

Imagined Homeland: *Inummariit* as the Basis for the Concept of Inuit Nationhood

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ABSTRACT

The Arctic is home to many distant and distinct Inuit communities and dialects. The strength of the Inuit originates in their being tethered to the same ancient narrative harkening back to common ancestral traditions, songs, and stories that characterize the *Inummariit*, the “real Inuk.” The wisdom of these traditions called *quajimajatuqangit*, or Inuit knowledge, is the key to creating nationhood among the Inuit via *unikkausivut*, sharing stories. This paper examines how affirming shared roots, common goals, and speaking with a united voice—the credo of the Circumpolar Council, the prime Inuit organization in the North—has helped establish an Inuit national identity for all Inuit living in several different regions and countries across the Arctic. In Canada, the creation of the semi-sovereign territory of Nunavut and the acknowledgement of the *Inuit Nunangat*, or homeland, have further aided the Inuit in redefining themselves. (RN)

KEYWORDS: the Arctic, imagined homeland, Inuit identity, Knud Rasmussen, traditional Inuit knowledge

Discovering a Shared Culture

The Inuit of Canada today inhabit four distinct regions: Nunavut, the semi-autonomous territory that accounts for the majority of the Inuit living today; Nunatsiavut, within the province of Newfoundland and Labrador; Nunavik, within Québec; and the Inuvialuit Settlement, within the Northwest Territories and the Yukon; altogether called the *Inuit*

Nunangat or the Inuit homeland. These distant places are sparsely populated with linguistically diverse peoples, speaking sometimes vastly different dialects—for example, the Western Arctic Yup'ik is not easily understood by most Eastern Arctic Inuit—yet they all identify as Inuit, sharing creation myths and folk tales with marked similarities.¹ These age-old narratives have strengthened the Inuit's sense of belonging; their shared origins and history emerge in the stories passed down from one generation to the next. The tales and legends of the different tribes convey the values, traditions, and technology (“5000 Years” 3) that have forged a common Inuit identity, that of the real Inuit, referred to as *Inummariit*.

Early Inuit culture relied on an oral tradition, with the first detailed written descriptions provided by Danish missionary Hans Egede in the eighteenth century while he was living among the Inuit. His studies were continued by his son, who maintained an intimate relationship with the Greenlandic Kalaallit (Rasmussen, “The Fifth Thule Expedition” 125). Conscious of his mission, part-Inuit Danish explorer Knud Rasmussen—also regarded as an “Inuk ethnographer” (“5000 Years” 3)—built on their findings to further explore Inuit culture in the early twentieth century, wishing to make it accessible to a wider, international audience:

Having myself the honor, as a Dane, of addressing you this evening, I should like first of all to point out how Englishmen, Canadians, Americans and Danes, all meet in this field. For generations past, we have all been engaged in . . . exploration . . . and in the course of this work we have all helped to procure information as to the life and customs of the Eskimo with whom we came into contact. It will, I think, be admitted that the study of Eskimo life and history is one in which Denmark should naturally take a prominent part. . . . [T]he general knowledge of Eskimo culture which has

penetrated to the outer world is very largely due to the literary and scientific work of Danish investigators. (“The Fifth Thule Expedition” 125)

The question as to what extent the diverse peoples of the Arctic are connected to one another—besides their once common ancestral past going back to the Thule people of 1000–1850 CE (“5000 Years”), the predecessors of all modern Inuit—intrigued Rasmussen. Not only did he have an Inuit ancestry on his maternal side, but also grew up among the Kalaallit in Greenland, speaking both Danish and Kalaallisut, having the Greenlandic language as his mother tongue. His language skills and cultural background aided his research across the North, yielding unparalleled literary and ethnographical data, in addition to the discovery that the Indigenous peoples living in the Arctic regions of Canada, Denmark, the United States, and Russia shared a similar cultural history. Given that at Rasmussen’s contact few Inuit could read and write, his work in recording and representing the Inuit culture has proved fundamental to preserving the oral traditions for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous future generations. He, as a part-Inuit researcher living with the Inuit, albeit not as a tribal member, the authenticity of his work, exemplifies the notion that one’s inclusion in a tribe is not necessarily a prerequisite for the genuine study of a people.

The proto-Inuit of the Thule culture lived in fixed settlements and relied primarily on marine life for sustenance, while their descendants followed the caribou herds and only built temporary igloos over the winter and spring while they resided on the shores hunting sea mammals (Rasmussen, “The Fifth Thule Expedition” 131). With the appearance of the Europeans, and especially after World War II, the Inuit formed permanent settlements once again and were able to attend school on a regular basis, which has led to rising literacy levels and, as a consequence, has richly contributed to preserving Inuit cultural traditions. Recent poetry, fiction, and life-writing, coming chiefly from the Nunavut community, show that a

new, written tradition has been established, and is becoming strong in the North, which might eventually lead to new preservation attempts through what can still be learned about the Inuit culture from the elders alive today. If the Inuit cultural inheritance is cherished and disseminated among the present-day young Inuit, the result might be that they can remain real Inuit, *Inummariit*. Exploring cultural roots in order to help formulate ethnic identity—and in the case of the Inuit, nationhood itself—is one of the most significant ventures not only for Inuit Canadians, but for all Canadians. If it is not the borders of a country, or wars fought, leaders elected, and poets celebrated, it is surely the cultural history of a people, their past kept alive, that can unite them even if they are scattered throughout the tundra.

We Are Our Stories

Although the Inuit are not an ethnically homogenous people, the varieties of their language across the Arctic—described as “dialects” in *Intellectual Culture of the Iglulik Eskimos*—did not differ significantly, therefore ancient stories traveled seamlessly from one region to another:

There is no very marked difference between the Aivilingmiut and the Iglulingmiut. The dialects are so alike that it is difficult for a stranger to tell the difference. There is a more pronounced dissimilarity, however, between these dialects on the one hand and that of the Netsilingmiut on the other, the latter having a more emphatic sibilant than the former (10).

Noticeable similarities among the cultures, languages, and lifestyles of the Inuit inhabiting the North, regardless of the linguistic differences and geographical distances, are aptly documented in Rasmussen’s records. In one of them he is heard recalling his meeting

with Igloolik Elder Ivaluardjuk; Rasmussen points out how surprisingly similar Greenlandic stories were to those of the Qikiqtaaluk Region Inuit:

In order to draw him out a little, I narrated a few of the stories common in Greenland. These proved to be well-known here, and the surprise of the natives at finding a stranger from unknown lands be able to relate old tales they fancied were exclusively their own, was such that in a short time the house was filled with inquisitive listeners (*Intellectual Culture* 17).

Many of the same or almost identical epic and folk tales collected among widely dispersed Inuit tribes across the Arctic are transcribed in multiple volumes of Rasmussen's *Report of the Fifth Thule Expedition*.² Variations of the folk tale "Kivioq" are, for example, found among both the Iglulingmiut inhabiting today's Qikiqtaaluk Region in the Baffin area and the Kivallirmiut in the Kivalliq Region, west of Hudson Bay. Epic tales such as "Kagsagssuk" are well-known to both the Iglulingmiut and the Netsilingmiut from the Kitikmeot Region, called the King William Island area at the time, and so are folk tales, such as "The Raven who Married a Snow Goose." These records are an indication of the shared cultural past of the different Inuit groups inhabiting the polar North, and of the linguistic similarity that allowed Rasmussen to communicate with people from different settlements across the Arctic.

Inuit cultures have been open to encounters with non-Indigenous people; the Inuit have welcomed these meetings. While the initial cultural differences between the Inuit and Westerners have led to misunderstandings, the relationship between the Natives and the newcomers is presented as an exchange through Rasmussen's first meeting with Takornaq of the Iglulingmiut in the Qikiqtaaluk Region: "She had moved down [from Igloolik] to Repulse

Bay [today's Naujaat] with her husband, Padloq, expressly in order to be near White men and all the wealth which one could obtain by bartering with them" (*Intellectual Culture* 21). The idea that the Inuit and Westerners frequently engaged in barter is echoed in Takornaq's recollections of such mutually beneficial trade:

It is quite a common thing among us to change wives. And when a man lends his wife to another, he always lies with the other man's wife. But with white men it was different; none of them had their wives with them to lend in exchange. So, they gave presents instead, and thus it was that many men in our tribe looked on it as only another kind of exchange, like changing wives. . . . [A] man with a handsome wife could get anything he wanted out of them [White men]; they never troubled much about what a thing cost. . . . And they gave the women valuable gifts (Takornaq qtd. in Rasmussen, *Intellectual Culture* 25).

Such trade between the Inuit and the first Europeans to set foot in the Arctic is important for the ensuing process of identity formation and nation building of Inuit Canadians. It has impacted the Inuit culture by introducing modern tools and staple food to settlements and has changed the way their subsistence society functioned. "Inuit experience with southern economic influences and other penetrations . . . offered an example of the adaptability of subsistence societies to new and ostensibly disruptive technological, economic, and social inputs" (Wenzel 182). Since Rasmussen's friendship with Takornaq in the early twentieth century until today, contact with the outside world—as is generally the case with cultures—has continued to impact the Inuit.

How First Nations leaders in British Columbia reacted to European land claims highlights the importance of stories in both identity formation and nation building: "The

officials claimed the land for the government. The natives were astonished by the claim. They couldn't understand what these relative newcomers were talking about. Finally, one of the elders put what was bothering them in the form of a question. 'If this is your land,' he asked, 'where are your stories?'" (Chamberlin 1). Before the European Moravians introduced writing to the Inuit in the late eighteenth century, their only means of retaining tradition was by storytelling. The practice continued well into the twentieth century, as Arctic ethnographer Diamond Jenness recounts: "[s]torytelling is one of the most favorite past-times [sic] whenever three or four natives are gathered together, especially in the long evenings of winter. The old tales and traditions are repeated again and again . . . until they become almost as familiar to the young men of twenty as they are to the old men of fifty or sixty" (1).

Myths, epic and folk tales do more than signify the lessons they contain; they are also signposts to how a culture conducts itself, educating both the indigenous listener and those wishing to learn from and about the Inuit. Stories in oral cultures reveal the identity and peoplehood shared by the communities concerned. As it is often claimed by Indigenous people, such as Opaskwayak Cree scholar Greg Younging, listening to the traditional stories of a people as performed or reading them as written by themselves is the most authentic way of learning about that people (1). *Unikkaaqtuat*, ancient stories, are the primary means of learning and connecting with one's culture. Folklore in oral cultures serves as a source of identity and is, at the same time, an affirmation of nationhood for the people who share those very same stories and traditions (Dundes 150). In the case of the Inuit, one who knows and lives by the same traditions all Inuit share proves a real Inuk, an *Inummariit*. Thus, *quajimajatuqangit*, traditional Inuit knowledge, sometimes referred to as IQ, is the basis of creating nationhood among peoples living in the vast Arctic area across borders. The primary method of disseminating *quajimajatuqangit* while the oral tradition persisted was through *unikkausivut*, sharing stories, which has found its way into school curricula and is very much

part of people's lives even today, in the age of written and visual culture, especially due to the inclusion of more Inuit teachers and Elders in public education. Storytelling, by connecting the young to their roots, shapes their Inuit identity. It is thus perceived as an integral part of individual mental health and, by extension, of nation building itself.

Traditions beyond storytelling, primarily those with literary merit, such as the *angakoqs*, the magic songs of the shamans, are also well-documented by Rasmussen in his multivolume *Report*. Folklore unites the Inuit across the continent from Greenland to Alaska. Observing cultural similarities in various Inuit tribes on opposite coasts, he concludes that “[i]t is [in] Alaska only that the East Greenlandic tricks which we know . . . are practiced to a degree” (“The Fifth Thule Expedition” 132; ellipsis in the original). The importance of shared cultural beginnings based on stories and practices is further emphasized by his observations of religious rituals; he noted that identical fundamental principles were observed in the spiritual and material culture of the Western tribes and in that of the Inuit of the Eastern Arctic (*Across Arctic America* 320).

Forming Inuit Identity within Canada

The Tuniit, also referred to as the Dorset culture or Sivullirmiut—First People, that is, the people living in the Arctic before the ancestors of the present-day Inuit—appear in the legends of the Eastern Arctic. These stories tell how different the Tuniit were to the Thule, the proto-Inuit people, who arrived later to the area. The emergence of the Thule marked the end of the Tuniit era, which shows an eerie similarity to the social-historical changes that have taken place among the Inuit with the arrival of the European settlers to North America. While the Tuniit have completely disappeared, the Inuit have not, apparently because of their resilience as a people, which enabled them to settle and survive in the harshest environment on Earth. Similarly, Inuit adaptability is demonstrated in their establishing regional

associations, taking part in Canadian politics on a national level and eventually forming the semi-sovereign territory of Nunavut with its own legislative body in 1999. Remarkable changes have taken place since the early twentieth century, when ethnographers such as Rasmussen and Jenness visited the Canadian Arctic and contacted the Inuit in tribal communities. The adoption of western political formations started in the nineteen-seventies as an answer to former colonialist attitudes, politics being the primary tool available to the Inuit through which they could promote their own identity within Canada and let their voice be heard both locally and nationally.

An early proponent of civic nationalism, nineteenth-century historian Ernest Renan defines nation as a group of people linked by many things in common, which may either derive from a common descent or a common cause. In this, he differed from the predominantly ethnic, that is, ancestral or primordial, preference of late-nineteenth/early twentieth-century nation/race definitions. Global mass migration throughout the past hundred years has changed how nationhood is experienced and interpreted, especially in settler societies, such as Canada, Australia, and the United States, where multicultural ideology and policies emerged in the 1970s, proclaiming that different ethnicities must live together sharing the bond of what land, country, nation and home means to them. Thus, the word nation, from then on, has been used to refer to a group of people with a shared interest; in other words, as Benedict Anderson defines it in *Imagined Communities*, a nation is an “imagined political community.” Canada meets this criterion for a nation, formed by many ethnicities tethered to one another and to an imaginary homeland that—while it exists physically—is created through the policy of common interest. The Inuit, one of the first inhabitants of Canada, are now Canadians but maintain a distinct Inuit identity. Canada’s current political philosophy—unlike that in the early days—essentially aims at creating a kaleidoscope of cultures, rather than operating by earlier assimilationist directives, under which the Inuit can live

autonomously in the *Inuit Nunangat*, while as Canadians they are entitled to the benefits of the Canadian welfare state.

Partha Chatterjee, however, in critiquing Anderson's theory, contends that European colonialism imposed such limits to nationalism that "even [Indigenous people's] imaginations must remain forever colonized" (5), implying that newly imagined political nationhood simply accepts non-Indigenous invaders' rules. The idea of unwelcome colonialist intervention and its long-term effects is echoed by Keavy Martin, who adds that "the fur trade was declining, and more and more Inuit were being forced to move into permanent settlements, where the government could provide them with welfare services" (*Stories* 50). Indeed, sedentarizing Inuit lifestyle in order to standardize the delivery of national policies of education, healthcare, and housing, adversely affected the Inuit whose attachment to nomadic life was crucial to their formation of identity. However, as the arguable success of multicultural Canada shows, "our land" is the place a group of people relate to in a similar manner: with affection and a feeling of belonging.³ As J. Edward Chamberlin points out, further steps need to be taken: "Can one land ever really be home to more than one people? To native and newcomer for instance? . . . I think so. But not until we have reimagined Them and Us" (4). To cast the idea of "them and us" aside, and to create a new heterogeneous culture of "us," first we have to investigate what makes "us" who we are, and examine whether being a member of a certain culture means having been raised according to the cultural standards prevailing within that particular group. The late-twentieth-century history of Canada suggests that a shared belief in the success of the country can be a stand-in for religion, ethnicity, and ancestry, resulting in a Canadian cultural quilt, of patches from different backgrounds.

The Canadian North after World War II

With the colonial experience fading, the Inuit began to build on their shared culture in representing themselves. The Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC), a non-governmental organization founded in 1977, now acts on behalf of the Inuit of the United States, Canada, Denmark, and Russia. This organization has a strong Canadian branch, and it could not have been formed without the underlying culture apparent in the folk and epic tales and customs of different Inuit communities. The ICC website proclaims the urgency of uniting peoples in the circumpolar homeland:

To thrive in their circumpolar homeland, Inuit had the vision to realize they must speak with a united voice on issues of common concern and combine their energies and talents towards protecting and promoting their way of life. The principal goals of ICC are, therefore, to strengthen unity among Inuit of the circumpolar region; promote Inuit rights and interests on an international level; develop and encourage long-term policies that safeguard the Arctic environment; and seek full and active partnership in the political, economic, and social development of the circumpolar regions. (“Aims and Objectives”)

The importance of such nationlike connectedness across borders by means of a shared culture and interest is especially apparent in the years that followed the first contacts with the Europeans, which changed the structure of Inuit societies. Visitors to the North came as explorers in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; from the late eighteenth century, whalers and fur traders flocked to the region and stayed until their businesses collapsed. Missionaries, who also arrived in the eighteenth century, exerted considerable influence on the locals before the closure of residential schools—a system of schools in Canada between the 1830s and 1990s that forcibly enrolled Indigenous children in schools that separated them from their

Native culture and families. In the 1940s, with the introduction of the hamlet culture that replaced the nomadic lifestyle the Inuit traditionally had, the Polar populace became sedentarized, belonging to a place in a country, rather than traveling across borders following game. As a result, the Inuit living in settlements in Arctic Canada became Canadian citizens. To create a dialogue between the Indigenous population of the far North and the government, the goal of the Inuit Circumpolar Council's Canadian branch is not only to connect the Inuit living in different countries, but also to work together with the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, the premier Inuit Organization of Canada, to maintain an ongoing dialogue with ministries of the Canadian Government on issues of international importance to the Canadian Inuit and to represent the Inuit in land claims and issues relating to welfare ("Aims and Objectives"). Across the North, divided by borders, the existence of the Inuit homeland is fueled by linguistic and cultural kinship. To foster this connection, both organizations work towards making connections with federal institutions and Inuit establishments in different countries.

After World War II, with the arrival of a new era when the government pushed the Inuit into permanent settlements, they found themselves divorced from the migrating lifestyle of their ancestors. Furthermore, a difficult economic situation presented itself after commerce based around whalers and fur traders collapsed. These changes made it apparent that the Inuit needed a unified representation more than ever in order to place themselves in an advantageous cultural and economic situation. With such an organization as ICC to speak for the Indigenous populace of the Arctic, the new, strong voice of the Inuit reached the stage of national politics in Canada and a separate Inuit homeland became acknowledged within the country's borders.

The constitutional formation of Nunavut in 1999 as a semi-autonomous Inuit territory and the acknowledgement of several Inuit lands in the North, along with government funds and investment in the Inuit homeland within twenty-five years of its entering active political

life in Canada, show that the people of the North are endowed with ingenuity and resilience. Their skills have helped the Inuit not only to survive in the harshest environments, but also to adjust to a new situation as members of a multicultural country, all the while retaining their cultural integrity, one of the foundations of Canadian multiculturalism. In accordance with this statement, Natan Obed, the current president of the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami stresses that “[Inuit] could’ve made this into our Inuit lands, and we could’ve cordoned it off and tried to keep people out, but we see ourselves as Canadians. . . . We want to share our land, we want to have this relationship” (qtd. in Kylie). Although the period from the late eighteenth century to the late twentieth century is, unfortunately, marred by the residential school system, the Inuit did establish a representative body to promote the interests of all the Inuit, yet it is one that they themselves look upon as both Inuit and Canadian: “This land is ours, but also something we want to show the world as long as we do it in a way that’s respectful. I hope Canadians get excited about that, too and are appreciative of the fact that Inuit want to be Canadians” (Obed qtd. in Kylie).

In this spirit, new Inuit schools are being built—including a second, bigger high school in Igloolik—that expand the curriculum to include both traditional Inuit knowledge and expectations at provincial and territorial levels, so that every child receives the benefits of their oral tradition as well as the qualifications needed for colleges or universities. Albeit the system in its present form is far from ideal, the need for bigger school buildings indicates that more and more children are enrolled in primary and secondary education, which in turn leads to rising literacy levels. Even more successful self-governance can be achieved if more professionals, such as doctors, teachers, police officers, researchers and scholars are Inuit. Literacy is the key to achieving this goal; presently, however, Inuit communities still rely on Southern teachers. Keeping Northern schools open is important not only because education is a powerful tool in the hands of the Inuit in order to better their circumstances, but also in

order to receive federal funding. Inuit involvement in determining subject areas, methods, and outcomes is also necessary for success along with the possible abandonment of the currently used Alberta curriculum in favor of a more Indigenous-centered content.

Preserving Inuit Cultural Identity

In *Elements of Indigenous Style*, Younging claims that because Indigenous people are largely written about by non-Indigenous authors, they are often misrepresented (2). In fact, Inuit ethnography was most extensively produced and written by Western researchers and explorers, such as Rasmussen, whose work is widely regarded as the most authoritative (Burch 155). Without his arduous journeys and earnest inquiries, the Inuit past would have likely been lost to Inuit and Qallunaat and foreigners, alike. A necessary precursor to legitimate research and important findings is not Indigenous ancestry but adherence to unbiased scientific principles of research, data gathering, and conclusions. As in Rasmussen's case, it is not his ancestry that authenticates his research, but the enormous body of work, the treasures of cultural heritage he collected from primary sources through fieldwork. Under the current academic practice of rigorous peer-reviewed processes to ensure that scholars comply with research ethics, researchers' choices of subject matter must not be limited by their ethnocultural background. Many elements of literary forms are comparable in different cultures, such as the features of narratives and literary discourse, hence literature is a discipline that can be studied across cultures with the benefit, as Katherine Durnin points out, that "comparative literature counteracts the tendency to claim national superiority or precedence on the basis of the imagined 'genius' or specificity of a nation" (2). In a multicultural country such as Canada, the concurrent existence of different literary traditions and their cross-cultural study within and outside of Canada is essential in order to establish and maintain the culture of sharing, of inclusiveness and equality. The cultural

interconnectedness of a multicultural society demands of academic researchers that fairness is maintained in their approaches, regardless of their cultural background.

Opposition to cross-cultural interpretations is doubly flawed in assuming that cross-cultural understanding is impossible and in believing that literary criticism involves asserting the author's correctness, whereas it only provides a proposed reading that may be accepted or rejected by peers (Durnin 3). There is also an inherent advantage in studying something while not being part of it: from an outsider's vantage point, the researcher can occasionally gain a more objective insight into his field of research than the insiders themselves. Durnin notes that Indigenous texts often address both an Indigenous and a non-Indigenous audience and challenges critics like Younging by contending that it is necessary and possible to venture out and connect with different cultures (5).

Over the past two decades, the attitude within the Indigenous publishing community has shifted toward collaboration, observes Iva Cheung, as many Indigenous authors recognize that collaborations with non-Indigenous writers can be productive if culture is approached with sensitivity (Cheung, "Elements"). The recent shift in Indigenous and non-Indigenous literary criticism and publishing suggest that previous concerns about the validity of research done by a non-native person are being re-evaluated (Durnin 2; Szklarski). Younging himself stresses that he "used to say that non-Indigenous people should just stop writing about Indigenous peoples. Now that [he has] seen good collaborations and respectful work, [he does not] say that anymore" (xiv). It is interpretation itself that provides a platform for sharing and understanding, thus scientific analysis and dissemination must not be limited to the cultural background of those concerned. Intercultural encounters, such as reading and construing a variety of literatures from authors outside our own cultural background can be the basis for appreciating and acknowledging the interconnected nature of history and literature, and our role in them, irrespective of our ethnicity. The very effort of getting to know another people

through their literature wearing unbiased lenses could be one of the means of eradicating some of the colonial misconceptions.

Another of Younging's controversial claims is that Indigenous literature is not part of Canadian literature (15). However, literature produced by Indigenous authors remains Canadian, as they are citizens of that country, reside in it, and are influenced by and partake in life in Canada. Although an elected leader of about 65,000 Inuit, Obed represents them as Canadians (Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami), therefore their writing is part of the quilt of Canadian literature. Both Younging and Martin claim that Indigenous writing should be edited and published following different standards from those used for non-Indigenous authors for, as Martin argues, "Why not resist the demands of the southern readership and the assimilative requirements of mainstream publishing?" (Stories 62). If it is to be considered at all, the introduction of such a special category for Inuit literature must, however, only be done with care, so that it does not leave room for undue criticism taking away the merit of Inuit writing; it should by no means appear patronizing or condescending. Introducing special judgment categories for writers from each of the many different cultural backgrounds in Canada would be highly problematic on account of the considerable ethnocultural differences across the country; such a system has never existed in or outside of Canada.

Archaeological evidence shows that early Arctic cultures living in permanent settlements vanished when the nomadic forebears of the modern-day Inuit appeared in the North (Rasmussen, "The Fifth Thule Expedition, 1921-24" 132). Since the Inuit are admired for their flexibility and success in adjusting to extreme climate and living situations, a similar future could be avoided. It can only be hoped that the creation of the *Inuit Nunangat* along with the formation of various political organizations that represent the Inuit are just the beginnings of a flourishing Arctic, to be aided by a written tradition to safeguard the Inuit intellectual culture and heritage. Indigenous people from Greenland to the United States,

across Canada and even in Siberia share the same linguistic, cultural and literary origins. Even though their lands are separated along changing political borders, their shared culture and goals keep them together and give them a powerful voice through their organizations.

Forming identity and building a nation in a multicultural society could start by sharing stories in a respectful manner and jointly creating new ones, thus demonstrating positive answers to Martin's pointed questions: "Have we transformed the literature into a shape that can nourish us? Have we been [positively] changed by the interaction, if so then we may have successfully entered into a relationship, one that we then accept the responsibility of honoring, maintaining and reciprocating for in whatever ways we can" ("Northern Lights"). The stated goal of all Canadians is to preserve all the cultures that make up Canada, whether they are Indigenous or new to the country, but this will require a united effort of all Canadians. If anything, this objective can lead to a fortunate situation where scholars, irrespective of their cultural background, continue to document Inuit cultural treasures for posterity.

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Notes

¹ Early ethnographic sources use the term Eskimo, a designation no longer acceptable, to indicate the Inuit. In this essay the term "the Inuit" is understood to refer to all the Indigenous peoples in the Arctic unless they are identified by their own regional names, such as the Iglulingmiut. Geographical names are given in both Inuktitut and English, as both are in use.

² Volumes dedicated as *Report of the Fifth Thule Expedition, 1921-24* would have distinct titles identifying topics, peoples, or regions. I specifically relied on two of them for this essay: *Across Arctic America* and *Intellectual Culture*.

³ The writer of this essay holds dual—Hungarian and Canadian—citizenship.

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