

**CONCEPTIONS OF SUCCESS IN EDUCATION**  
for  
**THREE CLASSES OF NUNAVUT ARCTIC COLLEGE STUDENTS**

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## ABSTRACT

"Success" in education means different things to different people. The purpose of this study was to examine conceptions of success (in education) held by some students at Nunavut Arctic College. The author is a white male from southern Canada and had not been to the Arctic prior to this study. As such, it was necessary to employ a participatory and respectful methodology.

In three separate procedures, classes of Nunavut Arctic college students were given index cards and asked to describe what it means to be successful in education. As a class, we arranged the cards into common categories on the floor in front of the classroom desks. Some students wrote that success in education meant getting a good job. Some reported that they learned best when they could understand what was going on in a class. We decided as a class where each card belonged. Conceptions of success in education emerged as groups of cards were given titles, such as, "Understanding" or "Sharing knowledge." In the final procedure, another group of students was interviewed with a tape recorder to explore their conceptions in more depth.

"Success" in education in the Arctic (and elsewhere) typically has to do with securing knowledge for personal development. Secondly, it is concerned with instrumental or pragmatic concerns like getting a job. For most people "success" in education involves a mix of personal and instrumental factors. Hence, for the purposes of this study the author used a heuristic device wherein "personal" and "instrumental" conceptions of success could be plotted. Students' conceptions were graphed along the two dimensions of instrumental application and personal development.

Five conceptions emerged from the final study: "Understanding", "Sharing", "Reaching goals in education", "Money" and "Certificate". The conception "Understanding" was graphed in an area of low instrumental application/high personal development; "Sharing knowledge" and "Reaching goals in education" were graphed in an area of high instrumental application/high personal development; "Money" was graphed in an area of low instrumental application/low personal development; and "Certificate" was graphed in an area of high instrumental application/low personal development.

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## CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

When I first decided to travel to the Arctic, I told my plans to Errol Fletcher, a friend who lived there. I had explained to Errol that I was writing a thesis on the meaning of success in education. Errol told me this story about hunting.

Seals are hunted on the ice in the North. The hunter first looks for a breathing hole - a small opening in the ice that is kept unfrozen as the seal returns to it for a breath of air. Traditionally, a hunter has used a harpoon to catch the seal. A cord is attached to the harpoon so the seal can be pulled up through the breathing hole after it is pierced. The hunter must tie the cord around something if he doesn't want the seal to escape down the breathing hole after it is harpooned (an example of an unsuccessful attempt). Seals are strong swimmers though, and the ice is slippery. The hunter should tie the cord on to something heavy, like a sled or a snow machine - not around himself, or he might get pulled in.

I hope I didn't tie a rope too tightly around myself. I am very much a novice. Like so many *Qadlunait* (outsiders who try to toy with nature), I know nothing about hunting; yet I have become attached to the North.

I went to the Arctic in hopes of finding something out about adult learning and teaching. I still cannot describe all that I have learned, but I know the experience was very valuable. I hope

readers of this thesis can learn something about adult education without "falling into the breathing hole." But if it happens, I guess it can't be helped.

### Success at U.B.C.

At the surface level, mainstream Western "success" means looking good, feeling good, and deriving benefit of some kind. I wrote this thesis at the campus of the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, Canada. It is as far west as you can go on Canada's mainland. The campus is located next to an attractive upscale neighbourhood called Point Grey. Point Grey looks good. It is well maintained. I enjoyed a serene feeling walking around the well-kept houses with their neatly trimmed lawns, breathing the fresh air that blows in from the Pacific Ocean and distant snow-capped mountain peaks. These benefits were costly. For a term, I shared an apartment on campus that cost \$1100 per month to rent, and it was not the most expensive available. I am in debt \$27,000 to student loans, and I have few assets other than my education. I am not alone. The average Canadian undergraduate student debt load upon graduation was \$25,000 in 1998 (Capilano Students' Union, 1998, p. 142).

Many people who "get ahead" by visiting the campus seem to equate success in education with driving in style, and roads leading to the campus are full to capacity in the morning. Attending a class at U.B.C. involves a wade through a sea of parked automobiles; many are expensive luxury sedans, trucks and sport utility vehicles.

Libraries, offices and class rooms seem deserted by 5:00, and roads leading away from campus are once again full.

Where do U.B.C. students drive? Highways lead north and east from this corner of Canada. Rent is cheaper outside of Point Grey. I rent a room at my friends' house in Coquitlam, 40 kilometres east. It takes at least three hours each day to commute to campus by bus. I have recently succumbed to pressure from friends, colleagues and family to be more "independent" (a component of Western individualism). I have stopped riding the bus. I bought an old Toyota, joining the throngs of motorists that fill the highways in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia. Most vehicles who jockey with me for position on the highway have no passengers, and the sky above us is brown with smog.

The drive is worth it. The campus certainly is a place where one can feel good, look good and acquire benefits. It feels very good to exercise and play sports - particularly in the fresh air that blows around Point Grey. I enjoy swimming in the 50 metre pool at the U.B.C. Aquatic Centre. I think I look better when I am physically fit, and I can go swimming for free each weekday morning as a U.B.C. student. There are numerous sports teams, clubs and social activities around campus as well.

Members of Western society are subjected to an overwhelming array of choices. There are plenty choices for off-campus recreation in the city of Vancouver. Students and staff might stop in at one of the many coffee bars that dot the streets leading into and out of

campus. The nearby Big News Coffee Bar offers a display of dozens of titles of magazines for patrons to read. Nearly all of the magazine covers depict images of attractive young models dressed in high fashion. In Western culture, "dressing for success" means looking good. A television set sunk into the wall of the coffee bar depicts popular music stars performing rock videos. But a stereo system tuned to a separate channel offers aural entertainment. Patrons don't seem to have space to notice that the constructed images filling their senses are far removed from how they look and behave as they drink their coffees.

One magazine seems to be a little more academic. The latest issue of *Psychology Today* sports an advertisement from the Western Research Institute for cassette tapes that "supercharge your mind for success". Available tape titles include "Dynamic self confidence", "Reach any goal", "Be a total winner", "Millionaire mindset" and "Attract the opposite sex" (*Psychology Today*, February, 1999, p. 82).

Sexual success is no doubt included in many peoples' notions of what it means to look good, feel good, and derive a benefit. It is spring as I write this introduction, and couples walk blissfully hand in hand around the campus. A colleague has suggested to me that the primary function of a university is to provide a venue where students can meet their mates. Like many of my university cohorts, he and his wife met on campus. They have bought a house, and they are having children. Perhaps students have reached the acme of

"Mount Success" (Adams, 1988) when they have graduated, become professional homeowners, had children and sent them to U.B.C.

Of course, this notion of success is not paramount in the minds of all students. For one thing, it commodifies the education experience, turning it into something you can buy and sell. And there is more to life than feeling good about reproducing ourselves. Philosophers (lovers of knowledge) at U.B.C. critically examine the assumption that filling traditional parental roles, particularly the role of mother, represents successful arrival into adulthood (Courtney-Hall, 1998). Many of my friends and colleagues, particularly those who are lesbian, gay, transgendered, bisexual, asexual or celibate, question such beliefs about traditional family roles. Success means different things to different people.

Perhaps overcoming barriers is key, and success is a journey, not a destination. Posters around U.B.C. today invite students to participate in the upcoming "Storm The Wall" event, and a wall has been erected in front of the Student Union Building for this purpose. Several books written about how one can become a more successful student are available at the U.B.C. libraries and book store, including *Becoming A Master Student* (Ellis, 1997), *Overcoming Math Anxiety* (Tobias, 1978), and *Successful Intelligence* (Sternberg, 1997). Most students I have asked have told me that success in education is about more than passing exams. Students might see success as a spiritual pursuit. There are several churches and church affiliated colleges on or near the university. L. Ron Hubbard of the nearby

Church of Scientology has developed a method to help students succeed at school by improving their study practices (Anonymous, 1999). Personally, I have found a meditation technique called Vipassana to be very beneficial. But many of my colleagues and friends are uncomfortable talking about success as a spiritual pursuit.

To me, success in education involves coming to understand other people's perspectives, and the concepts through which they communicate. Once I understand these concepts, I can better share what I have learned with others. I began to ask students what it meant for them to be successfully educated.

### **Rationale for the study**

Answers to the thesis research questions were designed to help me plan for the classes I intended to teach, wherever they might be located. Conceptions of "success in education" are unique to each individual student. I have found, however, that students I have taught who reported enjoying success in their education have thought about where each class was taking them from the first lesson.

I most recently taught in Nunavut. I found that it was easier for a student to work with a goal in mind, or at least a plan. Having an education can make an enormous difference in career success in the North (Nunavut creating two classes of Inuit, 1999, April 5. *The*

*Globe and Mail*, p. A4). Suppose a student wanted to work as an officer with the Nunavut Government after finishing a program of education. This student would know why computer and communication skills are important. The student was motivated to finish the course assignments, so these skills (and the course certification) could clarify career goals. Did someone want to work as a clerk at the local *Northern Store*? This career plan involved achieving Grade 12 since *Northern Stores* had a policy of hiring only high school graduates to work the office. But success in education means more than career success.

Did the student want to experience good feelings associated with success - confidence in knowing that something had been done well? Was the student seeking knowledge for its own sake? A student with a goal of self-improvement could refer to comments about personal success made at the beginning of a course to reflect on progress toward a personal goal.

Even if students were unsure why they were in a class, reflecting on possibilities for success in education could still be very beneficial. Students reported to me that a program "came together" at some point in the year - they began to see how a program could work for them. The more students knew what "success" meant to themselves, the more they knew when hard work was paying off.

Little research has been published that documents Arctic students' ideas about success in education (Villeneuve, 1996, p. 54) although Alaska Native students have been research subjects

(Kleinfeld, 1978, McDiarmid and Kleinfeld, 1982, Lipka, 1989, Lipka and McCarty, 1994), and northern students' experiences and opinions have been studied (Barnhardt, 1994).

Very little research has been done about factors that relate to aboriginal students' success in college (Kleinfeld, 1978). Studies done with aboriginal students (Foster, 1969, Goodwin & Orvik, 1977) have provided little direction about how to help aboriginal students succeed; these studies listed "factors of success" such as coming from an urban background, and not being displaced to attend school (Kleinfeld, 1978). The types of support available to students have changed dramatically since these studies were done.

### **The Qualitative Approach**

This study used a qualitative methodology. I wanted to find out what success meant to students, not how many students held a particular belief. In Nunavut, classes are small, so the sample sizes are small, too. The small sample sizes - nine students in the first study, eight in the second, eleven in the last - afforded me the time to allow each student's conception to emerge. Surveying a large group of students might be useful, but I was teaching these small classes, and I wanted to know what they thought about success in education.

The qualitative approach to this thesis is interpretivist in nature. The interpretivist perspective attempts to reconcile the

objective and subjective, celebrating the uniqueness of human inquiry as apart from naturalistic approaches inherent in traditional sciences (Schwandt, 1994). Students' conceptions of success are unique because they are human phenomena. The scientist merely observes, trying to remain objective. Yet human phenomena are highly subjective. When people attach meaning to something, it is a subjective act. What one person thinks about "success" for instance, may not be the same as what other people think. My "success" is unique to my experience. I can choose to measure success, but it cannot be compared objectively with other peoples' notions, unless I am willing to equate it with an indicator such as number grades in school, or Canadian dollars I earn. Even then, I am not measuring the meaning of "success."

A subjective observer is not apart from the observed phenomena. As an interpretivist observer, I was aware that I was neither omniscient nor innocent (Rosaldo, 1989). But in this thesis, I reported observations I made about students' conceptions of success as objectively as I could.

## Organization of the thesis

Chapter 1 of this thesis provides an outline, and describes the approach I took. Chapter 2 offers historical context. In Chapter 3, some contemporary environmental and political realities are described. These historical and political descriptions help provide insight into the context in which Inuit students' conceptions of success in education are formed. Chapter 4 is a review of literature relevant to "success in education". Chapter 5 describes procedures used in each of the three studies. The study phases are described in detail, so that this research method might be employed by a teacher or by an educational researcher. Chapter 6 describes the research sites.

In Chapter 7, I map data along the axes of "personal development" and "instrumental application," since I wanted to know the extent to which students in my class were oriented to each of these dimensions. I can help students learn better when I know what success in education means to them. I can also plan a class better knowing what student orientations are along the lines of personal development and instrumental application. Chapter 8 draws conclusions from the previous Chapters and summarized the thesis.

Index card results of the preliminary studies are found in Appendix A. I kept a journal of experiences and feelings while writing this thesis, and an excerpt is in Appendix B. In Appendix C, a

political map of Nunavut shows its location, and the location of the villages mentioned.

### **Purpose of the thesis**

The purpose of this thesis is to describe and analyze conceptions of success in education for a group of Nunavut Arctic College students. The research questions were:

- What do students think about their own “success in education”?
- What does “success in education” mean?
- How can a program “go right” for students?

## CHAPTER TWO

**HISTORICAL CONTEXT**

The purpose of this Chapter is to show that Inuit control of their own education stems from a cultural background not accommodated by elites from the South with European orientations. I will begin with a brief Inuit history, showing that a culture has emerged based on the survival of the people, and tied to immediate environs. Western culture brought change, and people moved into villages only to be subjected to a system they did not understand. The system of education introduced by the European culture did not originate from Inuit interests, and local control of Inuit education developed out of indigenous political movements. The need to promote and maintain local control of Inuit education remains important today, especially as the North experiences more industrial development.

**A Cultural History**

It is difficult to say how long people have been living in the Arctic (Siska, 1984, p. 94). In one story, "Inuit" are defined as descendants of the waves of people who moved eastward into the Arctic following the retreat of the "Little Ice Age", some 1200 years ago. McGhee (1988) describes Ancestral Inuit as people who "spoke a dialect or dialects of Inuktitut language and who were ancestral to the present Inuit of Arctic Canada and Greenland" (p. 9).

Western archeologists believe Ancestral Inuit moved into what is now Arctic Canada from Siberia. They learned the art of igloo building from a people they named the Dorsets, who lived in the Canadian Arctic from 800 B.C. to 1300 A.D. (Nunavut Constitutional Forum, 1984, Oakes, 1987). A people that archeologists named "Neo-Eskimos" introduced large skin boats, dogs and advanced harpoons to Inuit from 900-1300 A.D. Other historical neighbours of Inuit include Thules, who, like Inuit, had moved eastward into this region (Damas, 1996, p. 335). Archeological evidence indicates that Ancestral Inuit descended from Thules (Damas, 1996). Thules, however, moved south in the mid-eighteenth century (Oakes, 1987, McGhee, 1988). Scientists have described several Inuit peoples, including Copper, Netsilik, Caribou, Igloodik, Ungava, and Labrador Inuit (Environment Canada, 1995). Inuit traded extensively (Nunavut Constitutional Forum, 1984).

Traditionally, Inuit lived in extended families of five to six people, with six to ten families per group. These groups traveled by dog team in winter, and kayak or foot in the summer. Each spring, people would disperse from winter camps to hunt seals on the ice, fish the lakes, and hunt caribou. In the winter, they would go back to the sea ice floe edge to hunt seals (Environment Canada, 1995).

I did not ask people in Nunavut what they thought about their origin. I did not have permission to write about this topic, only about what it meant to be successfully educated. Interested readers could respectfully inquire through Inuit studies programs currently taught in the North.

One of Errol Fletcher's students told him about a story from an elder who said they had come from Greenland (Fletcher, 1999). A Greenland Inuk elder told this story to Rasmussen:

A long, long time ago, when the earth was to be made, it fell down from the sky. Earth, hills and stones, all fell down from the sky, and thus the earth was made. And then, when the earth was made, came men. It is said that they came forth out of the earth. Little children came out of the earth...Then there is something about a man and a woman, but what of them? It is not clearly known. When did they find each other, and when had they grown up? I do not know. But the woman sewed, and made children's clothes, and wandered forth. And she found little children, and dressed them in the clothes, and brought them home. And in this way men grew to be so many (Rasmussen, 1921, p. 16).

#### Knowledge tied to locale

Survival for Inuit has involved an intimate relationship with inhabited ecosystems. Traditional ecological knowledge demands accurate observations about wildlife and weather. The position of stars in the sky have been used in navigation. Months of the year have traditionally been divided according to natural events, such as, "the time when the caribou come" (Siska, 1984, p. 95). Success in hunting has traditionally meant plenty of food to share at celebrations (Wallace, 1999).

A basic traditional ideal is that humans are equal in status to other animals. Animals are not resources to be exploited: they are beings who share the world with humans. *Niqituinnaq* is Inuit food, given by animals and accepted by people (Stairs, 1992). All animals

have souls and spirit powers. If a hunter does not show proper respect in the way he shares the food he brings to his community, the animal might not offer itself next time the community is hungry. A real (mature) Inuk, *inummarik*, is a genuine person who is generous in the proper way. But a person's status in the community might change quickly depending on how she or he behaves (Stairs, 1992).

From a southern perspective, "harvesting" has been "managed" by not killing during the breeding season, constantly moving camp, using different ways to store food, changing diet, and a belief in systems of sharing. Sharing has ensured that food reached everyone, especially the helpless, such as the elderly or infirm (Environment Canada, 1995). I expected that conceptions of success in education and learning for Inuit would be affected by this notion of sharing which ensures the survival of the community.

The educator Kawagley (1993) is a Yupiaq professor at the University of Alaska at Fairbanks. He differentiates between an abstract Western perspective and a Yupiaq view of success in learning intimately connected to physical survival:

Western thought...differs from Native thought in its notion of competency. In Western terms, competency is based on predetermined ideas of what a person should know in a certain body of knowledge, which is measured indirectly through various forms of tests...Such an approach does not address whether that person is really capable of putting the knowledge into practice. In the traditional Native sense, competency is based on an unequivocal relationship to survival or extinction. You either had it, or you didn't and survival was the ultimate indication (Kawagley, 1993, p. 129).

This is not to say that Inuit were individualistic. Co-operation and openness have been historically honoured as necessary to survival for Inuit (Nunavut Constitutional Forum, 1984, Wallace, 1999). Traditions in aboriginal education have emphasized the relationship of the student to natural surroundings. Barman, Hebert and McCaskill (1987) write:

Education was...a process of inculcating awareness of the proper conduct within a person's family, clan, community and nation. Rituals, ceremonies, festivals, and other social and religious events reinforced this search for knowledge. Traditional education also included the teaching of specific skills such as hunting, fishing, trapping, and agriculture necessary for survival within a particular environment (1987, p. 3).

Learning to survive involves keeping spirits high. Kawagley explains a holistic approach to visualizing success in education for the Yupiaq of Alaska:

The Yupiaq people had to maintain a positive mental attitude to make a living and a life in an unpredictable environment. This meant releasing all negative thoughts from the mind by participating in steam baths, singing and dancing, talking with others, games, spending time in silence with one's own thoughts, learning to relax, and visualizing a good life (1993, p. 43).

### **European encroachment**

Whalers and missionaries brought change to this culture in the 1800's. Mammal populations, especially belugas, bowhead whales and walruses, diminished nearly to the point of extinction. People began to camp in settlements, where Inuit cosmology was subsumed

into Christian teachings, and Inuktitut language was discouraged (Condon, 1987).

Winter seal hunts now began to be replaced by trapping - mostly arctic fox. People also began hunting local wildlife. Eventually, trading posts became permanent campsites. Inuit began to acquire rifles, telescopes, hunting tools, pots, steel needles, cotton thread and wool. Later, more expensive machines were introduced, including snowmobiles, outboard motors, and three and four wheeled all-terrain vehicles. But these modern advances did not necessarily lead to the atrophying of skills and abilities necessary for subsistence. A seal hunter on snowmobile, for example could no longer depend on sled dogs to sniff out almost invisible snow-covered seal blowholes (Environment Canada, 1995). His eyesight would have to be keen enough to spot the holes himself.

Europeans have historically viewed their own culture as superior to aboriginal world views. Stefansson, an early anthropologist among Inuit, portrayed a people's childlike innocence corrupted by white encroachment:

Just as children may be kindhearted, attractive and in every way charming and still believe in Santa Claus or even in Jack The Giant Killer, so the Eskimos are no less a delightful people for all their childlike notions...I find them less charming as they grow more sophisticated, but this should not be charged against the missionaries, for the sophistication is only in small degree their work. It is the aggregate result of the intercourse of the Eskimos with all sort of white men...which is changing them gradually into a less attractive and less fortunate people (1921, p. 107).

The twentieth century brought more missionaries, police, scientists and traders to the North. By the 1920's nearly all Inuit lived near trading posts (Environment Canada, 1995). The first Hudson's Bay post opened in the Arctic in 1926 (Oakes, 1987). During the fur trade, which dominated the Arctic until the 1930's, people moved to posts like Dundas Harbour, Fort Ross, Arctic Bay and Spence Bay (known today as Taloyoak). Inuit were hired as pilots, crew, seamstresses and hunters for these new elites.

#### Education and Inuit interests

Early Canadian education policy was based on the assumption that aboriginal people needed to be assimilated in order to survive. Historically, however, people who were successful at being assimilated into European culture were not always rewarded. A future Minister for Indian Affairs made the following racist statement in 1897: "we are educating these Indians to compete industrially with our own peoples, which seems to me a very undesirable use of public money" (Canada, House of Commons, 1897). Ultimately, the federal government's policy of aboriginal assimilation through education failed due to government parsimony and native resilience (Barman et al., 1986).

Canadian aboriginal education policy was revised in 1910 in order to attempt to sustain some autonomy for aboriginal people. Schooling at this time is described by Barman, Hebert and McCaskill, however, as "separate but unequal" to that of non-natives, preparing

aboriginal people neither for assimilation into white society nor for life in their own village (Barman et al., 1986, p. 9).

Formal schooling was introduced to Inuit in the 1930's by Anglican and Roman Catholic missionaries (Condon, 1987). Day schools were conducted in mission buildings, and parents encouraged to send their children away to secondary schools. The experience was traumatic for children, who had grown accustomed to the intimate relationship enjoyed in kinship-based communities. The children were now subjected to impersonal, underfunded and understaffed residential schools (Condon, 1987, Duffy, 1988). When students returned to their villages, they had difficulty readjusting to subsistence living and to speaking Inuktitut. Hardships facing Arctic missionary teachers were not insurmountable - a visitor to neighbouring Greenland during World War Two discovered aboriginals there were transmitting official radiograms, and had been printing their own books since 1860 (Duffy, 1988).

Although some aboriginal people saw the value of becoming literate, most had little incentive to learn in the European sense, and were often not encouraged to do so. An aboriginal student might be physically punished for being ignorant of the English language (Duffy, 1988). Many native people resisted formal schooling. A 1951 federal census reported that eight out of twenty Native people in Canada had no formal education (Barman et al., 1986).

Native students' perceptions of schooling may have been affected by the opinions held by their parents. Kawagley (1993)

describes his family's experience with schooling. His grandmother's parents would not allow her to go to school for fear that "she would get dumb" (Kawagley, 1993, p. 81). Other elders told Kawagley that children in modern schools "no longer have brains", "have little common sense" and are "irresponsible" and "dependent" (1993, p. 146).

Kawagley describes the dilemma for Yupiaq students caught between two systems of education today: "Right now it is emotionally costly to try to succeed in either world...our youngsters enter school confused and graduate from school confused and disoriented" (1993, p. 159). His solution lies in local control of education: "We must control education and give it direction to accomplish the goals we set for it" (1993, p. 159).

Inuit have no tradition of warfare,<sup>1</sup> but the effects of World War Two were felt across the Arctic. The Canadian government's desire for sovereignty meant extensive mapping of the North, the influx of aircraft, comfortable housing, recreation facilities for newly arrived servicemen - and new ideas about what was desirable and achievable. These servicemen were under orders not to fraternize with the local people (Nunavut Constitutional Forum, 1984, p. 17).

The advent of the Cold War meant more extensive mapping and scientific activity in the Arctic. Distant Early Warning radar stations were built and manned. These more permanent, exclusive

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<sup>1</sup> McNeal (1996) notes that Inuit and Dene peoples living near the mouth of the Mackenzie River warred occasionally (p. 20).

communities looked at Inuit perhaps with pity, but more likely as irrelevant to scientific progress - a potential source of envy for local people. Inuit were provided some compensation in the form of basic training and small material benefits for those who worked at the stations. The federal government began to place emphasis on vocational training during the 1950's. The few Inuit students deemed eligible to work on the DEW line were sent to Leduc, Alberta; local training centres planned for Yellowknife, Aklavik and Iqaluit materialized too late to be applicable (Duffy, 1988, p.103). Education was promoted mostly as part of an expansion of social welfare at this time. Missionaries ran schools to promote Western education, but their effect was on a comparatively small scale (Nunavut Constitutional Forum, 1984, p. 20).

The amateur Jim Houston began promoting the production and sale of carvings during his travels about the Arctic in 1952. Stone carving was a traditional art form, and Houston tried to employ this existing activity so people could have an income. Carving grew to a \$3.6 million per year industry in 1981, and it has been recovering in the Arctic since a 1983 decline (Environment Canada, 1995, p. 10). Print making was introduced in 1957 (McGhee, 1988), and later refined with the help of Japanese artists such as Naoko Matsubara (Gooding, 1997). A 1989 North West Territories labour force survey indicated 30 percent of Inuit participated in handiwork such as carving, print making and needlecraft (Environment Canada, 1995, p. 6).

Because there was a perceived lack of community learning opportunities, a system of residential schools was set up in the

Arctic in 1951, and children were airlifted to Iqaluit, Yellowknife, or even Ottawa (Duffy, 1988, p. 100). Children were housed and schooled in heated buildings and fed a Western diet, which made it more difficult to return to their original environment, and easier to scorn parents still practicing traditional ways (Duffy, 1988, p. 101). Children lost respect for parents, and people began to be afraid that they could no longer control their children.

The first Arctic federal school opened in Iqaluit in 1955. It used a curriculum appropriate to rural southern Canada. Grade one Inuit students learned about "zoos, traffic lights, and Dick and Jane's life on the farm - concepts completely foreign and meaningless to them" (Duffy, 1988, p. 106). Community adult education centres began at this time; by 1958, about 50 communities in the Arctic had some form of adult education (Nunavut Arctic College, 1997, p. 3).

#### Inuit control of education

Debates in the North West Territories Council in the 1960's centered on differences between the "West" North West Territories, and the "East". People began to talk about separation between the East region, or Nunavut, and the West Arctic, whose capital, Yellowknife, was the centre of administrative control. In 1966, the Carrothers Commission recommended that the decision be reviewed in ten years, and that local community development be promoted so that the East could be involved in their economic development just as the West was doing. An extensive system of administration was created in Yellowknife, with 25 regional offices. The Eastern regions of Kitikmeot, Keewatin and Baffin first elected members to represent

them, recognizing the unique character of people living in these areas. Finally, in April, 1982, the North West Territories voted in favour of creating the new region of Nunavut (Nunavut Constitutional Forum, 1984, p. 24).

As oil and gas exploration began to increase during the late 1960's, strong community leaders, many of them women, began to organize to protect the integrity of their communities. Local and regional public bodies, such as co-operatives and community radio stations, were formed. Organizations such as the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada, which worked on land claims, began to speak about regaining political autonomy. Inuit had been moved into suburban villages of bungalow houses, largely controlled by a white minority. These groups expressed a feeling of being displaced. Inuit, especially the young, began to try to immerse themselves back into their traditional culture. A bone of contention for some was that their communities, especially their schools, were run by outsiders (Nunavut Constitutional Forum, 1984, p. 32).

The United States civil rights movement of the 1960's began to raise public consciousness about racial minorities. Churches, particularly Anglicans, began to reassess their relationship with aboriginal people. The federal Department of Indian Affairs started a series of community development organizations at this time. In 1966, the federal government's Hawthorn Survey of Indian Conditions recognized a need for aboriginal integration in education.

A 1969 federal White Paper suggested, in the language of the federal government, that Indian people be given the rights of individual citizens (Barman et al., 1987). The paper's meaning was

tantamount to the abolition of the constitutional rights and status of First Nations peoples. The proposed policy did not address other important aspects of First Nations communities. Reserves, for example, would be dismantled. Aboriginal reaction demonstrated that this policy was unacceptable. The only solution was Indian control of Indian education.

A 1972 paper issued by the National Indian Brotherhood demanded just that. In 1973, the federal government accepted the principle of Indian control of Indian education (Barman et al., 1987). Local control of education was to arrive slowly in practice. In the fall of 1976, the National Inuit Council on Education was created in order to examine the feasibility of Inuit planning and administering their own education systems. The council met only once in April, 1977, and disbanded because of a shortage of funds (Duffy, 1988, p. 121). In 1982 the federal government noted that Indian bands were still without guiding principles or operational procedures to make local control materialize; although 450 out of 577 Native bands in Canada had taken over full or partial administration of their own schools. By 1984, 187 bands were operating their own schools completely (Barman et al., 1987, p. 16.) In the late twentieth century, aboriginal people in Canada have been regaining control of their own cultures - mainly by giving local control of education a high priority (Barman, Hebert & McCaskill, 1986, p. 1).

The history of adult education in the Eastern Arctic reflects the push for Inuit autonomy. Responsibility for the administration of community adult education centres shifted from the federal to the Territorial Government in 1969. Frontier College was contracted to

begin a system of community-based adult education, and vocational training centres were developed in the 1970's through Canada Manpower. Thebacha College, inaugurated in 1981, grew out of this system of training centres. Initiatives for more community-based learning led to the creation of Arctic College in 1984, with campuses in Fort Smith in the Western Arctic, and Iqaluit in the East. The headquarters of Arctic College were stationed in Yellowknife. Community Learning Centres were incorporated into the college by 1990. In 1995, administrative control shifted away from Yellowknife. Nunavut Arctic College was created, with head offices in Iqaluit. Fort Smith would now house Aurora College. Today, Nunavut Arctic College's Community Learning Centres are operating in 24 of the 26 communities throughout the Eastern Arctic, soon to be the Territory of Nunavut (Nunavut Arctic College, 1997).

### Conclusion

Inuit demanded, and have begun to achieve, local control of their education because a Eurocentric system was not appropriate for them. For 1200 years, Inuit have celebrated a unique culture which sustained its people and the resources they enjoyed.

Nunavut's unique history underscores the need to determine what success in education means to the students themselves - not to the administration of the college, or to the teacher of a course. Historically, teachers and staff have generally not come from communities where courses were taught. Writing about what success in education means to students is a step in putting some power in the

students' hands so that they can take leading roles in the communities where they live.

CHAPTER THREE:  
**ENVIRONMENTAL AND POLITICAL CONTEXTS**

Roy Bowkett, who was the adult educator and priest when I arrived in Pangnirtung, cautioned that the Arctic is no place for fools. Living in the Arctic has never been easy. I understood from listening to people, especially older folk, that living on the land involves the possibility of freezing or starving to death. Today, the social environment has become more complex. Inuit culture, society and economy depend on local wildlife populations, and industry has begun to expand.

**Environmental context**

In the North, going out on the land can be dangerous. Simon Anaviapik, a respected Elder from Pond Inlet, believes students must learn good survival skills as part of any classroom curriculum. Children, he has noted, have been lost on the land because they didn't know what to do (Farrow & Wilman, 1989, p. 8). A successfully educated northerner learns how to survive on the land.

Going out on the land can also be rewarding. Students can learn more about their intimate relationship with the land through their education. Meeka Arnaqq, the Adult Educator at Pangnirtung, shared traditional knowledge in her classes at the Community Learning Centre. Although I could understand little Inuktitut, I was invited to watch as Meeka would light the stone lamp and offer her wisdom to the students. I could see that this was not knowledge

presented in the abstract, but intimately connected to the land where Meeka was born and raised. It is practical knowledge. Harvesting "country food" - local meat and fish, for example - offers a higher return on the dollar than buying groceries at the local store (Wenzel, 1992, Duffy, 1988).

Today, 80 percent of Inuit people fish, trap or hunt caribou, fish, and marine animals, and process wild meat and resources for arts and crafts and clothing to wear and sell. Sixty percent rely on hunting and fishing for sustenance (Environment Canada, 1995, p. 1). Every college student I surveyed in Pangnirtung had been out hunting or fishing that year; some seemed surprised I had asked.

Animals are used in many ways - caribou can be made into clothing, bedding and hide for tents. Sealskin can be made into a type of footwear called *kamiks*. Furs can be fashioned into mitts and parka hood trim. Bone and ivory make excellent tools, weapons and crafts (Environment Canada, 1995, p. 6).

The more the people of the North have control over their own education, the more they can enjoy learning about their potential role in the development of industry and culture - while maintaining important traditions. Meeka's daughter Marlene began working as Adult Educator in the Pangnirtung Learning Centre when I was doing this research and teaching there. Employing local talent in a college setting was an important step in Pangnirtung's directing its own course of learning.

Industry continues to expand. Most Inuit consider themselves part or full-time hunters or sewers, but wages from employment in mining, oil and gas extraction and exploration, construction, service

industries and government may supplement their income (Nunavut Constitutional Forum, p. 32).

Caribou, musk-oxen and fish are now commercially harvested; this industry employs 80-100 hunters and generates \$1.5 million per year (Environment Canada, 1995, p. 7). The community of Cambridge Bay processes, packages and distributes musk-ox, caribou meat, and fish. Pagnirtung has a fine commercial fishery, with 98 harvesters and 33 workers generating \$1.3 million in 1993 in the production of 43 tons of char and 374 tons of turbot (Environment Canada, 1995, p. 9). Education is playing an important part in learning to balance traditional activities with as much contemporary innovation as people choose to allow, so they can enjoy the best the North and the South have to offer.

Social and economic change has come quickly to the North. McNeal describes the effect of the rate of change in the Western Arctic:

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 (1996, p. 26).

No male students I surveyed in the Pagnirtung Learning Centre had built a complete igloo, although people there (including myself) wanted to learn how.

For Kawagley, success in education means realizing the value of Native ways of thinking in the face of an invasive Western ethos. Historically, his people,

spent less than forty hours per week foraging for food. Unfortunately, for many Alaskan Native people, this "affluence" is no longer a feature of their lifestyle. Native people are beginning to realize that technological and bureaucratic solutions as a road to "progress" are a myth (Kawagley, p. 148).

Meanwhile, more southerners are coming north. Tourism has become especially popular in the Arctic since the 1980's. Tourists pay top dollar for camping and dog team expeditions and ice flow tours. Inuit can make good guides because of their intimate knowledge of the environment, but an appreciation of our world is important if Nunavut wishes to ensure that the tourism industry is sustainable and beneficial to people of the communities.

The Arctic ecosystem is fragile. Pollution from industrialized countries is profoundly affecting the environment. A Norwegian Arctic Monitoring Assessment program has been tracking the effects of pollution moved by winds and ocean currents since 1991, and recently released its findings at a United Nations Earth Summit. The study found the Arctic is the final storage for many global contaminants, especially mercury from the burning of coal. Mercury levels in bodies of Arctic peoples were often five to twelve times higher than were those of peoples living further south (Arctic warning sounded, 1997, June 26, *Vancouver Province*, p. A34, Global defence of the Arctic urged, 1997, June 26, *Victoria Times-Colonist*, p.

A14). DDT can be found in high levels of concentration in the Arctic, even though it is not used in North America any more. Arctic women, especially those in Eastern Canada and Greenland, were found to have levels of organic chemicals or pesticides "which approach or exceed those which could cause problems for unborn children" (Arctic warning sounded, 1997, June 26. *Vancouver Province*, p. A35, Global defence of the Arctic urged, 1997, June 26. *Victoria Times-Colonist*, p. A14). Radioactivity from the 1986 Chernobyl disaster, and from nuclear weapons testing, has slowly found its way to the Arctic, exposing people there to radiation levels higher than those living in the South (Global defence of the Arctic urged. 1997, June 26. *Victoria Times-Colonist*, p. A14).

We can assume that students living in the Arctic have a conception of success in education influenced by environmental concerns. If Northerners are eating contaminated meat, success in education means knowing what to do about it. While staying at Arctic College's Iqaluit residence, I found that the Environmental Technology program is popular, and that some students were interested in international law.

### Social context

Nunavut has seen major developments in its schooling, health care, and political organizations. Market forces and government regulations can restrict local traditional activities. Fur trapping, for example, diminished during the animal rights campaigns of the 1980's, as market prices fell. The price of a seal skin fell from \$23 in 1983 to \$7 in 1985. Polar bears are now protected by a federal

government quota system. In Labrador, government regulations limit hunters to no more than four bears in a year (Environment Canada, 1995, p. 7). One local hunter summarized the situation well when he said: "A guy can no longer just be a hunter. A guy almost has to be a lawyer to understand what's going on" (Lipka, 1989).

The Arctic's population density has always been one of the lowest in the world - less than one person per 100 square kilometres. Today, a total of 29,000 Inuit, and a handful of non-Inuit, are concentrated in some 27 coastal communities (Environment Canada, 1995, p. 2, map, Appendix 1). There are more students at U.B.C. than there are Inuit; yet Nunavut, home to Inuit, and the newest region of the North West Territories, constitutes one-fifth of the geographic area of Canada. Anywhere in Nunavut, a short hike in any direction yields an absence of people, and travel to the next village is almost always, out of necessity, by air.

Yet Inuit population has increased in recent years, and is expected to double by 2025 (Environment Canada, 1995, p. 3). In the North West Territories, women between the ages of 15 and 19 have three times more children than do women of the same age group in the whole of Canada. Nunavut's 1991 birth rate was 33%, twice the national average. Inuit are young. Nearly half are under 15 years of age (Chartrand, 1987, p. 243, Baffin leaders ponder the future. (1997, July 18). *Nunatsiaq News*, p. 13). Nunavut is destined to have the youngest and fastest growing population in the country (Government of the North West Territories, 1994, p. 3).

But Inuit have not been captured by formal public schooling. State operated schools are not yet 50 years old in the Arctic (McLean,

1994, p. 41). Whereas almost no Canadians outside the Arctic speak Inuktitut,<sup>2</sup> English illiteracy rates among Inuit stand at 50% (Barker, 1992, p. 3). Even Inuktitut programs are not popular today at the formal level (Komangapik, 1993, p. 103). In 1991, some 30% of Nunavut residents over age 15 had less than a grade 9 formal education (Government of the North West Territories, 1994, p. 61). The public school drop-out rate, at 95% in 1992, was higher than the national average (Komangapik, p. 59). Success for many adults will mean a return to school to upgrade their formal education (Bell, 1992, p. 3).

Indigenous control of Inuit education still has a long way to go. In 1989, the Government of the North West Territories Department of Education published an article entitled, "Inuit Control of Inuit Education." Eric Colbourne, a member of the study group, said most young Inuit children did not complete high school then. Some high school programs, he explained, didn't exist outside Iqaluit, the largest town in Nunavut. Parents are reluctant to send their children out of their home communities, and some towns have only offered schooling as high as grade nine or ten. Colbourne adds that schools transmit the culture, values, attitudes and language of a people, and that these should be indigenous to Inuit (Colbourne, 1989, p. 68).

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<sup>2</sup> Allan Kilabuk taught Inuktitut as a volunteer after work in Pangnirtung. These classes were a joy to attend. Meeka Arnaqq, Marlene Angnakak, Joel Maniapik, Billy Kilabuk, and the staff and students at the Pangnirtung Community Learning Centre where I worked, all patiently helped me to learn Inuktituk. Koyanamik!!

Youth unemployment is chronic in Nunavut, and expected to increase as the population grows. An article written by the Producer Co-ops of the North West Territories describes the situation for young Inuit of Lake Harbour:

Although children are being educated, there are few employment opportunities in their home communities. Carving is virtually the only means they have of supplementing their subsistence activities (Producer Co-ops, 1988, p. 29).

Brian Pearson, a 40 year resident of Baffin Island, paints a pessimistic picture about the future potential of formal education in Nunavut:

These isolated communities will never have enough jobs. So why bother educating them at all? The terrible reality of life in the North is that we are on a collision course with success. The more successful the education system becomes the less benefits will accrue to the educated (*Nunatsiaq News*, February 9, 1996, p. 10).

Pearson believes that a small number of "bright" students should be sent south to return to their communities as leaders (A brighter Nunavut? Send bright kids south. 1996, February 9, *Nunatsiaq News*, p. 10).

Not everyone shares Mr. Pearson's pessimism. Elisa Davidie countered in a subsequent article that "There are many successes in Nunavut and many Inuit leaders should be commended for the hard work they have done" (Tired of Pearson's complaints. 1996, February 23. *Nunatsiaq News*, p. 7).

Nunavut's 10,895 member workforce (those 15-64 years old), is 85% Inuit, and 72% of these are wage employed, mostly by the Government of the North West Territories. Workers holding university degrees or post-secondary certificates are effectively 100% employed. Currently, 44% of the 2096 government employees in Nunavut are Inuit, and these people are given less responsibility and pay than their non-aboriginal colleagues. The unemployment rate for non-Inuit in Nunavut is 2% (Nunavut workers at a glance. 1997, February 28. *Nunatsiaq News*, p. E8). Today, the coastal community of Hall Beach has a 35% unemployment rate; Igloolik and Arctic Bay each have a rate of 30%. The government of the North West Territories planned to spend \$6 million in the Baffin region in 1998 to create 1,911 jobs, in an attempt to lower the unemployment rate to 20% (Communities must set job plan priorities. 1997, July 18. *Nunatsiaq News*, p. 13).

Many people in Baffin are on welfare. In the 1995/1996 fiscal year, the NWT government spent \$12 million on social assistance for Baffin. High Arctic MLA Levi Barnabas believes the welfare system now in place has affected peoples' morale. He recently told the *Nunatsiaq News*, "...the social assistance program has broken down the resolve of the people to work...It's obviously an attitude problem" (Communities must set job plan priorities. 1997, July 18. *Nunatsiaq News*, p. 13).

At least one northern aboriginal leader is curious about application of resources in the public sector. Cece Hodgson-McCauley, founding chief of the Inuvik Dene band, asked recently in a local newspaper,

Why doesn't someone do a study on all the hundreds and hundreds of students who graduated from grade 12...What I would like to know is, where are they... how come we haven't filled our institutions with our own professionals, and also filled all the government offices?" (*News/North*, 1997, August 4, p. A9).

Suicide has seriously affected Inuit communities. Nunavut has one of the highest suicide rates in the country (Modern day Inuit heroes. *Nunatsiaq News*, 1997, April 4, p. 19). Between 1984 and 1993 there were 219 suicides in the North West Territories - four times the national average rate. Nunavut has 38% of the Territories' population, but 63% of the suicides have happened here. Young men kill themselves more than other demographic groups (Tilden, 1997, p. 11). Success in education may mean spiritual and emotional survival. But not all the news from Nunavut is bad.

Students in Nunavut are in the privileged position of living in a region about to be born around them. Although there were no treaties affecting Arctic lands until recently, Inuit are governed directly by Canada (McNeal, 1997, p. 16). North West Territories Inuit voted to ratify Nunavut land claims November 3, 1992 (Komangapik, 1993, p. 1). Nunavut, (which means, "our land" in Inuktitut), became legally official April 1, 1999. Iqaluit is the capital of the new Territory. Students come to Iqaluit from coastal communities all over Nunavut. Iqaluit is also the transportation, commercial and administrative capital of Baffin Island. Its mostly transient population has been identified as 60% Inuit, 20% non-aboriginal English speakers, 19% Francophones and 1% Dene (Komangapik, 1993, p. 64).

Political forces are coercing people to train for jobs in the new Territorial government of Nunavut. In the fall of 1996, the federal government set \$40 million aside for this purpose. Jack Anawak, the Regional Interim Commissioner, set a goal of 50% Inuit employment for the startup of Nunavut, with a long term goal of 85% Inuit employment in the government. There are some 900 government positions for Inuit to fill now that the change has come (Komangapik, 1993, p. 1). A government report announced that a hiring target of 600 government posts may be difficult to reach, however, because of "low education and training levels" (Working towards a better job. *Nunatsiaq News*, 1997, February 28, p. E8). Despite millions of dollars of government spending to enroll some 200 Inuit in Management Training programs in the region, Anawak said that his objective may not be met. The reasons he gave were that training might not be complete by 1999, adding that "not all Inuit want to work in an office 9 to 5, and there are some who don't want to be wage earners" (Baffin leaders ponder the future. *Nunatsiaq News*, 1997, July 18, p. 2).

Some northerners believe that Inuit have a set of values distinct from their white neighbours to the south. In an article entitled "Education and Change", Father Lechat, a minister in the Baffin Island community of Igloolik, wrote:

Inuit and Kadlunat don't think the same ways and don't have the same values...to Inuits, up to now, religion is still very important, but for may Kadlunat it is of little importance or no importance at all...for many Whites what is very important is to have a lot of money to get a lot of things, still for many Inuit what is important is to

be a good man (sic) in order to have many friends (1978, p. 1).

Until recently, Inuit have generally not had an interest in participating or competing with the mainstream South (Komangapik, 1993, p. 52, Brody, 1975). Today, a new generation has had to redefine itself.

Nunavut is improvising to adapt to a changing world, and many innovations and ideas have emerged. A recent Nunavut Arctic College Board of Governors Newsletter read, "We at Nunavut Arctic College are constantly increasing our capacity to provide programs and services by Inuit, for Inuit" (Nunavut Arctic College, 1997, p. 4). The newsletter then advertised "people who are building towards Nunavut," listing recently hired Community Adult Educators and other college staff from local populations. Philippe Bovet, a journalist with *Le Monde Diplomatique* of Paris, France, was impressed by a recent visit to Nunavut:

Nunavut has new ideas about decentralization, multiculturalism, equal representation for men and women in the legislative assembly, using technology for long-distance learning...(and)...the possibility of work-sharing in an era of unemployment (*News/North*. Voicing concerns over education, August 4, 1997, 52(16), p. A9.).

On Monday, May 26, 1997, 57% of Nunavut voters said "no" to a proposal that would have created political constituencies with one man and one woman representing each - the first system of this kind in the world. A referendum followed a month-long debate in church halls and school gymnasiums throughout the region. Voter turnout

was healthy at 39%, especially considering that the polls were opened during a time when many people go hunting (Nunavut says no to gender equity plan. *Nunatsiaq News*, 1997, May 30, p. 1).

It appears community leaders were divided on the issue. Advocates of the "yes" vote included John Amagoalik, Chief Commissioner for the Nunavut Implementation Commission, known by some as "the father of Nunavut" (Gender parity law would be phased out. *Nunatsiaq News*, 1997, May 9, p. 3); Natsiq Kango, Secretary-Treasurer of Nunavut Tunngavik Inc., Martha Flaherty, President of the Pauktuutit Women's Association (Yes tour gets tepid support in communities. *Nunatsiaq News*, 1997, May 16, p. 5), and Rita Drey, President of the North West Territories Status of Women Council, who said that gender parity ought to be viewed as part of traditional Inuit culture (Plebiscite on gender parity a world first. 1997, May 16, *Nunatsiaq News*, p. 19). The proposal had its opponents, such as Suzie Napayok, who felt the initiative patronized women. Many voters were confused (Plebiscite on gender parity a world first. 1997, May 16, *Nunatsiaq News*, p. 19). But the referendum was voted down.

### Local language

The use of local language is key to success in local control of education. Communication in the Arctic has become complex. In a recent survey, 75 percent of the residents of Nunavut listed Inuktitut or Inuinnaqtun as their mother tongue. A syllabic alphabet, developed for use in older Inuktitut religious texts, is read today in the the Eastern regions, and not very much in the Western

Arctic (Appendix 1, Komangapik, p. 85). I found the easiest way to learn Inuktitut, apart from talking with small children, was to sing hymns in church, since I knew the tunes from boyhood choir days. The hymn books used Inuktitut syllabics, and I found it was easier to learn the sounds while singing.

Inuit living in Alaska, Greenland, and parts of Western Nunavut use Roman orthography (Laghi, 1997). In the Central Arctic's prosperous village of Cambridge Bay, about three quarters of the people, "speak, work and learn" almost exclusively in English. Few people here speak Inuinnaqtun, the indigenous dialect (Cambridge Bay hoping for economic boom. 1997, July 25, *Nunatsiaq News*, p. 4). I learned little Inuinnaqtun, since I stayed in Cambridge Bay only one month to teach an intensive course.

Translators are employed in Arctic conferences. The extent to which English dominates traditional languages can be promoted - or resisted - as people discover for themselves what it means to be successfully educated.

A key issue in Nunavut is the use of Inuktitut language in schools. Meeka Arnakaq, the Inuktitut language instructor and Adult Educator in Pangnirtung, has offered suggestions about what should be included in school programs. She believes Inuit Elders coming to classes might bring more Inuit culture to schools; for example, students might recognize that Inuktitut is as important as English (Farrow & Wilman, 1989, p. 8).

Other visiting teachers like me were interested in learning local languages, but it was not a job requirement. Many people in

Nunavut have volunteered to help interested visitors from the South to learn native dialects. This was no easy task. I found Inuktitut more difficult than Mandarin to learn. Also, the turnover of southern students of Inuktitut is relatively high. It seemed I was just beginning to learn the language, and it was time to go.

Nunavut will not have Inuit teachers for a while, so visiting teachers will have to learn more about Inuit culture and language (Nunavut Constitutional Forum, 1984). Inuktitut has become important in unifying the people of the Arctic, allowing them greater control in preserving their own culture (Nunavut Constitutional Forum, 1984, p. 13). Journals and books such as *The Journal of Indigenous Studies* (Kaliss, 1996) and *The Inuksuk Book* (Wallace, 1999) are now published in Inuktitut. One of the projects we were working on in our spare time in Pangnirtung was converting computer keyboards from Roman orthography to Inuktitut syllabics. We can assume that speaking and writing local dialects is an important part of Inuit education.

Maintaining oral tradition is important. Kawagley argues that the oral tradition of the Yupiaq offered more intimacy between teacher and students than the Western tradition of writing.

To hear stories being told in the *qasegiq* (community house) allowed the children and other hearers to savour the words and visualize the events (described). For the duration of the story, they became part of the imagery. The modern written word is useful for many things, but it removes the reader from the human interaction element (Kawagley, 1993, p. 21).

Writing is different from speaking. The education theorist

Karla Williamson asserts that in the Arctic today "the learning style in schools is incongruent with the traditional learning style", and that "the school curriculum bears minimal relationship with the Inuit culture (since) schools prepare students for industrial societies in which they cannot participate" (Williamson, 1989, p. 158).

But modern concepts can be articulated within a traditional approach to education. Lipka (1989), for example, offers an education model incorporating mathematics courses into traditional Yupik culture and knowledge, where the essence of a successful education is its link to the local community.

Komangapik, an Iqaluit adult educator, advocates bilingual instruction (Inuktitut and English) as a crucial part of making a curriculum more culturally appropriate. She notes that Inuit adults who are literate in Inuktitut have been observed by instructors to be more successful at learning English than illiterates. Is speaking Inuktitut an integral part of success in education? Komangapik has found it very difficult to find funding for bilingual courses, and students have been reluctant to enroll in them (Komangapik, 1993, p. 81).

Despite the difficulties in implementation, the promotion of local languages in schools seems to be an important step in reclaiming education for the North, so its people can better cope with current social complexities.

**SUCCESS IN EDUCATION**

Success in education was, I assumed, something many Nunavut Arctic College students had not yet had the opportunity to formally articulate together. In this study, students and I constructed the meaning of success in education from our experiences.

The term "success" is culturally constructed. At the time of the study, I thought the meaning of "success" may be unclear. A student may not have considered how a program could "go right" before college classes began. This study aimed to get students' conceptions of "success in education" in the foreground.

Suppose a student had enrolled in a course to develop or improve him or herself in some way. Reflecting on what "success in education" meant to the student at the beginning of the course could be beneficial to the student and teacher. Working together with students to discover what "success" means offered the potential to continue positive working relationships, which in turn, could lead to teacher success (Villeneuve, 1996, p. 56).

To interpretivists, meaning is socially constructed (Hultgren, 1989, p. 58). Interpretation is a hermeneutic process - bringing to understanding something foreign or strange, which is separated in time, space or experience (Gadamer, 1975, Hultgren, 1989). Hermeneutics, then, is the science and art of interpretation (Palmer, 1969, Hultgren, 1989). Each time I reflect on what it means to be successful in my education, a new layer of meaning is uncovered, and my conceptions may change.

Because they are subjective, the conceptions students attempt to describe cannot logically be held in static suspension; yet we demand the rigour of objective inquiry when we analyze these conceptions in a thesis. Interpretivism offers a "middle ground" between the demand for rigorous objectivity inherent in scientific empiricism and overly subjective "naive inquiry" (Smith 1989, p. 158).

Interpretivists, as Schwandt (1994) Denzin (1992) and Hammersley (1989) point out, "wrestle with maintaining the opposition of subjectivity and objectivity, engagement and objectification" (Smith, 1989, p. 158). I am aware that the data I collected from students is incomplete, and provides only my interpretation of what I have been able to see and hear. Hultgren (1989) adapts Taylor's (1971) definition of "interpretation" as "an attempt to make clear or make sense of a text that is in some way confused, incomplete or cloudy" (Hultgren, p. 37).

Interpretivism clarifies obscure aspects of culture by looking at the meaning behind social events. I see this work as an attempt to explain what success in education means to students as they describe it with me. Hultgren asserts that the main aim of an interpretivist is to "make sense out of everyday activities and understand cultural phenomena by bringing meaning structures into full human awareness" (1989, p. 58).

Interpretivism lends itself well to this context because meaning is manifested in individual experience, but grounded in the history of a culture. Gadamer situates subjective acts in a "continuity of history" (Hultgren, p. 43, Gadamer, 1975). We must understand the history of a culture of students whose conceptions we are studying.

### Conceptions of success

Success means different things to different people. "Success" can be defined, however, as "the accomplishment of an aim; a favourable outcome" (Hawkins & Allen, 1991, p. 1444). My conception of success may not be the same as someone else's. Success is a process of setting goals and achieving them. Different people set different goals.

In his thesis, "Successful Illiterate Men", Clark (1992) defined "success" in general Western terms, but pointed to the ideas in the minds of his research participants to be more precise: "definitions key to this study are the ones developed from the collective perceptions of the subjects themselves" (p. 150). Commonly perceived views of success included steady employment yielding an annual household income above the Canadian average - which was then \$30,000 per year. Participants' ideas of success were grouped into two categories: how one achieves success, and what "success" - or being successful - is. Participants reported achieving success by working hard, being honest, being ambitious, trying their best and having "drive" (p. 151). Almost half of the participants suggested that successful people enjoy stability - that is, a relative lack of pressure or tension. One-quarter of the participants thought success had to do with one's feelings, especially as a "state of mind or overall outlook" (p. 154). Fewer participants thought that their possessions, the opinions of other people, the friends they had, or being able to read or write, were as important.

College success is strongly related to students' prior academic preparation. For example, in a group of 92 first year college students, 50 Native and 42 non-Native, who attended the University of Alaska in 1974, success was more strongly related to academic skill than whether they came from a remote village, Western background, had clear goals, or found the campus to be a friendly place (Kleinfeld, 1978). The criterion of success for college students was obtaining at least a 2.0 passing grade point average over 7.5 credits, one-half the number needed to advance to the next session. This criterion was conservative - staff at the college considered passing 12 credits to indicate student success (Kleinfeld, 1978).

Each person's conception of success changes through time. My own idea about what it means to succeed at school may not be the same today as it will be next year. If I have completed this thesis, my goal will no longer be, "completing the thesis." I will set a new goal.

A definition of "education" should surface in the students' descriptions, as they define what it means to be educated. In the West, adult education is oriented by individual student needs and experiences (Lindeman, 1961, Hoghielm, 1986). Adults learn well when they can direct themselves (Knowles, 1975, Tough, 1979), but self-direction is more effective when we reflect back on our learning experiences (Boshier, 1983). I see this research as an opportunity to outline a method which allows students to incorporate their course of study into a bigger picture of what success in education means to them.

The significance of individual actions must be understood in the context of the subjective meanings that individual people give them (Hultgren, 1989) although individual actions are private (Carr and Kemmis, 1986). In this thesis, I entered the context of a class of Nunavut Arctic College students to find the meaning of success in their education.

An object of inquiry can reveal itself through questions which bring it out into the open (Hultgren, 1989). This study asks questions to reveal more about our object of inquiry - the conceptions students have about where their education might be taking them. But what is a conception?

Marton and Booth (1997) describe the term in their study about conceptions of learning:

By conception, here, we mean a qualitatively distinct manner in which the subjects were found to voice the way they thought about learning, whether in respect to themselves, their reflections over their progress, or any other expression. (p. 36).

Marton, Beaty and Dall'Alba (1993) interviewed 29 open university students, and six distinct conceptions of learning emerged: increasing one's knowledge, memorizing and reproducing, applying, understanding, seeing something in a different way and changing as a person. These conceptions were grouped into surface and deep approaches to learning. Marton, Beaty and Dall'Alba thought that the first three conceptions of learning represented surface approaches to learning; the latter three were deeper.

The subject of students' motivations for learning has been a research focus in the field of adult education since the 1960's (Merriam and Caffarella, 1991, p. 83, Courtney, 1991). Houle's work, *The Inquiring Mind* (1961), conducted in-depth interviews to explore students' histories of learning, motivations that led them to continue to learn, and views of themselves as learners. Houle discovered that adult students could be classified into goal-oriented, activity-oriented, and learning-oriented participants. Boshier's (1971) *Education Participation Scale* tested Houle's typology with 13,442 learners from Africa, Asia, New Zealand, Canada, and the United States (Boshier and Collins, 1985, Merriam and Caffarella, 1991, p. 83).

In the developmental reading and study classes she taught, Borchardt (1989) noted students came with a history of failure because they did not have a purpose. The first day she asked her students, "Who is the successful student?" (p. 138). Students were then asked to define the word "student" and to think of the qualities possessed by successful students they knew. Students list behaviours of successful students: "being punctual, trying hard, sticking to the job, having a positive attitude" (p. 138). The next day, Borchardt wrote popular qualities and behaviours on the blackboard, so that the students could discuss the qualities and reflect on them. Students in Borchardt's classes were not asked to describe their own conceptions. They were encouraged to change their behaviour. There was no mention of students' opportunities to reflect on this change. In this thesis, students were interviewed to discover what success in education meant to them, and results were used to attempt to

formally incorporate students' conceptions of success in their own education and learning.

A student's decision to participate in an educational setting is a function of two things: his or her expecting educational success; and valence, or the value a student places on being successful (Merriam and Caffarella, p. 233, Rubenson, 1977). Bandura (1995) looks at consequences of what he describes as peoples' "self-efficacy" - how people view their own success in education. Villeneuve (1996) allowed research participants to define "teacher success" and "teacher effectiveness" in her thesis that examines teacher success in First Nations communities. She writes:

During the interview process I did not provide participants with a specific definition of these two terms. Rather, I was more interested in learning what these terms meant to individual educators, students and parents. (p. ix).

#### Northern students' conceptions

Northern students have been asked about their occupational and educational aspirations, and the kinds of rewards expected from work. McDiarmid and Kleinfeld (1982) surveyed 323 Yup'ik, and 117 white high school students in Fairbanks, Alaska, to determine their educational and career aspirations. Barnhardt (1994) identified several "keys to success" for Alaska Native students, including a teaching and learning environment responsive to the students' cultural diversity, respectful support services from the school, family and community, and exceptional individual effort (Barnhardt, 1994, pp. ii, 225).

Inuit students may not have English as their first language. Watt, Roessingh & Hetty Bosetti (1996) attempt to define what they mean by English as a Second Language student "success"; they mention conversational fluency, employment, a sense of self control, personal empowerment and pride. Others have defined "successful" ESL students as being "entirely or primarily mainstreamed" into English-speaking classes, and attaining a "C" grade average or better (Early, 1992, p. 266).

Adults generally want to be successful learners, and success in learning plays a part in a student's motivation to participate in a learning event (Komangapik, 1993, Wlodkowski, 1986). Komangapik writes:

Adults...are positively motivated as long as success and the volition to learn exist for them, but the result would be superficial learning. If adults, on the other hand, were to view what is to be learned as being of great value to themselves, in addition to experiencing success at learning while exercising their volition to learn, the result would be relevant to the adult learners themselves and it would increase their sense of self-esteem (Komangapik, p. 54).

Adults need to have experienced success in learning something of value to themselves in order for learning to be meaningful.

Aboriginal students may sabotage their academic success in order to identify with their communities that seem left behind (Ogbu, 1987, p. 317). Fear of success may explain the self-defeating, sometimes self-destructive phenomenon that some people experience at adult levels of study (Tamas, 1986). Komangapik

believes student self-abasement phenomenon should be researched in an Inuit context:

Because such a phenomenon appears also to be a serious barrier to the success of the Inuit in their education as well as in their careers, the importance of having this notion investigated cannot be overstated. The outcome of such research may have serious implications for all Baffin education ventures, for Inuit children as well as adults (Komangapik, 1993, p. 58).

This research is intended to help, in some small way, to overcome the problem of self-abasement in the classroom.

In this study, students and I constructed the meaning of "success in education" together, since the term "success" is problematic, and research has not offered a definitive version of it, especially among aboriginal students in North America.

**METHODOLOGY**

Students can be encouraged to talk about what success in education means to them as a group. Carriere (1994) advocates using a discussion session to facilitate community participation in such an issue. The session procedure is as follows: a) overview of the history and structure of the project, outline the organization of the session, invite people to introduce themselves, and discuss session ground rules; (b) write on index cards; (c) post cards at the front of the room; discuss, clarify and link ideas; (d) build and explain their 'model,' grouping or contrasting ideas on cards (Carriere, 1994, p. 91).

**Conceptual consideration**

This study followed a similar method. In employing the discussion session, I did not intend to uncritically adopt an aboriginal rite or practice (Marker, 1998). Carriere's model simply seemed to me to be the best way to allow the students' conceptions to emerge.

The meaning of success in education may arise as story. Clandinin and Connelly (1987) promote narrative as story in education research. Using this approach, we would view students' conceptions of success through the stories they tell about themselves. Students might talk about learning as if they were at work. A community college context more resembles on-the-job learning of apprenticeship programs than the "armchair learning" of formal schools; and hearing and telling stories inherent in this more casual

atmosphere restores agency to students as they learn about work they might do (Becker, 1986, Conquergood, 1993, Short, 1991).

Mezirow (1975) describes Adult Basic Education as a "crap shoot" in his work, "Last Gamble on Education." Many students in Nunavut love gambling and dice games, but Mezirow meant something different. Students living in societal margins take a risk to get a chance to succeed by becoming educated. A student with low literacy skills who leaves a low-paying job to attend full-time classes in Adult Basic Education risks losing what little financial security he or she might have for the "long shot" of the better job somewhere in the future, or an ephemeral notion of "being educated".

My asking questions might easily have been seen as voyeuristic by the people in the communities where I taught. Errol Fletcher has taught in Iqaluit for several years. He points out in *Social work education for Inuit* (in press) that the act of questioning someone can be interpreted as interfering in Inuit culture (p. 54). Villeneuve, despite being of Cree ancestry and having family in the village where she did her research, considered herself "an outsider" researcher because she had spent most of her adult life "in urban centres, post-secondary institutions, and other First Nations communities." (p. 42.) Villeneuve reflected on her hesitancy to conduct research in a First Nations setting:

Does research have a place in First Nations settings? If so, what does respectful research look like? How can an academic form of exploring and learning have a place in First Nations settings, where ways of learning and

knowing are often far removed from the world of academia? (p. 37).

Like Kawagley, Villeneuve was taught that asking direct questions was a "rude and lazy" way of learning (p. 39). I was careful, then in framing questions I asked.

## CHAPTER SIX

## THE RESEARCH SITES

Inuit live in a unique area of the world, and I was not disappointed to find many interesting ideas here about the meaning of success. The Arctic is a place like no other I have seen. The "Arctic" can be defined as the area north of the tree line in Canada. That means it is a land of permafrost - with mean temperatures of less than ten degrees Celsius in the warmest month, less than minus thirty degrees in the coldest month, and below an average of minus ten degrees during six or more months of the year (Environment Canada, 1995, p. 2). The house where I stayed in Pangnirtung was new, with plenty of insulation. The double-paned windows had a third layer of plastic installed on the inside, but the furnace rarely stopped working in February. I was no longer in the South.

Above the Arctic Circle, there is no night for a portion of summer, nor day for a part of winter. There are no farms in Nunavut.<sup>3</sup> There is also no bush, and visitors are granted respite from many southern trappings, such as highways, lawns and psychiatrists.

Iqaluit is the home of Nunnatta Arctic College headquarters (where I was hoping to work). I thought Iqaluit would be an excellent choice as a site for the first study, because I could meet Arctic College students and staff from a variety of places in Nunavut

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<sup>3</sup> I met a man named MacKenzie, who kept a few farm animals in Apex, a village near Iqaluit.

while living with them in the student residence. Greg Welch, the President of Nunavut Arctic college, kindly arranged for me to stay at the residence, and reminded me that this would be a long trip - I would fly west from Vancouver to Montreal, then north for another day to Iqaluit. It would be expensive - nearly \$2,000 just to fly up. But I wouldn't need a car. Nunavut, Greg assured me, has no highways. I booked a ticket for Iqaluit in late July, 1997.

Errol Fletcher was instrumental in helping me to come to Iqaluit. He suggested I would need good hiking boots for walking around the rocky terrain in August, but I would not need a parka. It was shirt sleeve weather.

My first surprise upon landing in Iqaluit was the extent of the development in the town. Our 737 jet landed easily at the massive Iqaluit airport, whose control tower lent an air of sophistication to rival Vancouver International. Expensive aircraft, including helicopters, a business jet, a large cargo plane and several CF-18 fighter jets, were lined up beside the runway. I could hardly believe this was a town of a few thousand people. I checked into the nearby "old student residence," a converted U.S. Army barrack.

I met, and chatted with, many helpful students, teachers and administrative staff at Nunavut Arctic College as they prepared for the academic year. Serendipitously, the college was about to start "Student Success Week" when I arrived. It was a perfect time and place to begin asking students at the college what "success in education" meant to them.

I knew that I started with very little knowledge - I could only prepare so much for the Arctic while at U.B.C. I had never met an

Inuk before I came to Nunavut. One day, a teacher staying at the residence explained to me that an Inuk's raised eyebrows meant "yes", and lowering meant "no". For days, people had been answering my questions and I had not understood. But I was comfortable with my ignorance, since I had taught in cross-cultural environments in Attawapiskat, a Nishnawbe-Aski village in northern Ontario, and in Taiwan.

I have spent most of my life in eclectic formal education. I read Politics and Philosophy at Queen's University. I have experienced failure more than once. I abandoned a Master's year in Politics and a Bachelor of Science in Biology. I studied the technique of Vipassana meditation, following the teaching of S.N. Goenka (where one of the precepts is to abstain from killing - hardly applicable to hunting!). My school marks improved dramatically. I spent one year doing the Diploma in Adult Education at U.B.C. before entering the Master's program.

I have paid for my education by working at many different jobs: in construction, in a plastic fabricating plant, as a steel plant worker, an oil rig roustabout, a cruise ship steward, a gas jockey, a farm hand, at Gang Ranch, and at a circus. I was an Advertising Account Executive at the *Globe and Mail* in Toronto, a tree planter for four seasons, and a "tree runner" for two. I was President of Raven Rent-A-Student, under the enfranchisement of Magnum Ltd. in Vancouver and Victoria. I have done some social work - in day care, as a counsellor for children with family challenges, with mentally and physically challenged children, in hospice, on a

psychiatric ward, in home support and with ex-offenders at the John Howard Society. Few northern students I met could relate to this array of southern experiences - or to the notion that I had no children, few possessions, and that I was working in order to pay back hefty student loans (then again, most southerners find this unusual).

I was a Sessional Instructor and Professor of General Vocational Preparation at Northern College in Attawapiskat, a village in the Nishnawbe-Aski First Nation. I have tutored privately in Canada, and I taught at several schools and businesses in Taichung, Taiwan, before working as an instructor at Nunavut Arctic College. I have worked briefly as a Research Assistant and Graduate Academic Assistant at U.B.C.

I undertook research for this thesis in order to improve my practice as a teacher. In Attawapiskat, students suggested that I should investigate teaching in the Arctic. I intended to pursue employment at Nunavut Arctic College. I enrolled in the Master of Arts in Adult Education at the University of British Columbia in 1995, and began researching the Arctic for the thesis.

Looking through back issues of local newspapers in the Iqaluit library, I was able to get a general picture of students' conceptions of success. Students enrolled in Arctic College's Management Studies program at Igloolik were looking for better jobs with an eye to the formation of the new government. One student told the *Nunatsiaq News*, "People have to go back to school for Nunavut" (*Nunatsiaq News*, Working towards a better job. February 28, 1997, p. E8). Another student had spent a year at university in the South, and

thought the timing of the program was right: "It's a two year program, and by the time we graduate, Nunavut will be just around the corner" (Working towards a better job. 1997, February 28, *Nunatsiaq News*, p. E8). A third student stayed home for four years after graduating and looked after her twin girls, partly because she was not able to find a good, full time job. This student "definitely" wanted "to work for the Nunavut government" (Nunavut workers at a glance. 1997, February 28, *Nunatsiaq News*, p. E8).

I found out that many students faced the difficult decision of whether to travel outside of their home community in order to reach career and life goals. Cecil Hansen left his home town of Aklavik twenty years ago to become Captain of a 747 Jumbo Jet in Australia. Cecil told the local newspaper, *Tusaayaksat*, his idea about success: "To achieve goals one has to work hard and sometimes one has to make sacrifices" (*Tusaayaksat*, Friday, May 30, 1997, p. 11).

Students enrolled in a new Legal Studies course at Arctic College to empower themselves with legal knowledge. The course attempted to introduce students to Canada's legal system in only six weeks. Pauline Pemik was motivated to take the course because she saw that none of the lawyers involved in the Nunavut land claims proceedings were Inuit. Paul Quassa, Past President of the Tunngavik Federation, and one of the chief negotiators for the Nunavut land claim agreement, said that many terms of the agreement were, "couched in obscure legal terminology", making clear communication difficult (Crash course in legal system tailored to Inuit. 1997, July 18, *Nunatsiaq News*, p. 11). Mr. Quassa admitted

that while a six week course could offer only a limited amount of information about the Canadian and Inuit traditional legal systems,

At least we will have a full understanding of the language, and how to create new Inuktitut words for interpreting law, which will work in our court system. (Crash course in legal system tailored to Inuit. 1997, July 18, *Nunatsiaq News*, p. 11).

The first phenomenon I saw in Pangnirtung that seemed to relate directly to success in education for Inuit was a series of inspirational posters on the walls of colleges. Those displayed at the Pangnirtung Community Learning Centres depicted students participating in Nunavut's Unified Human Resources Development Strategy. The theme of the posters was "Ready For 1999," which is the time that Nunavut will come into effect. Looking at these posters, I could see students enrolled in Arctic College programs have expressed unique conceptions of success.

Richard Angivrana's career goal for 1999 was to become an elementary teacher in the Kitikmeot region. His poster read: "As a male teacher, I will teach hunting and classroom skills." Nanci Tagalik wanted to become a specialist in the prevention of childhood sexual abuse. She said: "As a community, we can become strong. Now is the time to break the cycle."

David Sudlovenick was a dental therapist working in Pond Inlet. The question on his poster read, "What motivated you to become a Dental Therapist?" He answered, "I was working in the Health Centre at Resolute Bay as a caretaker and the pay wasn't so good. I decided I had to do something before I got too old so the main reason was to get a good paying job." David's advice to aspiring

students was, "Make sure they finish Grade 12. Stay in school, go for what you would like to do. Push for it, don't wait for it."

It seemed to me that, in the Arctic, one has an opportunity to learn and reflect in a unique environment, far from the din of the southern city. There was more time to think through things, and I felt more connected to people on a day-to day basis. People seemed to have time to talk about their ideas and interests, and they faced unique challenges.

## PROCEDURES

### Study 1

This study was conducted with a group of ten Nunavut Arctic College students enrolled in their first year in Nunavut Arctic College at Iqaluit. I had met several of these students in the cafeteria of the old residence building. I talked about the study I was doing, and several students asked if they could take part. We used a class room in the residence building for this study. Using a variety of approaches, students examined together what "success in education" meant. Students in the Iqaluit study were not all Inuit. One student was of Sami ancestry, and was visiting from Sweden. I decided not to interview these students with the tape recorder, since I was interested in hearing from a group of students who were all Inuit. Some students were enrolled in the Environmental Studies program, and were keenly aware of local environmental issues.

In Phase One of the study, I instructed the class to write what "success in education" meant to them, on index cards. Perhaps students wanted to complete a sentence, such as, "To me, success in a course means...", or, "I learn best when..." or, "A time when I learned something well was..." . I offered a few possible examples, expressing hope that those examples would not have an effect on what success in education means to the students themselves. Did "success" mean passing a course? Did it mean getting a job, or security for a family? I wrote on two cards myself, and offered students up to three index cards to write their ideas down. Students asked if they could use just one card, or more than three, but most were comfortable using three cards, one for each idea about what success in education meant to them.

In Phase Two, we posted the cards on the blackboard in front of the group. During phase three, students were asked to group their ideas together. Was "getting a job" similar to "having enough money to do things I want"? Did "feeling good about myself" belong with "increasing self-esteem"? One student read the cards to the class, and the class directed the student to move the card to a category on the board. We made categories such as "good feelings", using one of the cards to represent the others as the title for the category. I had to be careful not to impose my own ideas about "success in education" at this phase. I asked the students to decide what the categories were to be called, or whether a certain card belonged in a category or not.

Phase Four: we ranked the importance of each group. How many people thought "success in education" was about getting a job?

How many thought it was about passing a course? The more cards in a category, the more important I considered that category to be for the group.

In Phase Five, I interviewed students about what they thought. Questions took the form of, "Some people thought that 'success in education' was about feeling good about yourself. What do you think?" or, "I see your first idea about success in education was about getting a job. Would you like to talk about that?" Some ideas about success were about students developing themselves in some way. Other ideas were more about applying the material they had learned somewhere in particular. Later, I arranged students' responses according to whether they reflected personal and instrumental dimensions of conceptions of success in education. I hoped the answers students had given would indicate how a program could "go right" for them.

## Study 2

While staying in Iqaluit, I met Roy Bowkett, Principal of the Aurthur Turner Training School for Anglican missionaries in Pangnirtung. At the time, Roy was also Pangnirtung's Adult Educator. Roy kindly offered me a job teaching an accounting course at Pangnirtung's Community Learning Centre. Pangnirtung, then, was the second study site.

Pangnirtung is the closest coastal community to Iqaluit (see map, Appendix A). I was delighted to see state-of-the-art facilities at Pangnirtung. The Community Learning Centre was housed in a beautiful new building. Pangnirtung's computer lab rivals that at the

U.B.C. Educational Studies Department, and the students enrolled in Computer Applications quickly became more adept than their teacher! I also taught Public and Private Sector Accounting, English, Mathematics, and Science at the Pangnirtung site.

Study 2 was carried out in the same way as study 1. The ten participants, though, were all Inuit, living in Pangnirtung (see map, Appendix A). The students were enrolled in an Adult Basic Education class, beginning to intermediate level. Most were women.

### Study 3

The third study was also done in Pangnirtung; this time it was with eleven students enrolled in a Record of Achievement, Science and Technology class. I taught Mathematics, Science and Computers in this class from January to April, relieving Angie Troke, who was away on maternity leave. All of the students were Inuit women; all were mothers, most with young children.

This study was done in the same way as the first two, but any students in this study who asked were interviewed with a tape recorder (Villeneuve, 1996). The tapes were left in the office so that students could listen to their ideas as the year progressed, and after the school term was over. Students could then reflect on what they had said, to see if their ideas or goals had changed, or if they had thought about something they might want to add. The tapes and index cards could become a sort of diary. The interviews were mostly in English, although students were free to record their thoughts in Inuktitut on these tapes. Later, I transcribed the tapes

in order to reflect upon what the students had told me. I did not transcribe any of the Inuktitut.

Although I asked basic questions to all students, I saw no need to set a formal interview agenda in advance (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983, McNeal, p. 53.). Neither did I provide students with any definitions of "success in education." I wanted students to come up with their own definitions. Villeneuve (1996) interviewed students, teachers and parents in her home community of Hobbema, Alberta. She explains how she let the participants give their own definitions of "teacher success" and "teacher effectiveness":

During the interview process I did not provide participants with a specific definition of these two terms. Rather, I was more interested in learning what these terms meant to individual educators, students and parents (1996, p.ix).

I truly enjoyed teaching and talking with students in the North. I found people to be very helpful, good-spirited and determined to solve they unique problems they faced. Northerners also know how to have fun, and I enjoyed feasts, games, social activities and of course, playing hockey on the "old-tymer" team!

CHAPTER SEVEN  
DATA ANALYSIS

This was a study of conceptions of success in education held by three classes of Nunavut Arctic College students. It was informed by three kinds of data. The first involved the card processes or "talking circles." The second source of data was the set of interview transcripts. The third involved my own experiences and reflections on the situation in the Arctic.

There are many ways in which one might organize data about conceptions of educational success in the Arctic, or anywhere else. For present purposes it seemed prudent to deploy a model which foregrounds the extent to which "success" is constructed from a personal or instrumental perspective. Of course, these are related. It is rare to find someone doing something just for personal or instrumental reasons. But, conceptually, the distinction is important.

In Adult Basic Education, there has been an historic focus on instrumental concerns. Can the learner use a credit card, operate a computer or perform other technical tasks? Even reading and writing is constructed in a discourse that stresses economic or other instrumental imperatives. As well, although the Arctic might seem isolated to those of us living in the South, as ecological and other difficulties demonstrate, it is very much part of the press for globalization. Unfortunately, discourses about education for globalization stress economic performance and competitiveness. Thus, by ascribing the same significance to personal and instrumental concerns, I take a position.

My position is that education involves understanding - not just about the situation the learner is in, but understanding the people that the learner may encounter in any context<sup>4</sup>. Instrumental applications of success in education, such as earning some sort of certificate, are not more important than understanding different peoples, ideas, and the instrumental learning that affects all of us.

### THE INSTRUMENTAL AND PERSONAL DIMENSIONS

With regard to the above, the analysis reported in this Chapter proceeds as follows. The model shown in Figure 1 will provide an heuristic device for organizing the three kinds of data (cards, interviews and author reflections). There are roughly four types of conceptions of success. The first is where the learner experiences significant levels of personal development, with minimal instrumentality. In the second, the learner encounters considerable personal development and instrumentality. In the third conception, the learner goes through a process of formal education without much personal development or plans for instrumental application. The fourth conception involves a low level of personal development, but a high degree of instrumental application. Of course, these are theoretical constructs. Life itself may not fit comfortably within the borders of the zones shown in Figure 1.

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<sup>4</sup> I am grateful to James Carpenter, an Elder in the Nishnawbe-Aski nation, for this idea. James first introduced to me the suggestion that if we act out of fear, we will remain ignorant; but if we act out of love, we will come to understanding. Meegwech!

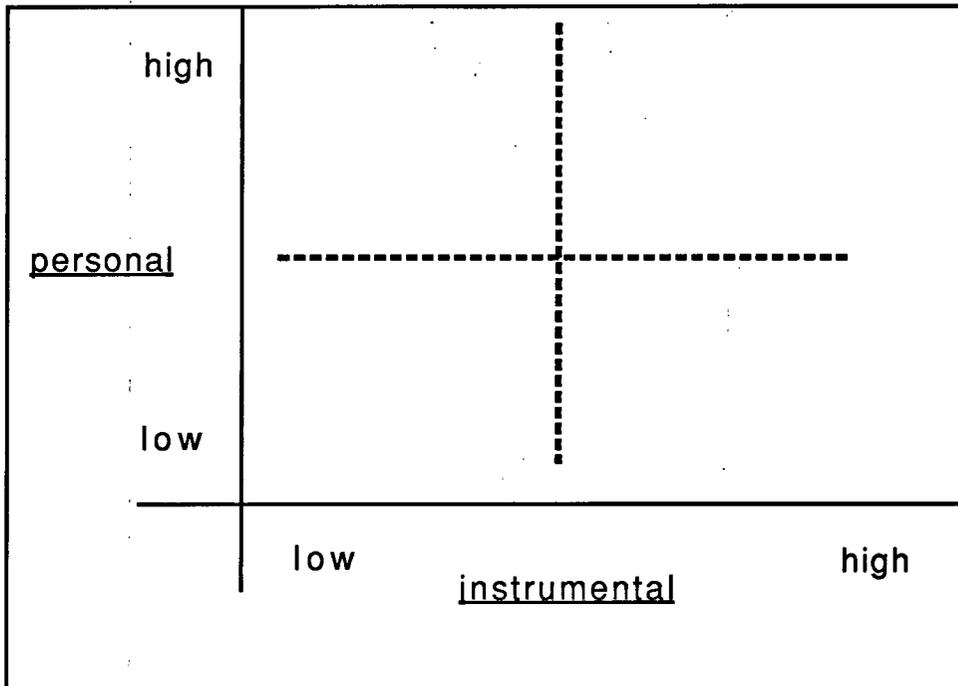


Figure 1 Model for Distinguishing between Different Conceptions of Success in Education

I taught a "Master Student" course in Attawapiskat in 1991, which illustrates a good example of students in the mid range of 'personal' and 'instrumental' dimensions (Ellis, 1997). The course was designed to help students cultivate study and communication skills, develop academic and career goals, and to motivate students by discovering personal interests. At the outset of the course, many students seemed unsure about what jobs were available, and expressed moderate interest in developing themselves personally. By the end of the course, students expressed considerable motivation to learn and discover more about particular career fields.

At this point, students would score higher on both the 'personal' and 'instrumental' axes, and some would score very high on both.

Students scoring low on either of the dimensions are not well motivated to take a course. A student may have been forced to enroll in a course, does not see how it can be applied, or is not interested in developing as a person through what the course appears to offer.

These conceptions will change over time. but it is interesting and useful to begin a course with a clear idea of what motivates students to attend. If a teacher discovers that a student is interested in a particular job at the end of the course, it is much easier to help the student by offering material relevant to this goal. More important, this process of recording conceptions of success in education helps students and teacher discover more about how a course can help students, and it can motivate students to get skills, information and any direction they need to reach goals.

I suspected that, for most learners in the North, "success" would involve both personal and instrumental considerations. Hence, quadrant two was likely to be the most crowded for any group surveyed. However, it is not my task to say how many people are encompassed by each quadrant. Rather, my aim is to provide a venue which may reveal the cultural, historical and economic factors involved with the different conceptions of success located in each part of the model.

So, in the remainder of this Chapter the reader is introduced to the cards that fall into each of the quadrants, the relevant parts of

the interview transcripts (and the life circumstances of the interviewees) as well as the author's reflections.

### **High Personal/Low Instrumental**

#### *Discussion session*

We arranged these eleven responses to reflect the idea that understanding people and things is more important than applying knowledge in some way later on. Note my own suggestion that "understanding" is an important conception in successful education; at least one student, as shown below, agreed.

**CONCEPTION ONE:  
UNDERSTANDING PEOPLE AND THINGS**

Understanding people and things (researcher)

I understand lots of things now since I started school.  
I didn't know a lot of things before I went to school. (student Z2)

I learn best when my teacher is explaining more about what we are learning  
but when I'm confuse when I don't understand  
but when he/she is explained it good I understand. (student W)

I learn best when I try my best to complete my work.(student S)

Not raising the time! Taking it slow. (student X)

I learn best when I work alone.  
I can't really explain to another student but I try to make them understand.  
What I understood. (student X)

The best way for me to learn in courses I'm taking  
is when I can understand the teacher when explaining the work well. (student V)

Success in education means expanding your knowledge and skills.  
(student Z1)

When my teacher doesn't be at the same subject I get confused  
and when he/she doesn't know the answers it pisses me off  
but I know I have to ask more question in order to know the question  
and to get to know I didn't know. (student W)

Learning and listening (student U)

This course is so much means to me because I do work,  
I learn and I'm getting better on reading. (student Z2)

*Interviews*

Student Z2 reviewed her ideas about success as understanding in her interview,

(Student Z2): I understand a lot of things now since I started school. I didn't know a lot of things before I went to school...This course is so much means to me because I do work, I learn and I'm getting better on reading.

I asked Student Z2 if reading was difficult before she went back to school. She replied "I didn't know a lot of words, before I went to school...I read at home? Like magazines, before I go to bed, and I'm getting better".

I also asked student Z2 if the Science, Mathematics and Computer courses would be easier to understand if they were taught in Inuktitut, and she answered that it would be about as difficult for her. It seems that understanding the course material was important to this student, especially understanding the readings.

Student W did not do an interview, but her card entries also reflect her desire to understand what was going on in the class. The study offered student W the opportunity to vent her frustration about her difficulty in class ("When my teacher doesn't be at the same subject I get confused and when he/she doesn't know the answers it pisses me off"). She felt safe enough to criticize the teachers.

Student X indicated to me through this study that she understood the material best when she worked alone and at a pace she could manage. She elaborated in an interview:

(Student X): I learn best when I work alone. I can't really explain it to another student but I try to make them understand what I understood. It's really true, 'cause I, I like working alone? I don't know why but sometimes it bugs me when someone asks me how to do it; I should help; but I like to work alone... (laughter) and I can't really explain it to another student? I know it's in my head but I can't explain it well.

(Researcher): So, you learn best when you're not having other students ask you about anything; when it's quiet, by yourself, just doing your own thing, it's easier?

(Student X): Yeah.

(Researcher): It's good I know this so I'll try not to have the other students disturb you while you're working.

(Student X): Yeah.

Student X also described her idea of a more desirable learning pace:

(Student X): This one is, not raising the time. It was supposed to be not, uh, rushing? Not rushing the time, taking it slow. I understood this when I read it, yeah, not going too fast, not getting too far ahead so that you have a chance to understand, like, sometimes we rush? And I can't wait to go to a smoke or something or a break. That's why I wrote this. Not rushing. But sometimes, I rush too? (laughter) Are you getting something out of it? Or am I not talking like the way it should be?

(Researcher): The more you describe it to me the more I understand.

(Student X): Oh, that's good. And taking it slow, but not too slow? Like we have all those learning techniques in

our heads...we don't learn right away, but we also don't learn slow, so I wrote not taking it solw. (laughter)

(Researcher): So going at a pace that we can understand so that we get a chance to learn?

(Student X): Yeah.

Student X indicated that she was concerned about understanding the course material in the class, not so much applying it somewhere else. I commented on her focus on education for its own sake:

(Researcher): So for you this is about being right in school; you didn't write about getting a job after, or, ah, learning how to do something, like math or computers. For you, the success is right in school. I like that, you describe about being right in class.

(Student X): Yeah.

(Researcher): Do any other ideas come to mind when you're talking about this?

(Student X): Yeah. I want to learn more and I want to finish the ROA (Record of Achievement, the program in which student X was enrolled).

(Researcher): That's important, for you to get the ROA?

(Student X): Yeah, and the GED (High school equivalency).

Student Z2 also told me about her ideas for the future as her interview progressed:

(Researcher): Had you thought of doing more school after this?

(Student Z2): Yes.

(Researcher): What sort of ideas had you thought about?

(Student Z2): I don't know. I want to go back to school after this. To...learn more.

(Researcher): Like the Science and Tech course (in Cambridge Bay)?

(Student Z2): Yeah.

(Researcher): Or the Inuit Studies?

(Student Z2): Maybe Inuit Studies...

(Researcher): Have you considered doing high school?

(Student Z2): Yes, I want to; I want that GED.

(Researcher): How long does it take to do?

(Student Z2): They say it's (a) three week course.

As Student U expanded on her idea of success as "Learning and Listening" she told me she was also considering the Science and Technology course in Cambridge Bay:

(Student U): I hope I get picked for another course like this in Cambridge Bay. I like this course very much - Science and Technology. I've learned a lot even though I haven't been here every day.

Student U completed her interview in Inuktitut. I did not understand all that she said, but she now had a tape recorded diary entry to refer to later in the year.

### *Reflections*

We can map the conception card called "Understanding People and Things" along the axes as shown in Figure 2. The category

"Understanding People and Things" groups cards that reflect a conception of success where personal factors are more important and instrumental concerns are in the background. A student who is talking about being enrolled in a course in order to understand more about the subject is not talking about where the material will be applied. An Inuit Studies student, for example, might talk about success as coming to understand more about Inuit culture. In doing so, the student is talking less about applying the knowledge - becoming a school teacher, for example.

The conception card called "Understanding people and Things" belongs in the top left quadrant. It is here that personal development is of more concern, and instrumental application is in the background.

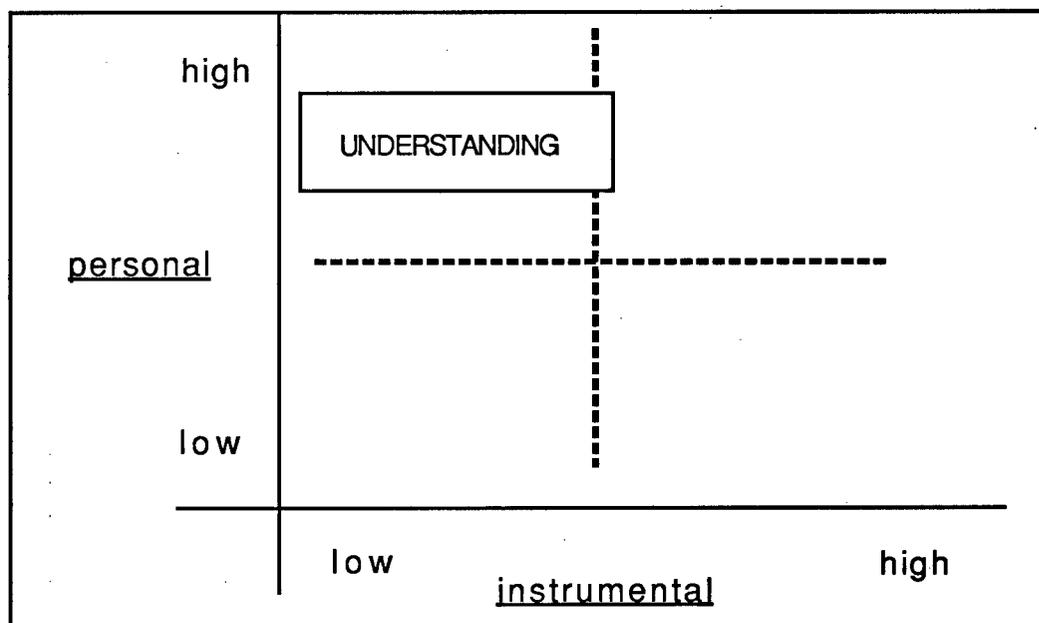


Figure 2: Map of the conception "Understanding"

**High Personal/High Instrumental***Talking Circle*

The category "Sharing Knowledge" constitutes a conception of success in education manifesting both a high degree of personal development and significant instrumental application. It was the least crowded category for students in the Record of Achievement class. There were four entries in this category:

**CONCEPTION TWO:  
SHARING KNOWLEDGE**

Sharing knowledge (researcher)

Never ever give up. (student X)

Help others with what you know.  
With what you have learned in education. (student R)

Success in education can be encouraging to other people  
to stay in school instead of dropping out. (student Z1)

*Interviews*

I asked student X to expand on her idea "Never ever give up." She was happy to share her conception of success as tenacity:

(Researcher): It looks like you came up with three ideas; and the first one I really took to heart - it said, "Never ever give up" ... would you like to talk about it?

(Student X): When I give up, like when I can't do it any more, I say to myself, "Never ever give up" and I won't give up...I don't want to just give up; I want to learn.

Student X inspired other students by sharing her idea that success involves persistent effort.

I asked student Z1 to expand on her conception that involved encouraging other people by staying in school:

(Student Z1): It can be encouraging to other people to stay in school instead of dropping out. Sometimes we hear about the wonderful things that the students have done, or will do in school, and that is encouraging. When we see students graduating from school, it encourages other students to finish school. For instance... when my kids wanted me to help them in a subject that they were doing, that they had taken home from school, sometimes I didn't used to know what they were doing, 'cause I didn't have that much education...I used to get help from other teachers in planning. When I was looking through my calendar, there was a Bachelor of Science and Technology degree, and I thought that was what I wanted to aim for.

Student R explained what her second idea about success in education, "Helping others with what you know," meant:

There's a lot of teen-agers who have dropped out of high school and most of them are shy about going back to school; there's so many other people who can help them, with what they know, what they have learned in school, in education. Hopefully, they would help them go back to school 'cause that's what we all need now, depending on what Nunavut will become.

*Discussion session*

Another category that arose from a concern with both personal and instrumental "success" was, "Reaching Goals." This category had six entries:

**CONCEPTION THREE:  
REACHING GOALS**

Reaching my goals in education (student V)

Going for your goal in life ( what you want to become)  
(student R)

Get your Grade 12 and move on... Reach your goal. (student R)

Sometimes I just want to learn the hard way have a strict teacher I learned better that way, sometimes I think it is good too. To have the right teacher, I think it is best, but not liking th teacher I tend not to do a hard work on my subjects. (student W)

Study your course by taking notes and reading. (student U)

Reaching your goal. by completing your course.  
(student S)

*Interviews*

Student R's ideas about success in education indicate her high degree of interest in both personal development and instrumental concerns:

(Student R): For me, success in education is going for a goal in life. That means, what you want to become when you're ready for it. Get your grade twelve and move on - reach your goal. Help others with what you know, with what you have learned in education.

Student R wanted to develop herself by achieving the difficult goal of becoming a nurse; she realizes that in so doing she will inspire others to be successful as well:

(Student R): For example, I want to become a nurse, when I'm ready for it, and to me that will help other people, hopefully my community, and be a role model for them.

As the interview progressed, Student R talked with me about her idea of helping young students:

(Student R): I like helping my friends, or anybody, with my school work that I've done before, and what I'm doing now. I've been thinking of helping young teenagers who have dropped out when they were young. I think they can only learn by having someone being alone with them and helping them with what school is about, and what they should know. Hopefully, they would then go back to high school...I've been thinking of coming up with something like other people from the community...get fresh (starts) on school, the school work. And then, hopefully, they would go, think about going back to school then, 'cause when they drop out early they get shy to go back to school. I don't like seeing them just hanging around outside when it's during the day when they should be in school and doing something for, something towards their future.

(Researcher): You can see yourself as kind of a peer helper, a tutor; you could help people who have dropped out of school to go back, and to give them confidence to go to school.

(Student R): Yeah.

(Researcher): Would you like to be a nurse first?

(Student R): I don't know. I'm not that ready for learning for the nurs(ing) yet. I think, hopefully, I'll be ready soon, while I'm still young, I mean, not too old - and being a teen-ager in the North is so hard, 'cause there's so many people dropping out of high school. They have

goals when they're young, but when they get older they seem to forget about their goals, the goals they had.

I was thinking about that. When I couldn't go back to high school, I wanted to go ahead for my goal, because I believe in myself, that I can do it. If I'm not ready yet, then I'll look for something else to do; maybe stay in high school, stay in school and learn more, 'cause right now I'm not ready to go out of town. For myself, when I'm ready, I'll do it.

With the drop-outs, if I can get together with somebody who would like to do it with me, then maybe I would go ahead and do that.

(Researcher): Sounds like a good idea. So you'd want to do that next year?

(Student R): I'm not sure when I'll start, but I would like to start soon, 'cause so many teen-agers in town, and not teen-agers, even adults, need to get fresh in education, and maybe then they would start to think about going back to school.

Student V also offered "Reaching my goals in education" as an idea about what success in education would mean. I believe students develop themselves when they imagine education is about reaching goals. Student V elaborated "I think it's good for us to study; I mean, for me, I have to know what I want to do in my future."

Student V had a particular application in mind as well. She continued, "Science and Technology certificate. One year in Cambridge Bay. I wanna go for that." Student Z1 explained learning about goal setting in her journey toward success in education:

(Student Z1): In the past, when I don't (sic) really look forward to my future...I never used to really get to where I want (sic) to go. Having a goal is easier... setting a goal

is easier. That's what I found out. If I don't set my goal, I don't really go forward.

### *Reflections*

The conception cards, "Sharing Knowledge" and "Reaching Goals in Education" are mapped in the high scoring area in both the axes of personal development and instrumental application:

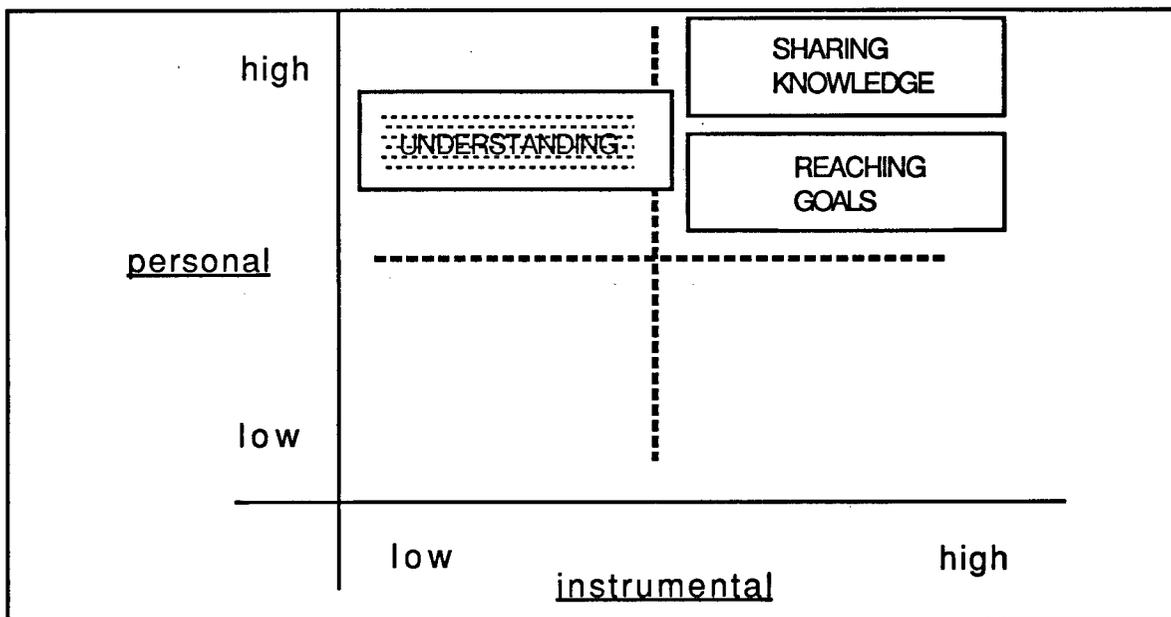


Figure 3: Map of "Sharing Knowledge" and "Reaching Goals"

I have mapped the conception type "Sharing knowledge" at a higher level of personal development than "Reaching goals" because I believe we develop ourselves more as students when we share what we have learned with others. This is my own idea, not the students';

but I think we grow more as we help others achieve their educational goals.

### Low Personal/Low Instrumental

#### *Discussion session*

The seven responses that emerged in the category we called "Money" talked more about technical training than education; so I see them as scoring low in terms of personal edvelopment and instrumental application. Technical training is something a student learns so it can be readily applied - it can contribute to a trade, for example. But the idea of becoming educated for its own sake remains in the background of this view of schooling.

#### CONCEPTION FOUR: MONEY

Money (student Y)

I understand that education gives us a good job.  
(student Z)

Earning the right amount of money you work for. (Student T)

Working to earn money using what you learned in school.  
(student S)

I want my education to be high level, so I can have a good job.  
(student Z)

It may be hard for a while and after it give (sic) you a good job.  
(student Z)

Success in education means having a good paying job.  
(student Z1)

If I pass this course I'm going to look for a job; this course is so important to me because in the future I'm going to need a job. (student Z2).

*Interviews*

All three of student Z's conceptions were about getting a job. I asked this student what job she had in mind:

(Student Z): I want to be a clerk... a clerk in an office, like running a business, or, I don't know, I just wanna be a clerk.

I asked this student if what we had learned in class so far had helped her in her idea to become a clerk:

(Student Z): Some of it. Like Angie (teacher for whom I was substituting) said, "It's part of our job?" Like, it gives you a job?

This conception was a suggestion from the previous teacher; student Z was only now beginning to discuss her conception in detail. The first idea that student Z2 talked about in her interview was getting a job:

(Student Z2): If I pass this course I'm going to look for a job; this course is so important to me because in the future I'm going to need a job.

Student Z2's second and third ideas scored high in personal development and instrumental application. She said she understood "a lot of things" since she started school, and that she was "getting better on meaning" - that her reading comprehension and numeracy applications were improving. Student Z2 also expressed an interest in Nunavut Arctic College's Inuit Studies program. But the first conception that emerged in the interview was a desire to pass the

course to do her high school equivalency or to get a job. For now, she wanted to train in basic skills.

Student S's idea "working to earn money using what you've learned in school" is another example of a conception representing low levels of instrumental application and personal development: presumably anyone who goes through school hopes to apply some of skills they have learned to their job. It was during the interview that student S's higher level conceptions emerged. I asked if there were any ideas that came to mind about the type of job this student was interested in doing:

(Student S): I've been interested in teaching elementary...(school) Since my oldest daughter started school I've been interested in that...I think I could go right into the Teaching Certificate program.

Student S was motivated to become an elementary school teacher after observing her daughter's experiences in school. This is a higher level conception than simply "working to earn money" (Marton & Booth, 1997).

### *Reflections*

The "Money" conception card is mapped in Figure 4. It represents basic levels of personal development and instrumental application.

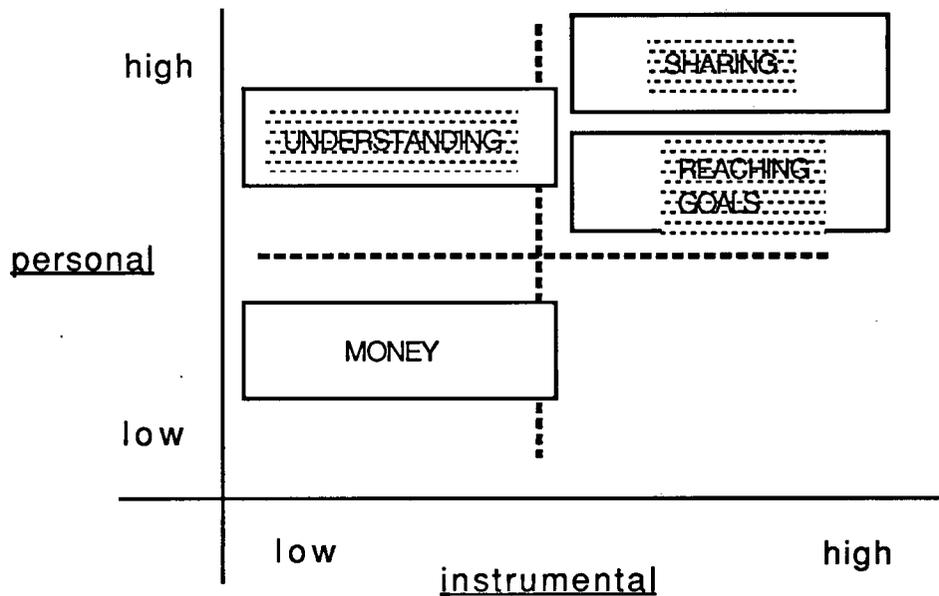


Figure 4: Map of "Money"

### **Low Personal/High Instrumental**

#### *Discussion session*

One of the reasons I enroll in a program is to have completed it. My entry "Certificate" represents my third conception of success in education: I get a piece of paper when I finish school. I do not develop myself much by holding a diploma in my hand. Yet if that is the goal I have set for myself, it represents an instrumental conception of educational success, with less personal development involved than, for example, sharing what I have learned with other people. The category we called "Certificate" had five entries:

**CONCEPTION FIVE:  
CERTIFICATE**

Certificate. (researcher)

Passing all my grades (student V)

"Success in education" is when your good at something for example:  
If I knew how to do math very well  
and know all the answers and not be behind. (student U)

Computer (student Y)

Mathematics (student Y)

*Interviews*

Another example of a conception of success with high instrumental application and not much personal development is student V's "Passing all my grades". Student V did not elaborate on this, but she agreed that to her, success meant getting through the Record of Achievement program, so that she could continue with the Science and Technology program at Cambridge Bay.

It is arguable that ideas like "Computers" or "Mathematics" might involve a high degree of personal development, especially if these courses were pursued out of personal interest. The students thought that these ideas belonged under the "Certificate" category, however, and student Y did not participate in the interview phase of the study. Student U also did not elaborate on her idea during the interview.

*Reflections*

Figure 5 shows the "Certificate" card mapped in an area of lower personal development and higher instrumental application:

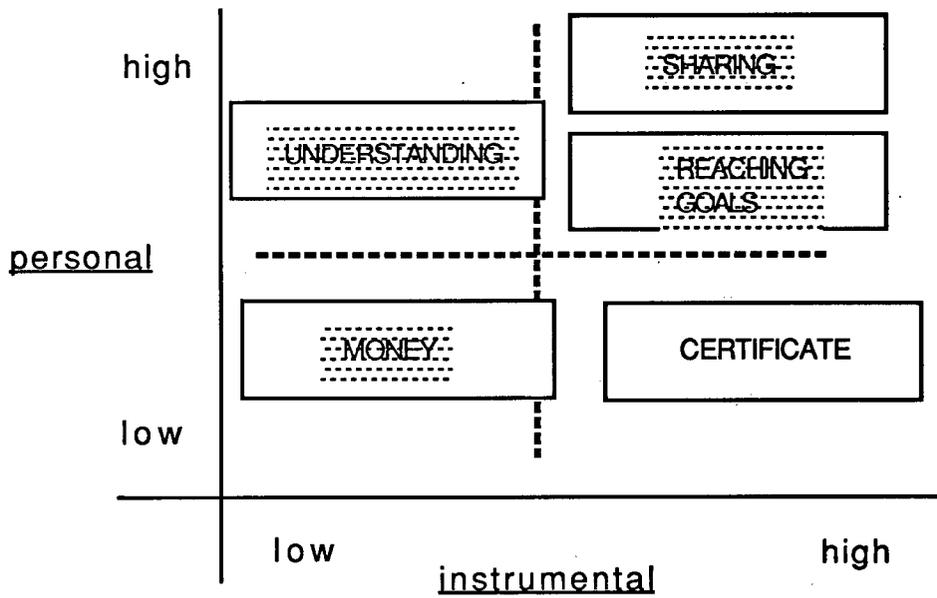


Figure 5: Map of "Certificate"

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### CONCLUSIONS

Five types of conceptions of success in education emerged from the final study conducted for this thesis. In order of the number of index card responses, these types were: "Understanding"(11), "Money"(8), "Reaching Goals"(6), "Certificate"(5) and "Sharing Knowledge"(4). Looking back to Figure 5, we can see that "Understanding" and "Money," conceptions that involve low instrumental application, elicited more responses (19); "Reaching Goals," "Certificate" and "Sharing", conceptions that involve high instrumental application, elicited fewer (15). Students wrote more about developing themselves than about applying their education. We could infer that students were not oriented to applying what they were learning outside the classroom when they thought of success in education. Why is this so?

The technology of literacy education can be seen as an instrument of social control in the North (Shearwood, 1987, Stairs, 1990). Instead of assuming students are autonomous in their way of seeing, Millard looked at minority literacy education from the perspective of "cultural and ideological domination and resistance" (1991, p. 6). Some schooling practices, she argues, appear to reinforce ideological domination by the teacher and school; and the human response to domination is resistance. Students in the North sometimes asked me questions which critically reflected on the culture I was demonstrating as a teacher of literacy. I was pleased

to be asked questions such as, "Why do white people write all the time?"

Helping students "succeed" at school does not allow them to transcend the hegemony of the school system, or the political system of which it is a part. If a student did well in the Science, Math and Computer classes in the Record of Achievement program I taught, she had to be able to work well with the texts and course materials (written in English). I tried to grade students who were less proficient in English accordingly, but Inuktitut was only one course out of five in the R.O.A. program - and the other course was English. The "official" knowledge seemed to be Science, and it was delivered in English. In this system, understanding, and thus, buying into, a Western scientific perspective, was important in order to be graded as a "success." Tutelage in this system is little more than assimilationist education, or middle class socialization (Honigman and Honigman, 1965, Paine, 1977).

We can view the students in this study as subjects of Anglo-colonialism. Paine (1977) describes life in northern settlements as "welfare colonialism," where the colonizers are privileged whites, and the colonized are devalued Inuit (p. 6). Inuit are paid social assistance cheques to attend classes, and schooling amounts to little more than babysitting. Paine follows Brody (1977) Parsons (1970) and Vallee (1962) in saying that white workers in the North assume a "caretaking" role in order to have Inuit adopt distinct middle class values. Schooling people to the ideal of "success," together with that of obtaining private property through personal industry, is a

centrepiece of North American Protestant ideology (Adams, 1988). An education system purportedly designed to grant Inuit "more control over their own affairs" is still colonialist. Perhaps the greatest success students could enjoy was for me to fail as a colonialist teacher!

I found Paine's analysis of northern social structures to be insightful, if reductivist. Paine predicted that "whites only" parties would allow feelings of futility to arise on the part of the "colonizers," as they would reflect on their legacy as "reluctant imperialists" (p. 6). Rosaldo (1989) described "imperialist nostalgia" as mourning for a culture one has taken a part in destroying (p. 69). I avoided meetings and parties where there were no local people present - I had come to the North to meet and to share knowledge with Inuit students, not to otherize (Kaliss, 1996). When I returned to the South, I smiled at those who would comment that I had been in the North "too long." It is necessary to describe Inuit education in Canada as colonialist, but it is not sufficient: generalizing about aboriginal education ignores social complexities that can be found in any culture (Marker, 1999). Likewise, the terms "white", "Western", "European", "southern" and "traditional" are problematic (Kaliss, 1996).

Attempts to offer students input to their own school curriculum were limited by the culture of the college itself. As we have seen, writing and formal college schooling are new to the North; they were not important elements in traditional Inuit society.

Any system of learning has its limitations, and we might expect new ideas to be resisted. Millard (1991) examined adult composition instruction in a northern Native community. She explains,

It is apparent that attempts at altering approaches in methodology and curriculum to suit another culture's learning process can be done only to a restricted degree since the education system which is used is itself a cultural entity that has its own parameters and constraints on change (p. 144).

It took some time to adjust to life in smaller northern communities. One of the many enjoyable things about living in a smaller town is the cohesion enjoyed between events and participants. In the North, it is easier to maintain contact with people, and there is more a sense of continuity. For example, conversations can take place over long time periods. This happens with students and staff at U.B.C., of course; but I found richer human contact in a place like Pagnirtung, where I would meet people in different circumstances more often. Meetings in the South tend to be more sporadic, detached and formal. Pagnirtung has one church, a few stores, and a more set social schedule. Everyone knew when and where the community feast would be, and most people in town would go. I am reminded of the comment made by the northern educator Echo Lidster:

It takes time for people in any setting to build up a trust relationship with strangers in their midst, and adult educators work hard at this task of creating this climate of mutual acceptance and understanding (1978, p. 48).

Reflections on the data

The data gathered in this thesis is open to cultural mis-interpretation and observer effects (Marshall and Rossman, 1995). My privileged southern background is an impediment to the validity of this work. My father was a Civil Engineer and an industrialist of English stock. My mother's family dates back several generations in Nova Scotia, and she was a full-time mother until the children were grown, when she worked as a local and regional councillor at Halton Region in Ontario. My family moved to the wealthy suburb of Oakville when I was one. My mother's father was a professor, and our family dinners resembled college seminars, where everyone was expected to contribute their opinion about the day's events.

In some places, the data indicates I may have been over-sensitive. Student W commented in her card: "Sometimes I just want to learn the hard way, have a strict teacher I learned better that way, sometimes I think it is good too." Student W also wrote, "When my teacher doesn't be at the same subject I get confused". This student might simply have wanted to have the material delivered in a very straight-forward, subject based fashion.

As a white male visitor to the Arctic, I was, and remain, limited in what I might perceive and say. I never hunted or camped on the land when I was in the Arctic, and I stayed in Nunavut for seven months. This is not much time to develop trust and rapport with people, and I often question the extent to which I have the right to speak for anyone else, especially on behalf of cultural issues

(Clifford, 1988, McNeal, 1997, Rosaldo, 1989). This thesis describes what I think students told me they believed about success in education, not about what they believed.

Students may have kept social distance from me as an interviewer to preserve their cultural integrity. Cultural differences which arise in a school setting can be viewed not as barriers to success, but as "boundary maintaining mechanisms" (Millard, 1991, p. 12, Ogbu, 1987). The act of transcribing oral to written language can be seen as an unreliable way of representing the oral. Oral traditions are not written lists, charts or figures (Ong, 1982). A cultural interpretation of resistance, however, was not a sufficient explanation of student behaviour in Millard's classes (Millard, p. 127). I concur with Millard (1991) and Ryan (1989), who believe that a teacher, as participant-observer, can be a good co-inquirer.

I believe the results of these studies were affected by the fact that I was the participants' teacher. As a college teacher, I was an authority figure. Students seemed keen to please, and to follow my example. Sometimes I was asked if an entry that a student had placed in a category was "right". I would respond that this was a chance to describe for ourselves how our education could work for us, but some students would continue to ask me if they had got "the right answer". It is wise to approach the data in this thesis with skepticism in appreciation that the subjects have assumed a presentation of themselves (Goffman, 1959, Marshall & Rossman, 1995). Students may have given responses that they thought I wanted to see.

There is an imbalance of power between teacher and student. Some members of the Record of Achievement in Science class seemed especially adverse to the notion that they could be co-participants in learning with me. One student asserted, "We don't want to learn with you." Another added, "You are the teacher; you give the orders." These students seemed to be operating under the assumption that in this class, their notions would be considered either right or wrong, and I was the authority under which they could be scrutinized. There was only one way to the correct answer, and it was my job as a teacher to show it to the students. These students would do as they were told, not according to what they believed. They would write what they thought I wanted to see. Results of this study would thus be skewed.

I hope that spreading this work out over several separate studies has contributed to its validity. I found that the tone of the class changed with each new setting; the discussions in Iqaluit classes, with mixed Inuit and *Qadlunait* students, seemed different from the classes in Pagnirtung.

Conversation patterns may be a threat to the validity of this thesis (Millard, 1991, Scollon & Scollon, 1984). I found I had to make an effort not to dominate conversations with my students, leaving long spaces for them to think about what they might say. Sometimes, answers would come back to me days or weeks after a conversation - seemingly out of context at first, but carefully thought through.

### Implications for further study

Teachers and education theorists can benefit from reading about this method to discover students' conceptions of success in education. I hope this work is of some use to studies employing a larger sample size or more classes of students.

Primary research that examines the work of teachers in aboriginal communities is in its infancy (Villeneuve, 1996, p. 27). This study has implications for those who plan programs and curricula in the North, as a way of determining the felt needs of clients - in this case, college students.

Students in the final study were all women, and gender may have played a role in determining students' conceptions of success. In "Sex role attitudes among high school seniors", Herzog and Bachman (1982) pointed out gender differences in high school students' attitudes toward education in terms of marriage, family expectations and career goals (Herzog & Bachman, 1982). Further study might look at gender differences in students' responses in studies like this one.

This study has implications for students in other contexts. The Brazilian educator Paulo Freire (1975) would advocate that truly educating students involves "conscientizing" them to their political situation, and the potential they have to change it. Instead of passively receiving knowledge, conscientized students "achieve a deepening awareness both of the socio-cultural reality which shapes

their lives and of their capacity to transform that reality" (p. 27).

Freire reminds us that teaching school subjects to students is not enough: "Merely teaching (wo)men to read and write does not work miracles; if there are not enough jobs for (wo)men able to work, teaching more (wo)men to read and write will not create them." (p. 9). While I would not go so far as to say that this study has conscientized students, perhaps an opportunity arose for people to reflect on what "success in education" meant.

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## APPENDIX A

## INDEX CARDS - STUDIES 1 &amp; 2

Studies 1 and 2 were not analyzed along axes of personal development and instrumental application, and students were not interviewed. The index card results of these preliminary studies are shown here.

**Results - Study 1**

The group agreed that nine main categories emerged from what we had written on the index cards. The categories were: "Good Feelings", "Achievements", "Share Knowledge", "Growth", "Dedication", "Kids", "Kids/Achievements", "Money", "All" and "None" (of the above).

"Good Feelings" was the most popular category. We further described this category as "self-confidence", and "ability to do things".

**GOOD FEELINGS**

"Get a sense of accomplishment/fulfillment" (student C)

"Finding happiness in what you are undertaking" (student I)

"Getting full support from family and friends" (student B)

"Getting a good job, and once settled (after school, etc.) feeling satisfied, fulfilled and happy with what all the work brought us" (student E)

"Success is a great feeling; the first feeling we felt in success is almost indescribable" (student A)

"Success is having popularity and expertise in my field. To share that knowledge with others gives you good feelings" (student G)

Five cards fell under the "Achievements" category:

**ACHIEVEMENTS**

"Sticking through with project or course" (student I)

"Exercising our full potential" (student H)

"Certificate" (researcher)

"Following your dream and accepting the flow of its life" (student I)

"Having had language impairment in my youth, success was low and my self confidence was low too. Now that the language is ok, I have the chance to build my confidence and I'm proud that I'm outgoing. That's it for me."  
(student G)

We thought four cards belonged under "Share Knowledge":

**SHARE KNOWLEDGE**

"Understanding" (researcher)

"To learn useful things for yourself and/or your close environment"  
(student C)

"Success fulfills. Life is learning. Learning is sharing. Sharing is understanding" (student D)

"Improvement of thought process and ability to form and communicate new ideas" (student A)

The "Growth" category housed two cards:

**GROWTH**

"Success is measured by the growth process of the individual as well as the communal response of this undertaking" (student I)

"Success in Education means I will have (hope so) a better life beside a person who does not have their education" (student J)

One card came under the "Dedication" category:

**DEDICATION**

"When a person is dedicated in whatever course he/she is taking it makes it easier to succeed" (student J)

One card also fell under the "Kids" category:

**KIDS**

"The family happiness is a success for me" (student H)

The study group thought the following description of "success in education" should be placed under a separate category called "Kids/Achievements:"

**KIDS/ACHIEVEMENTS**

"What I think of success in education: Thinking straight and letting education come first, because it would lead to something good for yourself and family"  
(student D)

The study group thought that one card should appear under a category entitled, "Money."

**MONEY**

"Success in education (in classroom) means with these grades I could get a high paying job, and with this money I could support my family economically, so I won't have to worry too much - that would make me happy" (student J)

The group decided that one card might belong in any of the above categories:

**ALL OF THE ABOVE**

"For me, success is simply attaining my life goals. Right now I just want to complete my studies, with good enough grades so that eventually the word will get around that I'm interested and people will be willing to hire me. Landing a good job will then permit me to do what I like doing in my spare time (reading, vacations, travelling), so success is also related to our financial situation"  
(student E).

One student who participated after the categories had been formed by the rest of the study group thought her ideas belonged under a category *different* from the ones that had already been formed:

**NONE OF THE ABOVE CATEGORIES**

"*Utbildning/buildning*: ie., skills, marks, and applied mathematics are not success for me. Learning to organize thoughts in a useful way; being able to draw conclusions and to evaluate ideas. If you are able to do this, you can grow as a person" (student F)

None of the research participants placed cards under two categories we added, "Status" and "Relationships". We felt other people might put ideas under these categories.

### Conclusions

Ten conceptions of success in education emerged from this preliminary study - "good feelings", "achievements", "share knowledge", "growth", "dedication", "kids", "kids/achievements", "money", "all of the above" and "none of the above".

I inferred from the large number of conceptions drawn, and from the mannerisms of the class - joking, teasing one another, and generally seeming very relaxed - that students were comfortable with the procedure. These students were well socialized into a formal education setting. They had done this kind of exercise before. Some students told me that they had university or college accreditation. A few participants were from northern Quebec, and one was a Sami exchange student. I conducted subsequent studies in a coast community further north called Pangnirtung.

## Study 2

This study was conducted with ten Inuit College students enrolled in Adult Basic Education at the Pangnirtung Community Learning Centre. There were eleven entries - students I - Q (I appear as the "researcher" in all three studies, although my responses were not included in the data analysis). I think the students' responses speak for themselves.

The dominant category that emerged from this study was entitled, "sharing". The six cards in this category read as follows:

### SHARING

"Sharing" (researcher)

"Sharing" (student I)

"Sharing" (student J)

"Sharing" (student M)

"Helping each other" (student O)

"Being able to help others" (student L)

"I hope the arctic college is here to stay, coz it helps the community in whole.  
I know it has helped me in last couple months."  
(student K)

The next important category was "Expectation". Five cards emerged:

### EXPECTATION

"(picture of a smiling face)" (student I)

"I feel great after school." (student Q)

"How would've I turn out if I completed my high school." (student Q)

"Having self confidence" (student L)

The next popular category was "Certificate", with four entries:

### CERTIFICATE

"Certificate" (researcher)

"Certificate" (student P)

"Getting a certificate to show you've succeeded." (student Q)

"(Picture of a Diploma)" (Student L).

The category we called "Learning" also had four entries :

**LEARNING**

"Learning" (Student I)

"Learing" (sic) (Student J)

"Learing" (sic) (Student P)

The "Understanding" category yielded three cards:

**UNDERSTANDING**

"Understanding" (researcher)

"Understanding" (Student M)

"As for the curriculums, I hope they put in some more culture & history for the high-school students. Or even in our Arctic campuses. "  
(student C)

We thought two cards fell under the category, "More opportunity for better jobs":

**MORE OPPORTUNITY FOR BETTER JOBS**

"More opportunity for better jobs" (student K)

"Success in education to have a better future" (student O)

Two cards also emerged under the category, "Make parents, family proud":

**MAKE PARENTS, FAMILY PROUD**

"Make parents, family proud" (student M)

"Making your Parent's Proud of you, and your whole family.  
(student L)

### Study 3

This study involved eleven students (students R - Z2) and myself as the researcher - twelve in all. I taught a Record of Achievement class from January to April, 1997, relieving Angie Troke, who was away on maternity leave. The courses I taught in the Record of Achievement program were Science, Mathematics and Computers. The students were also required to take English and Inuktitut as part of this program. Students could take comfort in knowing that their colleagues in ABE had done the "Success in Education" study last term, and had enjoyed participating.

## APPENDIX B

## JOURNAL EXCERPT

January 12, 1999

It has been more than half a year since I returned from the Arctic. It seems like yesterday that I was there, like I went and came back before I realized I had gone North. I am only now starting to settle in to the South in many ways, and I think I am nearing completion of the thesis. It is a wonderful thing to be able to write about my experiences. It is easy to see how many changes have come about in all the revisions of the writing I have made. My perspective continues to change. I wonder what will happen now. When will I return to the Arctic?

Roy suggested that people change after living in the North. One of the biggest changes I have seen in myself is that I am no longer as comfortable living with people I don't know, and I am more interested in seeing my own family. I especially enjoyed seeing my Great Aunt and Great Uncle together with my family at Christmas. I think the connection to elders is especially important. Elders provide family stability, connection to the past and they help to keep everyone calm.

**APPENDIX C**  
**MAP OF NUNAVUT**

# NUNAVUT

Our Land

### SEA ICE

Except for areas of persistent ice-free conditions called polynyas (dark blue), virtually all of the northern ocean freezes each winter. Some areas never melt in summer. These areas of multi-year sea ice have been shrinking over the last decades as temperatures rise. The ice cover in September 1998 (light blue) was the least extensive on record.

### Population

- 0-200
- 200-500
- 500-1,000
- 1,000-2,500
- ⊙ Iqaluit — capital of Nunavut: pop. 4,500

- ▲ National or territorial parks
- ▭ Migratory bird and wildlife sanctuaries

- National boundary
- Territorial and provincial boundaries
- - - Nunavut regional boundaries (approx.)
- + + Airstrips: gravel, paved
- ⊙ Minerals: deposits, producing mines, past-producing mines (with mineral and name of site)
- Gravel road (Arctic Bay-Nanisivik)

- Barren
- Tundra
- Forest/tundra or bog
- Forest
- Agricultural land

Lambert Conformal Conic Projection, Standard parallels 49° and 77° N. Modified Polyconic Projection, north of latitude 80° N.

Scale 1:800,000  
0 100 200 300 400 km



## NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

## ALBERTA

## SASKATCHEWAN

### REGIONS

The Kitikmeot, Keewatin and Baffin regions — administrative creations of the government of the Northwest Territories and prior federal bodies — reflect successive migrations of ethno/cultural groups across the north from the Bering Strait and remain a reasonably accurate reflection of today's geo-cultural reality. For example, Kitikmeot is the only area where Innuinaqun is spoken, and where text is written in roman orthography, as opposed to syllabics. In Keewatin and Baffin, syllabics are used, although each has a distinct Inuktitut dialect. The borders of the regions are not legally defined.

### COMMUNITIES OF NUNAVUT

Inuktitut name	Meaning	English name
Arviat	bowhead whale	
Arviliqut	lots of bowhead whales	Pelly Bay
Ajujittuq	place that never melts	Grise Fiord
Igluligaarjuk	place with few houses	Chesterfield Inlet
Iglulik	place of houses	Igloolik
Ikalkutiak	good fishing place	Cambridge Bay
Ikpiarjuk	pocket	Arctic Bay
Iqaluit	place of fish	Rankin Inlet
Kangiqtinga	beautiful cove	Clyde River
Kangiqtuqaalik	looks like a heel	
Kimmirut	(refers to a rocky outcrop)	Bathurst Inlet
Kingauk	like a nose	Cape Dorset
Kingnait	mountains	
Kugluktuk	place of rapids	Pond Inlet
Mitimitalik	place of Mitima's grave	
Nanisivik	where people find things	Repulse Bay
Nauyas	seagull nesting place	Pangnirtung
Panniqtuuq	place of lots of caribou bulls	Baker Lake
Qamanittuuq	far inland	Resolute
Qausuittuq	where there is no daylight	
Qikiqtarjuaq	big island	Coral Harbour
Salliq	islands in the south	
Sanikiluaq	named after hunter	
	Sandy Killuaq	Hall Beach
Sanirajak	flat land	Taloyoak
Taluruq	caribou blind	Whale Cove
Tikrarjuaq	where many people arrive	
Umingmaktok	place of many muskox	Gjoa Haven
Uqsuqtuq	lots of blubber	

+ Communities served by Canadian North. The airline also serves Yellowknife, Hay River and Fort Smith.

### LAND CLAIMS

The Nunavik Inuit of northern Quebec are claiming an area that includes islands and waters off the Quebec coast. Under the Nunavut agreement, the areas near Nottingham and Salisbury islands and the King George and Sleeper islands are for equal use and occupancy with the Inuit of Nunavut.

The Cree of eastern James Bay also have a claim off the east coast of Hudson and James bays. They are claiming land, water, subsurface and seascapes, defined as "top of the land under Arctic". The northern border of this claim has not yet been defined.

The Manitoba Dene Inuit are claiming their treaty right to hunt, fish, trap and gather, and to select reserve lands in southwestern Keewatin. They dispute the aboriginal title claim of the Inuit to these lands. The portion of this claim within Nunavut is shown.

The territory of Nunavut includes all islands in James Bay, Hudson Bay, Hudson Strait and Ungava Bay.