td>
<td>Inuvialuit</td>
<td>Inuvik</td>
<td>sewing, cultural interpreter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beverly Lennie</td>
<td>Inuvialuit</td>
<td>Inuvik</td>
<td>parkas, mitts, ruffs, moccasins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margaret Lennie</td>
<td>Inuvialuit</td>
<td>Ft.Smith</td>
<td>slippers, jackets, parkas</td>
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<td>Mary Ann MacDonald</td>
<td>Metis</td>
<td>Inuvik</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sandra McLeod</td>
<td>Non-Native</td>
<td>Arctic Red</td>
<td>women’s organizer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terry Norwegian-Sawyer</td>
<td>Gwich’in</td>
<td>Holman</td>
<td>Applique sewing/traditional life</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lena Olifie</td>
<td>Inuvialuit</td>
<td>Paulatuk</td>
<td>boots, slippers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bertha Ruben</td>
<td>Inuvialuit</td>
<td>Aklavik</td>
<td>beaded baby belts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lorna Storr</td>
<td>Gwich’in</td>
<td>Hay River</td>
<td>tufting on slippers, jackets</td>
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<td>Julia Pokiak Trennert</td>
<td>Inuvialuit</td>
<td>Nanaimo</td>
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<td>Mary Trimble</td>
<td>Inuvialuit</td>
<td>Taloyoak</td>
<td>women’s co-op learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peeteekootce Ugyuk</td>
<td>Inuit</td>
<td>Ft.McPhers.</td>
<td>embroidered jackets, slippers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Margaret Vittrekwa</td>
<td>Gwich’in</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
The audience was on its feet before the last note had faded away, clapping enthusiastically for the two performers who had been singing in praise of women all evening.

The two dynamic local singers, Joanne Delisi and Coralie Bryant beamed during the long standing ovation, as delighted with their reception as with the support shown for Sutherland House, the women's shelter in Fort Smith.

The pair had loaned their voices to a benefit dinner-concert, entitled More than a Song; a Tribute to Women. Organizers considered it a resounding success, as $1,200 was raised from ticket sales and a spontaneous Chinese auction to sell off the table centrepieces at the end of the evening.

The songs were carefully selected and the musical lineup judiciously arranged to reflect the changing roles of women as portrayed in songs over the centuries. The concert started with English folksongs, progressed to early 20th century songs, blues, semi-classical and ended with pop. Songs performed by artists like Billie Holliday, Helen Reddy and Whitney Houston were included in the sets.

The dinner-concert proved a success even before the doors opened at the Royal Canadian Legion Branch in Fort Smith, a town perched on the N.W.T./Alberta border. The 70 available tickets had sold quickly, and word spread like wildfire — by the time the doors opened, over 30 people were still hoping to get a seat.

The executive director of Sutherland House, Shirley Jones, said the audience members were supportive of the shelter and were pleasantly surprised by the number of talented artists in their own community.

"The most common thing I heard afterward was they didn't know there was such talent in town, and they were really glad (the proceeds) were going to the shelter."

While Sutherland House provided a memorable evening out on the town for the people of Fort Smith, the ticket-holders in turn were helping the women and children who use the much-needed community facility.

Although the shelter is adequately funded by the territorial government's department of Social Services, it likes to have money available for extras, explained Jones. In the past, Sutherland House's fundraising has been approached in a low-key fashion, with bake sales being the staple money-making activity.

That's been changing of late as fundraising has become more than a way of getting pocket money. The shelter's taken on larger projects, including putting on the dinner-concert extravaganza and catering the meal at Arctic College's Thebacha Campus graduation ceremony last spring.

"We don't fundraise because we don't get enough funding (but) we shouldn't rely on one agency for all our funding; we should go after other sources," the executive director explained.

The shelter has been receiving funding from Social Services Family Violence Prevention Program since program directors approved in the late 1980s, a proposal from the Tawow Society, an organization established by a group of residents concerned about the plight of victims of family violence.

Until the mid-1980s, victims of violence, mainly women and children could turn to the crisis centre in the old St. Anne's Hospital. The entire medical operation moved to a new building in 1979, but St. Anne's was used for a variety of purposes for the next five years.