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Sewing and silence, sewing and struggle: Socializing women's work in Igloolik, Northwest Territories.

Elizabeth Mary Miller
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SEWING AND SILENCE, SEWING AND STRUGGLE:

SOCIALIZING WOMEN'S WORK IN IGLOOLIK, N.W.T.

by

E. Beth Miller

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APPROVED BY:

Dr. Max J. Hedley (Chair)

Dr. Lynne Phillips

Dr. Victoria Paraschak (Kinesiology)

ABSTRACT

The main issues addressed in the thesis are the past and present importance of sewing to women in Igloolik, N.W.T. and the contribution women make to household and community through sewing. Interviews were conducted with women of different age groups to obtain an understanding of the importance of sewing in the past, teaching and learning sewing skills in the camp setting, the transformation of these activities and women's work generally in the move to settlement life, and the importance that sewing still maintains today.

When discussing sewing activities on the land it was suggested that women were continually sewing. The skills necessary to provide well made clothing were indispensable to a hunting way of life. The goal of women to open a sewing cooperative and their desire to teach sewing to younger women, provides an indication of the continuing significance of these activities. Sewing remains an important part of Inuit culture. It is of considerable economic importance and potential, and retains cultural significance for women. The economic, cultural and social importance of sewing are therefore explored in relation to the goal of women to open a sewing centre in Igloolik.

DEDICATION

When the axe came into the forest the
trees said 'the handle is one of us.'

from Alice Walker's, Possessing the Secret of Joy

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I would like to thank all the women who took the time to share their knowledge of sewing, and everyday life with me. I would especially like to thank Leah Otak for her guidance and friendship during my time in Igloolik and Celina Uttagayak for all of her assistance. John Macdonald also requires considerable thanks. From the beginning of my stay in Igloolik in the summer of 1992 John was extremely helpful and made all the arrangements necessary for the completion of my research. He also provided useful insights and hospitality, along with his wife Carolyn, who I would also like to thank. In making these acknowledgements I do not want to give the impression that I am closing a chapter. Hopefully, this is only the introduction and I will have many more years in Igloolik for which to be thankful. My research in Igloolik during the summers of 1992 and 1993 was funded by the Northern Studies Training Program.

I would like to thank my adviser Dr. Max Hedley for his considerable input and assistance from the beginning of my work in Igloolik. I would also like to thank Dr. Lynne Phillips for her encouragement and assistance over many years. Dr. Vicki Paraschak also provided much useful input as a member of my thesis committee.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This thesis will discuss women's sewing activities in Igloolik, N.W.T., the importance of this work to life in the past, the transformation of women's work since the move to the settlement, and the relationship of these changes to the present goal of women to open a sewing cooperative in Igloolik. In the first chapter of the thesis I will begin with my own story as a feminist researcher who went to the community of Igloolik in the Baffin region of the Eastern Arctic, N.W.T., to do research. When I reflect back now on this experience and attempt to construct thesis chapters which express what I learned from people in this community what stands out most is the necessity to develop an approach to writing which is much the same as the process of doing research itself. By this I mean that it should be interactive. What is interesting about the process of writing the thesis is how an apparent objectivity can be created through the written word. As a researcher/author I can eliminate myself, and the 'other' participants from the process, by writing in the third person. In this way it is possible to record ordered events or 'facts' without a context.

However, the process of doing research is a human experience in which the researcher interacts with other people. This is an obvious point which often gets lost in

discussions of entering the field, observing subjects and recording facts. It is important that the researcher should show respect for personal space, privacy and autonomy of the people. Research should be written up using the same principles of respect for those who take part in it. The issues that are addressed in the thesis come out of discussions and interviews with women that took place during the period I spent in Igloolik. However, I choose not to identify women by their real names when using quotes from interviews in order to preserve the confidentiality of participants.

In making this decision I have had to consider the possible contradiction in desiring to have women speak for themselves and recognising the necessity to give credit to these women for their contributions while at the same time understanding that I should preserve their anonymity. I feel that individual women do not have to be named in the thesis to provide a sense that what they have said is valuable and important. Their words definitely make this clear and provide many useful insights.

The qualitative approach espoused by feminist researchers concerned with women's stories takes on more significance after doing research. When one considers every day life in a community there are no clear cut designs. The set is always changing, just as there are many possible

interpretations and perspectives that one can attain from any story.

During the two field seasons I spent in Igloolik I experienced many different sides of the community through my interactions with people. There is nothing archetypal about life in any community, though one may embark on research with some idealistic notions. Of course, when people have a strong sense of their community they would like one to leave with a good impression of the place, which I possess from my time in Igloolik. In many ways this is a very strong community with a sense of its cultural history. It is growing and changing, though there are many social problems which have a direct relationship to the processes of development and colonisation which are a part of the history of Inuit people in the Eastern Arctic, most evidently since the 1960s. This intervention represents another link in the chains of domination and exploitation that aboriginal peoples have experienced over the last five hundred years by nations seeking land and/or resources. By acknowledging that these processes have created many difficulties for aboriginal people in the present I am not clinging to "imperialist nostalgia" (Rosaldo, 1989) or suggesting that Inuit people in this community would like to return to the past; they do not. Still the detrimental effects of colonisation should be recognized as it has a bearing on the ability of women to establish a sewing cooperative, and the

likelihood of its success. I will now briefly outline the main issues that will be discussed in the remaining chapters of the thesis.

The foundation for women's sewing in the past and today is the vital connection between hunting and sewing, and thus the hunting way of life. The third chapter will therefore discuss sewing in the past, teaching and learning, and the organisation of women's work in the camp. These issues reflect the degree of autonomy women maintained over their spheres of work and its importance.

Chapter four will discuss the changing significance of sewing activities in the settlement context. The effects of development policy as it was implemented in the 1960s will be addressed, most significantly through policies establishing rental housing in the settlement. It was suggested by women in interviews that this changed their work responsibilities. At the same time houses were not designed in a way which took into consideration the work that women were still required to perform as part of the hunting way of life. The effects of government intervention on the everyday lives and work performed by women is an issue which women in this community discuss from varying perspectives. But a common thread exists in women's words concerning government housing and its inadequacies in relation to women's sewing and the hunting/settlement way of life.

It will be suggested that women learned home economic duties similar to those performed by women in the south, while previously undertaking a different set of responsibilities on the land. This is directly related to the changing importance of sewing activities over time. When discussing changes in women's sewing activities the valuation given to women's sewing in economic and cultural terms will be discussed. How sewing skills are evaluated by women and the ways that this has changed, which can be interpreted as a reformulation of tradition, will be considered.

The fifth chapter will specifically focus on the struggle of women to establish a sewing cooperative in Igloolik. The issues addressed in the previous chapters will provide an understanding both of the desire of women to meet this goal, and the obstacles they face. The transmission of these skills between different generations of women and the economic and the cultural importance of these activities are connected issues which have a relationship to government policy in the initial period of settlement in Eastern Arctic communities in the 1960s. However, despite the changes that have taken place, and the negative impact of outside intervention on the valuation of women's work and the transmission of these cultural skills, the critique of policy which is offered by women and their perceptions about the importance of their work, provides a

counter point of resistance. This explains the desire of women to open a sewing centre.

The struggle of women to start a women's sewing centre is a collective way that women are trying to come up with solutions which reflect their everyday lives. What becomes clear is that women want alternatives to what exists for them in the community at present, and they feel that a sewing centre which they control would be a positive step in the direction of solving community issues, especially as these effect different generations of women.

The conclusion will bring together the issues discussed in the previous chapters of the thesis to provide an understanding of both the obstacles women face in their struggle to establish a sewing centre, the difficulties that may prevent its achievement, and most importantly the connection between this goal and the every day perseverance of these women. Bringing these issues together elucidates the different sites of power, as Foucault (1978) suggests, which make it difficult for women to realize their individual and collective goals. But what is most important to recognize is that this does not prevent women from continuing to sew, and to act through their attempts to work together for positive change.

Lastly, the impact of the State and market place on women's work, and the lack of consideration given to women's contributions by male researchers discussing the hunting or

village economy in the northern context will be addressed. Research and policy will be criticized in light of the perspectives offered by women concerning their everyday work lives. It will be suggested that research which specifically addresses the importance of the mixed economy in the north would benefit considerably by a more thorough consideration of women's contributions.

CHAPTER TWO

METHODOLOGY AND FIELD EXPERIENCES

In the Field

By beginning this second chapter with a discussion of my research experiences, I will make my "voice" clear and audible. I feel that this is essential, especially when doing research in an aboriginal community in which researchers have often been agents of colonisation. As a 'kadlunat' researcher from the south I do not want to presume that I can spend a matter of months in an Inuit community and speak in an authoritative voice about it. However, it is precisely because I am the final author of this work that my own story is relevant. By discussing my perceptions and experiences during the field work and connecting this with issues and concerns discussed by women in the interview process I am attempting to move away from a detached objectivity which silences and often misrepresents real people. My aim is to produce a work which does not claim a singular truth status, but rather, tells many different stories reflecting the life experience of people, including my own, that are all aspects of the reality of this community.

Writing oneself out of the research is parallel to the process of those male researchers and historians who have claimed to 'record' history and create a sense that they are telling the whole story while leaving women and minority

groups out of their versions of past and present events and everyday life. As Dorothy Smith (1987) asserts, research which claims objectivity does not see the 'real' picture but simply deals with a male object world. By presenting women's 'herstories', and perspectives about the present, it is possible to reclaim lost continents of knowledge that are disregarded in male biased research. I worked with these women. This was an experience, a story that we took part in together. I therefore intend to produce research with a human face (Schumacher, 1973).

Therefore, in the remaining chapters of the thesis I will use women's words from interviews as the framework for discussing some of the issues around sewing which are important to women in this community. I am bringing our stories together to avoid representing women's perceptions in a way that ignores my own selectivity in this process. I feel that this is important because I do not come from the same perspective as the women I am writing about. The experience of doing research and the desire, as a feminist, to produce a collaborative work with women is not without its dilemmas. This should be addressed.

The Significance of the Collaborative Experience

To illustrate this point I would like to discuss a relevant conversation which took place between myself, Jean, who is very skilled sewer that I interviewed both summers in Igloolik, and Karen who interpreted for me during the summer

of 1993. We were discussing the name change that was enacted in the 1970s at the prompting of the government Census Bureau. This legislation required women and children to take the husband's name so that a family name was established for the purpose of issuing birth certificates. Married men could keep their own name or opt to take their father's name. During the initial period of settlement people were given numbers rather than names. This was described by women as a very alienating experience for children coming into the schools. Prior to this time all people had their own names. The new legislation which required women and children to take the husband's name reflects the patriarchal structure of southern culture. When women were informed that they had to relinquish their own name and take their husbands, many people in the community, women and men, did not easily accept this idea. However, the census workers who came to the community pointed out that the government had given the people in the community many things and suggested that these could easily be taken away. According to Jean it did not seem feasible to give everything back. Consequently, she complied with the 'request'.

When I asked her if she felt like some of her self-identity was being taken away having to take her husband's name, she agreed that this was how she felt at first. As the conversation progressed, however, I lapsed into a more

abstract feminist analysis of the name change. This was received with some laughter and brought the conversation to a halt. I asked Karen what she had said to Jean and after a moment she told me that she had told Jean she did not understand a single word I just said. This brought me back to reality, and provided a reminder of the bridge between theory and practice. Difficulties in cross cultural communication across lines of ethnicity and class are a part of a collaborative research experience. The best one can hope to do is to listen well, for imposing one's views will only erect more barriers to achieving understanding. In as much as can be the case, then, my research was an exercise in listening to what women had to say, rather than being guided by a predetermined discourse.

The subject of my thesis was not mapped out before arriving in the community beyond the intent to look at women's contributions to the household economy through 'arts and crafts'. This proved to be a good approach because people have some reservations about talking to a researcher who wants to prove a hypothesis, especially if the subject of interest is the Inuit way of life in the past. There is an understandable resentment towards researchers who come to the community with their culturally imperialistic stance wanting to know about the past, rather than what is important to people in the present.

Women's perceptions of the past are addressed in the thesis, but not to idealise this period in Inuit history. The purpose is to provide an understanding of the changes that have taken place and the difficulties that this has created for women. Life in any community is obviously not static but is continually changing. People respond to changes in their situation by attempting to create and recreate a space for themselves based on their own life experience. It is in this sense that tradition can be said to be continually in the process of reproduction or creation. With this issue in mind, I would suggest that the thesis comes from a feminist perspective in that it attempts to address issues of concern for Inuit women today. It seeks to reveal the methods women use to persevere and resist, to create and recreate 'a way of life' in the present against seemingly overwhelming constraints.

The issues that will be addressed in the thesis come out of discussions with women about their sewing and its importance in the past and today. I do not know how to sew myself but I have developed an admiration and respect for the skills possessed by women who sew and I have come to understand that sewing has many levels of significance. The approach that these women take to their work is a reflection of the way that they live life every day. It is also an important part of the 'herstory' of Inuit women which is largely unacknowledged. The sewing created by many older

women in this community provides a powerful metaphor for engendering social change at the local level. Because women persevere and continue the repetitive motions with needle, thread, and thimble they create a relationship to their work which is lasting and meaningful. Their patience and a sense that things should not be rushed creates strong lines of resistance. It is in this sense understandable why older women in the community see sewing as a way to bring women together across generational and religious lines through a women's sewing centre. It must also be noted that it is these same lines, in part produced by hegemonic or colonial processes which create further obstacles for women in their attempts to come together to deal with common difficulties. I also had the opportunity to interview younger women who had various levels of skill in sewing activities. It was clear from these interviews and discussions that there are many problems and concerns which women of all ages hold in common. The detrimental effects of rapid social change are as much a part of life in Igloolik as in any other northern community, and rural communities generally, with their lack of jobs, poverty and isolation. Men and women obviously both suffer considerably from problems and changes beyond their control that this has created in their community. However, there are many issues which effect women in particular and offer a potential for collective action. It's this possibility which leads women in Igloolik to

recognise that a place where women could meet to discuss community concerns is necessary and would benefit the community as a whole.

Life is not without its contradictions and I do not want to suggest that the relationship between women, sewing, resistance and social change in the community of Igloolik is either idealistically simple or that I have a full understanding of it. One thing which is certain is that there are many sides to life in this community and at times these different aspects may seem to be in contradiction to one another. To present a seamless whole would be to deny the diverse, unique experience of women whose lives are expressed through the art of sewing and mending. The thesis, then, is my version of a shared story which developed during the time I have spent in Igloolik. What the experiences that have entered into the creation of this work have given me is further desire to work for change. Hopefully, the reader will be provided with is a sense of both the obstacles which silence and separate women and the potential women see for themselves in coming together.

Arriving in Igloolik

I arrived in Igloolik for the first time on July 8th, 1992. As I chose to do research in this community I was aware of some of the logistical information about it. I knew that the community received government housing in the 1960's, that approximately 1100 people lived there, and that

the people of Igloolik refused television in their community until the early 1980's when local broadcasting in Inuktitut was provided through the Inuit Broadcasting Association (Cousineau, 1993). However, as a young person from the south who had been inundated with television culture I had many preconceived images of what the north was all about. I had read recent articles and knew that northern settlements bear some similarity to other rural communities. However, I still maintained images of people living off the land in a self sufficient hunting culture.

The idea of entering an aboriginal community, to conduct research, produced considerable anxiety for me. I wondered about my ability to relate to people and even whether I should be going there in the first place. I asked myself as a person who had felt considerable dismay and disgust at the way that aboriginal people were treated historically and presently in Canada, and globally, how I could ensure that my research would be of some value to the people of Igloolik. I reconciled this in my mind, as I am sure many researchers do, with the awareness that it was an opportunity to experience a different culture and geography, meet new people and learn. I had no desire to 'study' anyone and being intrusive was not a part of my agenda I told myself. I would simply work with the situation as it developed.

What I saw from the plane as it approached the gravel landing strip in Igloolik was a very flat, rocky, barren island encased in ice, but not the glacial formations that one pictures in an arctic environment. The most distinguishing feature of the community itself, at this time of the year, is the dirt; dirt roads and properties, no grass and no fences to hinder contact with neighbours. There are very few automobiles on the island. Most families have ATV'S for summer use and skidoos for winter travel. There is a Cooperative general store, and a larger Hudson's Bay store, now called The Bay, that was expanded in the last few years. There is also a small privately owned store that sells clothing and small household goods. The Hunters and Trappers association sells meat and fish and there is also a small amount of sewn goods for sale but there is not a regular salesperson to make these transactions.

The research lab to which I was affiliated is built on an upward slope at one end of the community. In a sense, and not in an innocuous way, researchers are also a part of the landscape of this community. The research lab with its futuristic construction, exemplifies this. It can be seen from all points in the community and gives one the feeling when entering the community of having just arrived on the moon. It is an ironic monument to the initial period of research in the north during the 1950s and 1960s when development policy reflected the ideology of modernisation.

However, I was told that the design of the lab also serves a useful purpose in that it provides a site for taking various barometric readings and conducting different forms of natural science research. Social scientific research makes up only a small portion of the work facilitated through the laboratory. The research facility in Igloolik has also undertaken a life history project to collect the stories of many of the older women and men in the community.

When I arrived in Igloolik I explained the purpose of my project to the coordinator of the research lab and the manager of the facility so that arrangements could be made to accommodate the requirements of my research. I pointed out that I was interested in the contribution of women's work to the household economy. As 'arts and crafts' production is prevalent in the north I would consider the extent to which women were involved in this form of production. I was informed that women in the community did various kinds of sewing and other activities that could be defined under this label.

I was told that the major activity women engaged in was sewing, and this work was predominantly performed by older women. I was therefore informed that if I was going to do research which concerned women's sewing I would require an interpreter, as the first language in Igloolik is Inuktitut and most older women do not speak English. It was recommended that I should discuss my interests with MaryAnn,

who I was told would be an excellent interpreter. I hired her to work with me during interviews, and using her insight about the value and importance of women's sewing I decided that it would be appropriate to concentrate my research on these activities.

Because I was not knowledgeable about the kinds of sewing that women do in the community, or why it is culturally important, MaryAnn suggested we should first spend some time with her mother, who is one of the very skilled sewers in the community. In this way I would have a basic knowledge of women's sewing activities and could avoid asking many unnecessary or inappropriate questions. The following day we went to the house of this skilled seamstress and spent a good period of time looking at all the different types of skin clothing which she makes in her sewing shed outside her home. I was also shown the functioning of the 'quilliq' which is a carved stone lamp used for heating and some cooking when on the land. Today people use kerosene stoves for the most part, although when I visited a camp at Igloolik Point there were people who still used a 'quilliq', as MaryAnn's mother does in her sewing shed during cold weather months. I thought it was very beautiful the way the flame burned all around the outside of the carved stone and that the flames wick was made from the fibres of flowers (willow and moss) that grow out on the barrens. During a visit with MaryAnn's mother-

in-law at Igloolik Point she was sitting next to the 'quilliq' continually tending it while visiting. There was a sense of peacefulness in watching her as she seemed able to do many things at the same time in a very subtle relaxed manner. The knowledge that just a part of women's work on the land was to keep the flame burning as well as creating many forms of clothing for the protection and warmth of their families clarified the importance of women's work for me. When I returned to the house after this day I wrote the following note in my journal.

(July 10, 1992), as titled in my journal,

Introduction to the Skill and Symmetry of Skin Sewing

"Out on the land both hunting and carving could be performed by women or men, though women did a great amount of sewing, as many women still do. There are a number of steps in the process of skin sewing. A dull knife is used to scrape the skins away from the seal. Various techniques are used in the process of drying and stretching the skins. Once the skin is removed and scraped with a dull knife to remove the fat it is laid out in the sun. It may then be scraped again with a dull knife and wetted, then tightly folded so that all the skin is on the inside. This is part of the softening process. The outside skins are of different levels of thickness and also some are stiffer. This would determine their use. There may be two skins used to make a coat. Also for making 'kamiks' (boots), pants and

coats there are different types of skins that would be used with different designs. Caribou skins are used to make the tassels at the bottom of certain kinds of clothing. Double stitching is required to make waterproof boots. There are boots for water, land, house and camp. There are also inner and outer boots. The underbelly of the seal is white. Caribou skins are thicker than seal skins and the bearded seal has a thicker outer skin. Horizontal designs are used for women's clothing. Vertical designs are used for men. There are also different designs to identify people from a particular region. The autonomy of individuals is important regarding the desire to learn to sew."

During the week that followed MaryAnn and I interviewed four women, all very skilled sewers who make traditional clothing and other forms of machine sewn clothing, blankets, tapestries and other creative work. Their comments about their lives today and in the past made a strong impression on me. Over the next couple of weeks I did not do any interviews. This concerned me, especially after having come from a year of school where I was very busy all the time. I consider myself to be fairly relaxed, but I had come to Igloolik to do research and I wondered when it would begin again. Initially I attempted to discuss this with MaryAnn when I would drop by her house. I would ask if we were going to do interviews on that day. She would tell me that it was possible and that she would get back to me later and

the day would simply go by. After realising that this was not the appropriate approach I started simply dropping by her house for coffee and talk. This was the most logical thing to do because I liked her company and was not busy. When she was able to arrange an interview she would tell me without having to be asked. I learned that it was better not to push, that I should not be so concerned about time schedules, and that respect for her autonomy was important both for establishing a good relationship and for obtaining interviews.

Interviewing Women: The Process

The first field season in Igloolik I arrived on July 8th and departed on August 24th. The second summer I arrived on July 16th and left on August 27th. Over the two field seasons in Igloolik I interviewed twenty five women. As well, many informal discussions with women provided insights concerning sewing and some of the difficulties in undertaking these activities in the settlement context. The first summer in Igloolik I interviewed fourteen women, the majority of whom were Anglican and over forty years of age. Of these women, most were in their late forties to fifties and therefore grew up in a camp setting, generally moving into the hamlet with the introduction of rental housing in the 1960s.

My interpreter during the first summer in Igloolik, and friend the entire time there, grew up on the land and spent

most of these years in the company of her grandfather, as she was named after his older brother and was therefore considered to be his representative. The process of naming a child after a deceased relative has symbolic importance and accompanying obligations in Inuit culture. At the age of fourteen she began formal schooling in the settlement. The paternalistic and, at times, denigrating treatment that this generation endured was clarified by MaryAnn when she suggested, "we were not allowed to speak in Inuktitut and we did not speak English so we were all very quiet for a couple of years." I interviewed three women who were between thirty and forty years of age. These women also experienced growing up in a camp setting and then being moved to residential schooling.

During my second summer in Igloolik Karen agreed to interpret for me which provided a wider view of the community. During my first summer I interviewed predominantly Anglican women. As Karen is Catholic this made it possible to interview this group of women during my second field season. While the views of women in the community certainly overlap there were some distinctions in the perspectives they offered. The second summer in Igloolik I interviewed eleven women. Again the majority of women were between forty five and sixty five. However, I also interviewed two women in their early twenties, one women in her early thirties and a women in her late

thirties. The younger women interviewed had varying levels of skill in sewing activities, but generally expressed an interest in different forms of sewing and in obtaining a knowledge of traditional sewing. All women felt that a sewing centre would be useful for many purposes. That most interviews during the summer of 1992 were with Anglican women and in 1993 were with Catholic women was connected to the religions of my interpreters who arranged the interviews. The women who were chosen to interview were skilled seamstresses that were generally friends or relatives of MaryAnn and Karen. For this reason they were from the same religious background.

When I was conducting interviews with women I informed them that I was interested in learning about sewing and the contribution that it made to the household in the past and today. I suggested that there seemed to be little information about women's work and the important contributions they make and that I wanted, therefore, to learn about women's sewing and document the importance of these activities. Women were generally receptive to this. I did not have a set schedule of questions that I asked women, but had a more general approach to discussing issues concerning women's sewing and changes that had taken place. The interviews therefore tended to focus on the issues women were most interested in discussing. I was also wary because I had been told by different people that asking too many

questions is not appropriate behaviour in Inuit culture. This is why it is understandable that people are not keen about working with researchers.

Some women, such as Jean, asked me to tell her my main interests and then proceeded to discuss issues that were relevant for her relating to this. Therefore I asked people like Jean very few questions. The only major guiding points that were touched on in interviews related to teaching and learning sewing, intergenerational changes, changes in the move from camp to settlement and the economic contribution of sewing to the household. Many of these issues became focal points because they were brought up repeatedly by women that were interviewed first. During the first 'field season' in Igloolik I lived for approximately a month in the house of a teacher who was away for the summer. The accommodations were convenient, giving one the sense, at least while within the walls of the abode, of still being in the 'South'. The last two weeks of this trip I spent in a summer camp located parallel to Hand Bay on one side of Igloolik Island. I was camping with MaryAnn and her two children ages three and five. Her cousin who is in his early twenties also camped with us for the majority of the time. Our tent was located beside MaryAnn's cousin and her husband and children.

During the time in camp I attained a better understanding of the significance of hunting and sewing. At

different times hunters brought back caribou or fish to eat and we would share in this food. One morning I was awakened with the information that a hunter had shot some white whales off the beach and we were to go down to the site for breakfast. Approximately twenty people congregated on the beach to eat 'muktuk' (the top layer of the whale skin.)

While I was not enthusiastic at the prospect of eating raw caribou and raw whale I was very willing to sample the food and thereby show my respect for the hospitality offered by those I was camping with. The morning meal on the beach was significant for me because of the communal feeling that was evident. People spent a long period of time eating and talking on the beach and there was a sense of both pride and gratitude for what was being shared. Raw meat was better than I had imagined. I was informed by friends in Igloolik that raw meat provides extra warmth in cold weather. During this time many hunters also arrived on the beach to take portions of the whale back to Igloolik. This suggested that hunters are willing to share country food and provide for many people in the community beyond their immediate kin. During my time at camp I also observed the process of preparing skins as MaryAnn's cousin and other women were engaged in these activities.

A Lesson on Community Involvement

After about a month in Igloolik the economic development officer, who I had met informally on other

occasions, told me that he had received a memo about my research and asked to speak with me. He inquired about my research and what I had found out. I proceeded to tell him about the interest of women to start a sewing centre and the many difficulties they had expressed in attempting this project. He said that it was possible for women to obtain funding if they could draft a proposal and find a building to use as a sewing centre. He suggested that I should speak to the women about this. As I had just finished an interview with a woman before this meeting I decided to return to her house to relay this message. After I left her house I thought about the exchange that had taken place and it did not sit well with me. I felt that possibly I had acted out of turn. A few days later I was requested at the economic development office again. It was suggested that I should discuss making an application for funding with the women because the due date for proposals was within days. I realized that many people were out on the land at this time, which reflects the insensitivity within the bureaucratic structure to Inuit who are still actively participating the hunting way of life. However, the economic development officer has no control over these decisions which are made at a higher level of government.

Beyond this, after my previous day's experience I was aware that it was not my place to relay messages to the group as it had not been requested that I act as a go

between. I also discussed this with a couple that I had met who had lived in the community for a fair length of time and made the effort to be involved as community members. They agreed that people would not appreciate my unsolicited involvement. Women would get things done by their own choice, in their own time. I decided not to involve myself further and apologised for acting out of turn to Karen, who was important to the sewing group in its initial stages, because she was able to act as an interpreter and explain the rules and regulations concerning government funding to the older women who speak only Inuktitut. She was understanding, though she had initially expressed her displeasure with the proceedings to the economic development officer. This story provides a good example of how easy it is to make mistakes which could be detrimental in a field work situation if one is not sensitive to the autonomy of the people one is working with.

It is worth noting that during my second summer in Igloolik I did work with women in the Nalluat sewing group, which is a collective of women from the community generally, to draft a proposal for funding. This collaboration came at the request of women involved in this group. It was very useful to me because it gave me some knowledge of the process of applying for economic development funding and also provided an opportunity to meet with women as a group

to check the accuracy of my understanding about the issues they had discussed with me individually.

Conclusion

In many ways women in Igloolik, for whom sewing is important, exhibit forms of resistance and creativity through their sewing. What I came to realise through my interactions with women is that sewing is a method they use to speak to the issues which are of concern. Based on their life experiences, sewing becomes a form of discourse, a different vantage point from which to critically address those aspects of their present realities that are being controlled or infringed upon by forms of outside intervention. Therefore women's stories have something to say about engendering social change. What will be presented in the remainder of the thesis is an interactive text which attempts to explicate the threads of connection between various site of power and the everyday lives of women and the ways that women resist these forms of domination. What is remarkable is that sewing has retained much of its cultural and economic importance in Igloolik and the further enhancement of these activities is a goal of women, despite the many obstacles and discouragement they encounter. The issues which will be addressed in the thesis are connected to the struggle of women to open a sewing centre in Igloolik and the obstacles to realising this goal which is the main

topic of the thesis. We will now seek to establish the importance of women's sewing to life on the land.

CHAPTER THREE

WOMEN'S WORK IN EVERYDAY LIFE ON THE LAND: THE IMPORTANCE OF WOMEN'S SEWING IN THE PAST

Introduction

The main concern of chapter three is to establish the importance of women's work, especially sewing, within the camp setting. Some perceptions offered by women which stress the centrality of their work to 'life on the land' will be presented. The connection between hunting and sewing, the interdependence between men and women which is reflected in labour relations, the public nature of women's sewn work and the approach to teaching and learning sewing skills are the main issues discussed by women concerning life in the past. The literature will also be referred to both to support the assertion that women's work made a crucial contribution to life on the land and also to address the male bias of much of this research.

The work of male researchers who have visited the Baffin region of the Eastern Arctic generally makes brief mention of women's contributions to camp life and the importance of sewing, while concentrating on the activities performed by men. It is relevant to discuss this work as it is part of a long history of colonial discourses about the north, suggesting how the text of male-female relations and of Inuit people has been constructed by researchers over the course of this century. Where women's history is

documented, it is filtered through the dominant gaze of patriarchy, hierarchy and 'civilisation'. There is a tendency within this literature to assume a timeless and universal essence to women's work, projecting the southern model of the housewife onto Inuit women, though this seemingly archetypal domestic worker has only existed in the South since the rise of capitalism (Hall, 1980; Mies, 1988). This point will be discussed at the close of chapter three because it is directly relevant for understanding how women's work changed with the move to the settlement and the duties that women were expected to take on which was reflected in government policy. Changes in women's work also resulted from the southern design of rental housing which created many difficulties for women. In considering women's contribution to the Inuit way of life in the past, then, my aim is, to provide an understanding of the way women's work and everyday lives have been marginalised through a lack of consideration and the way that women respond to the conditions of power which have created many difficulties.

Everyday Life in the Past

The foundation of the hunting way of life on the land, the bases of Inuit culture, are sewing and hunting. The primary responsibility of women when living on the land was to produce the many different varieties of skin clothing and foot gear to be worn in the camp and by the men when

hunting. Sewn work was also a main component in the construction of the dwelling space. When I discuss 'life on the land' it must be noted that I am not speaking of tradition in any simple sense, for tradition is continually recreated over time. This point will be developed when addressing how women's traditional work has been reformulated since the move to the settlement.

During the twentieth century women and men participated in a mixed economy, which can be viewed as a part of the 'traditional' lifestyle for most Inuit people of the Eastern Arctic regions. The subsistence lifestyle predominated and the cash economy was of minimal importance for people in the Baffin region due to its relative isolation. A Hudson's Bay post was not established in the Igloolik area until the 1930's from which point people would make infrequent trips a couple of times a year to obtain extra supplies. Two camps, one composed of Anglicans and the other of Catholics were also established on the island for part of each year, a Catholic group being the first to establish a site followed by an Anglican group (Crowe, 1968). To the extent that people participated in the cash economy both women and men took part in these activities, as women would assist with the preparation of the skins to be sold. Participation in this economy increased during the seal skin boom at the beginning of the 1960's, but this was short lived. We should recognize that what we refer to as the traditional

way of life on the land was never static, but is continually changing and being recreated over time. This is still true of Inuit culture today.

As women themselves discussed, especially during the period before movement into the settlement, people in particular areas had their own dialect and clothing styles, as well as other distinguishing cultural features to their regions. However, there are also many similarities between regions in that people lived a mostly subsistence lifestyle in which sewing had a central place. Inuit people experienced a similar process of colonisation during the twentieth century and with the move to rental housing in the 1960's. I am not suggesting that the experience of Inuit people in different regions or even in the same region was homogeneous on the land, people have a diversity of experiences. However, it is possible to make some generalizations about women's work and social relations on the land.

Even today it is noted that skin clothing provides the greatest warmth and protection against the elements in the Arctic environment (Stenton, 1991:4; Jorgenson, 1990:115). Caribou skin is said to be the warmest form of clothing and seal skin is also very good material because it is waterproof and dries quickly to be worn again. The importance of skin clothing in the arctic winter is generally acknowledged by people in Igloolik.

The sewing skills that women possessed on the land were highly valued skills. The organisation of labour on the land and the necessity for a partnership between a skilled seamstress and a good hunter also suggests the equal importance of women's work for the reproduction of the 'household unit' in camp life. As Jean Briggs states in an article concerning male and female roles in the Inuit past,

> "I was told that in the old days a man might commit murder to obtain a good seamstress as a wife, and that if a man froze his feet, it was the wife who was blamed. The stories may be apocryphal, but they express the value placed on the feminine craft of sewing. The question 'which is better (or more important), a good hunter or a good seamstress?', is meaningless in Eskimo, both are indispensable" (1974:288).

Birkett-Smith also makes note of the importance of women's sewing, even if couched within the predominant concern with male hunting activities.

> "The Eskimos in fact take great care of their clothing. 'A man is the hunter his wife makes him' say the Polar Eskimos, for they know how far a well made dress will make a hunter independent of the weather and so more certain of his booty" (1971:116).

To follow are women's perceptions regarding their sewn work and its significance and centrality to every day life in the camp setting.

Sewing in the Past: Women's Perceptions

The age group of women who had stories to share about camp life were generally in their mid forties or older. While the stories women share about life in the past reflect their personal experiences, discussions of the way they

learned to sew and their work on the land have much in common. The passages that will be presented come from interviews with women of Igloolik about life in the past. These interviews, which were with women approximately forty five to sixty five years of age, are therefore referring to the time frame between the 1930s to the 1960s. In many ways life in the past was very difficult, and women do not want to return to the past. However, when women compare those days with life in the present, it is clear that life is difficult for people of all generations today but in different ways than in the past. The change that is most evident is the sense of purpose and control over one's work. This was organized by household units in the past in a way that does not exist today.

These stories clearly reveal the centrality of women's sewing to life on the land. The sewing which was most frequently performed by women in the camp was 'kamik' making. These 'kamiks' are seal skin boots worn on the land. The comment to follow refers to this activity and suggests the importance of sewing in the past and today.

> "It would be pointless for a man to be hunting for meat when we are wasting the skins because you need to use the meat and the skins. It would not be good to eat the meat and throw away the skins which are so warm for this climate, they are the best stuff that you can wear in this climate. Boots as well can be leather but they get wet and so does the lining and they are hard to dry. But with skin material it is just the outside that gets wet and they dry easily to be worn again." (Interview, Igloolik, 1992)

The following comment suggests that while kamik making was very important this was not all that women did in their daily routine on the land.

> "In the camp women had many jobs. In the springtime people would be constantly making seal skin boots. Men constantly needed these. They would do alot of walking to catch the seals and the boys as well, and would often wear out their heels. There were also many other things to do. During 'kamik' making you would have to scrape skins. You would need to boil blubber from the quilliq. You would have to get the water and at the same time one would be caring for children. There were no diapers at this time and as well one might be breastfeeding. Women would be glad to have female children to help."

This description of women's work in camp life and the point that female children would be welcome assistance suggests that different generations of women worked together and skills were passed on to younger generations. This ensured that young women would acquire the skills which would allow them to to adequately maintain the sewing needs of their families. The comment to follow reinforces the point that women's sewing was crucial for hunters and ensured their safety while hunting in the Arctic environment.

> "In the past the men could not go out hunting unless the women spent all their time sewing to make proper clothes to ensure that the men did not freeze."

Jean, who is in her early fifties, and spent her childhood and young married years on the land, had many thoughts to share about life in the past and changes that have taken place with the move to the settlement. She discusses generational changes in the acquisition of sewing

skills and the many varieties of clothing that women were required to make for their husbands to ensure their safety while winter hunting and also walrus hunting.

> "What changes I have seen. In the past you needed to have sets of clothing for particular kinds of hunting so if a man wanted to go walrus hunting there would be a particular kind of clothing for this. A women would be very ashamed if she had not made the proper clothes for the husband to hunt with. Today, if a man does not have the clothes to wear the wife does not feel ashamed. In the past it would be the women who would be blamed if a man could not go hunting due to lack of clothing. Long ago one was required to soften skins all the time. Warm boots and mitts required one to be softening all the time."

Jean's comment also points to the pride that women had in their work, that the quality of work was judged accordingly.

When discussing issues of changes in lifestyle and women's work over time the point was also brought out by Jean that in the past all that one owned could be placed on a 'kamatik' (sled) and one could then easily move on. Because there were few material possessions beyond the subsistence needs of the family, there was also less work related to the upkeep and caretaking of items and the living space needed to contain them. Thus, one was not tied down either by possessions or the work entailed in their upkeep. Consequently, men and women could travel together on the land. This point offers a critique of a prime element of settlement life.

The assertion that life on the land was oriented toward subsistence is supported by this comment made by Marie which suggests that most of what people needed, they made.

> "When I was a child the clothing was made mainly from skins, mainly out of the sewing the mother did, so the women were constantly sewing. Every now and then rubber boots would be made available for someone to wear but other than that there wasn't much to buy."

The passage to follow from an interview with June talks about life growing up on the land in another area of the Baffin region. June is in her late forties. She lived in an outpost camp with her husband and other family members until her mother in law contracted TB and had to go to the hospital. After this many of the people in the camp moved to Igloolik to be closer to her and so June and her husband followed.

When discussing the many varieties of vegetation in this area that women and children would gather for the family it was lamented by both June and MaryAnn that the Igloolik area was chosen by government as a centre for trade and eventually settlement in the 1960s, when compulsory education was established. Many people relocated to Igloolik from outpost camps in the Baffin region. The hunting of sea mammals is good in the Igloolik area. However, in terms of vegetation and scenery there are many better locations where these women suggested they would have preferred to see a settlement established. A further point that June makes in this passage is that it was easier having

children on the land with the help of other women, than in hospital. To follow is a comment by June regarding these issues.

> "There were blackberries and blueberrries in the area where we lived and ptarmigan. We collected many edible plants. There is a certain plant, you eat the roots instead of the plant. You cook it in oil and it tastes sweet, like a sweet potato, very good. I have not been there for a long time. Since I started having children I have been there once. I had fifteen children.
>
> Yes, to look back it seems very hard but at the time it didn't seem hard. From 1964 to 1970 I had a child every year. My mother adopted two. I had only four of my children in the hospital. The first children were born in the camp. You would think of a person to turn to and you would have your baby, but once I went to the hospital it was very hard."

Another issue brought out in discussions with women is that in the work women performed as part of everyday life in the camps, in contrast to the settlement, did not emphasize the preparation of meals, washing dishes, or housecleaning. An issue which is never brought out as a reason for the consumption of raw meat but which is relevant here is that this practise allows time for other more important work such as sewing. The comments to follow also suggest that house cleaning was not a regular part of women's duties in the camp. This point was brought out while discussing changes that occurred in women's work with the move to the settlement.

> "Before we lived in houses and you didn't have to worry about a big house and doing lots of dishes it was a speedier day because when the baby wasn't

crying or was sleeping one could work and sew very quickly."

"In the past women did not have to clean up so they spent their time sewing."

When describing the routine of daily life in the past, as was discussed above by Jean concerning the greater mobility allowed by few possessions, women suggested that one factor which influenced patterns of work and childcare was the semi-nomadic organisation of life on the land. In the fall people would walk inland to hunt the caribou where they would stay until early autumn. This is the time of year when the caribou skin is the right thickness for particular kinds of sewing.

After the caribou skins had been caught they were laid out and chosen by women according to the size of the people they would be sewing for. MaryAnn, in describing her experiences, relayed a story to me in which she suggested that this was a common practise of her family. While she was sent to school in Igloolik in approximately 1966, her family remained in outpost camps and continued to hunt for several years after many other people had moved into the settlement.

At this time many people who had moved into rental housing could no longer afford to go out on the land and travel the long distance to Baffin Island or other areas where there was caribou to hunt. When her family had extra skins they would take them to the settlement for people who

no longer had access to furs. One man suggested to MaryAnn that he remembered those days when her family would come into Igloolik and he would be envious of their warm clothing.

MaryAnn's mother and other women described the long process of preparing caribou skins. Initially the dried skin was scraped and softened so that it was easier to prepare. A person would sleep in the caribou skin over night. This would soften the skin and allow scraping to begin the next day. Before the introduction of steel, both caribou shoulder bones and stone scrapers were used for different stages of the skin softening processes. These instruments are still used by Igloolik women today, although steel scrapers are also used. After the skins were scraped they would be stretched. They would then be ready to cut for clothing. Inner and outer parkas, stockings, socks, would be made from the caribou. Seal skin was used to make boots, and mitts and could also be used for other forms of clothing. The bedding or sleeping mats were also made from caribou, as well as the trim or outer tassels on skin clothing.

Another important contribution women made through the production of skin clothing was through the creation of the living space which was either wholly or partially made with skins. Today, women do not make seal skin tents, but many sew their own canvas tents to be used in spring and summer

camps. In an igloo, the window would be made using seal flipper or intestine. A practise which was particular to the Baffin region was to place a seal skin tent on the inside of the igloo the first day after its construction once the igloo had set. This provided an extra measure of warmth (Birkett-Smith, 1971). Thus, it is clear that the sewn work which women performed on the land was crucial both to the success of the hunt and generally for the needs of the family.

When I asked women about whether men sewed on the land the general consensus was that men might assist with part of the preparation process for skins, the final scraping or stretching of the skins, but for the most part sewing was one of women's responsibilities. But just as women were infrequently hunters or could take part in hunting activities, there were times when it was necessary for men to sew. What is clear is that there was a well designed collaboration between women and men on the land, a division of labour existed because people were needed to perform specific duties which required a concentrated effort to meet the needs of the collectivity.

> "Men would sew when they were desperate or when completely alone they could repair their clothing. Women didn't hunt because there were too many responsibilities in the home. When rubber boots were not available in the north women had to sew all the time."

Teaching and Learning Sewing Skills on the Land

Most women I spoke to had a positive attitude about the times on the land and the period in which they learned to sew. When one considers recollections from the past, of course, it must always be noted that one is looking through the lense of the present (Hedley, 1979; Phillips, 1989). Women see the importance of sewing and the value of life on the land both in relation to the many difficulties that exist for families in the community today and the importance of maintaining significant aspects of Inuit culture. The comments to follow discuss the process of learning to sew. The point is made that learning to sew was very much connected with observation rather than more directed teaching methods. Related to this, children were able to observe and learn over time because they had a constant model. This again reinforces the suggestion that sewing was absolutely central to life on the land.

> "Part of the way we learned to sew was not by being taught directly. we would walk a lot in the summer and as we wear skins they would tend to make holes in our soles. Because our mothers had so much to sew we were told to sew this on our own and this began the process of learning to sew on our own."

> "The women were always sewing, so we had the opportunity to watch them while they were sewing and learn through observation."

In the passage to follow Marie shares a story about making her first pair of Kamiks. She made these when she was quite young due to her own inquisitiveness. Having

taken this action she was forced to finish what she started and this gave her added experience to speed up the process of learning to sew.

> "When I was about ten her mother had gone visiting and had taken apart an old pair of kamiks to put in new soles. So I patterned the kamiks for myself to fit me and I was making them when my mother came in. She said what are you doing, you have ruined these kamiks. I was forced to finish them so I did and I wore them after, so that was my first pair of kamiks and I must have been small to fit into them. From that I started to sew on and off until I could correct my mistakes and today I am able to make whatever I want."

The comment to follow suggests again that young girls learned to sew over time through observation and practise.

> "I learned to sew from my mother. My mother would be too lazy to sew mitts and so she would tell me to sew a pair and I didn't know how but I would sew them any way."

> "In the past it was easier to learn because you learned as a small child going along after your mother and so you new that it was possible."

This formal learning is in contrast to the situation of young girls today who are away at school all day and therefore do not have the opportunities to learn from their mothers.

> "I would be watching my mother sew and when she had alot of scraps I would sew these and then my mother would end up cutting me something to sew and I would sew this."

> "When I was thirteen my grandmother was getting too old so she would cut the pattern and then give it to me to sew on my own."

The above passages suggest that women learned to sew as young girls with only minimal direction.

The following comments by three women Betty, Marie, and Leslie underline the diversity of women's perceptions and experiences of life on the land. In the story to follow Betty, who is in her late fifties discusses her experience of learning to sew.

> "I would help my mother make a seal skin tent but never on my own. I learned all the things I know from my mother. It wasn't like you would be taught in school and taught properly but in my time you would prepare something and it would be given to do even if you didn't know how. I did not really like sewing because my grandmother said that I was not going to sew. I would simply help around. This got to me probably and so I didn't like sewing. So I did other duties and I also did other things that I did not enjoy either, such as caribou skin softening. I would prefer to go walking getting this and that rather than sitting down and concentrating on sewing. Yes I did hunt. Yes I liked this better than sewing."

Her comment indicates that females were not always required to learn to sew at a young age. Some women were taught to hunt if there was not an older male brother. Also, if one were named after a male ancestor, this could be considered a reason for learning skills predominantly acquired by males. However, as Betty suggests, eventually she did learn to sew, but unlike many women who enjoy sewing very much this was not the case for her. After Betty's marriage, though, she suggests that,

> "I did not mind when I was no longer hunting. This is probably because I was settling down and sewing then after my marriage. I then liked sewing for a while until my eyes got bad."

It is possible to suggest that Betty therefore adjusted to her situation and made the best of it. At the same time

her sense of resistance to prescribed norms, such as sewing, reflects both perseverance and strength which is evident generally in women's stories in different ways.

This story expressed by Marie focuses on her childhood experiences and the process through which she learned to sew.

> "When I was young I would go out on the land and hunt with my father. I was the oldest child and it was necessary for a person always to be watching the dog and sled. Once when I was young and living on the land I was out hunting and saw a polar bear standing behind me on the dog sled. I pushed my family off and the polar bear jumped on, then my father shot the polar bear."

Following this comment she shared a story about the move to Grise Fiord, a project which was introduced by the Government for the purpose of claiming this area of the high arctic when there was still some question of sovereignty. The lack of consideration for the people who were relocated to this settlement and the assumption that Inuit people can survive anywhere, reflects the ethnocentric and colonialist attitude maintained by government during this period. This is the context within which Marie learned to sew.

> "When I was thirteen we moved to Grise Fiord from Northern Quebec. We travelled there on a ship accompanied by an RCMP officer. It was a very isolated area. We arrived late in the fall when the ground was frozen. There was also less soil and moss for making sod houses. It was very difficult that first year. We had to set up our tents and stayed only in these for an entire winter. The problem was that there were animals to hunt, but no proper shelters.
>
> At this point after moving to Grise Fiord I began sewing. I sewed my first pair of kamiks when I

was thirteen. My brother was old enough to go out on the land then and my grandmother was no longer able to sew. My grandmother would make patterns and I would sew them but I had to teach myself to sew. I stopped hunting at this point."

The story to follow, shared by Leslie provides a good picture of the importance of sewing in camp life, the way that children were taught to sew, and the importance that they themselves placed on learning these skills due to its central importance to every day life. The very public nature of sewing on the land is also revealed, for her comments make it clear that one's work was open to praise and criticism by other family members and camp dwellers, as well as being appraised by women from other camps while travelling.

"When we lived at camp Sarah and I would sit up all night and sew when we were learning. This was fun. It was like you put all your efforts into learning from people. You would watch your mother and then you would try to make the patterns. If you were stuck your mother would help make a pattern and then you would sew it. Our mothers would make things for kids. We also practised how to sew a straight line because a straight stitch is very important.

When you started to make your own things it was not like going to school doing every thing at a specific hour. Nothing is scheduled. When there was an appropriate time they would show us how to waterproof or how to make good stitches. If we did not finish one day then we would have to finish the next day. But otherwise we didn't make plans for the day. It was embarrassing not to be able to make things. If younger people could sew better then you it was shameful. Our mothers would tell us if you don't learn to sew well then you will never have good clothing and also that one should not so fast so that the stitches do not come out well."

When discussing the public nature of sewing activities on the land it must also be clarified that to suggest that these activities were 'public' is to make my own designation of 'public' as opposed to 'private' which did not exist for Inuit in the camp setting. However, I am suggesting that these activities were of a public nature in the same sense that the most significant work performed by men also maintained a public character. There was no separation of the home and the hunt such that women were 'housewives' in the private sphere performing unpaid domestic duties for husbands, who worked in the public sphere and received public recognition for their work through a wage and interaction with their colleagues. On the land all people participated in the mixed economy and recognition for one's sphere of work was a public act. The work which both women and men performed in camp life represented part of a collective effort. This point is being stressed because it is relevant to understanding the changes that have taken place in the settlement context, and women's response to modes of valuation and forms of control which are clearly linked to a capitalist wage economy and a southern value system. Housekeeping duties, such as washing dishes and clothing, cleaning house and other such activities were kept to a minimum on the land. Other responsibilities, most notably sewing, comprised the majority of women's work.

Conclusion

When considering the transition from the camp to the settlement, then, it is useful to refer to life in the past, but not to idealise the past, or to suggest that life was easier, or that people had less work to do necessarily, but rather to provide an understanding of the significance of the changes that have taken place since the move to the settlement. If there is one issue which stands out concerning the difficulties that women have encountered since the move to the settlement it is the loss of control over their most central activity, sewing. This is due both to the inadequacy of housing for traditional work and the expectation that they should take over the domestic duties necessitated by a southern housing design which has increased the work load for those women who have continued to perform both sets of duties. The move to the settlement also meant that young girls were sent to school. This increased women's work responsibilities, because girls were not able either to learn the sewing skills of their mothers through observation or to assist with other activities such as child care to the same extent. The greater emphasis placed on work within the cash economy over time has also affected the way that sewing is perceived and performed by women. The lack of acknowledgement and support for the significant contribution that sewing has made and continues

to make within the household economy is another issue women address.

Many older women still perform their traditional sewing activities for the hunters in their families and are presently in the process of organising to teach younger women these skills. However, as mentioned, changes have taken place in the content and value of women's work in the movement to rental housing. Social change that has occurred intergenerationally with the introduction of a southern education system and the increasing importance of the cash economy have made it more difficult to pass on these skills. Still many older women see sewing as a basis for connection with younger women and a way for women to come together generally. There are many obstacles to the realisation of this goal, however. These obstacles are best understood in relation to changes in women's position and the structure of life in the settlement, a topic which will be discussed in Chapter Four.

CHAPTER FOUR

HOUSING, HOUSEWORK, HOUSEWIFIZATION: EVERYDAY LIFE, EVERYDAY RESISTANCE IN THE SETTLEMENT

Introduction

In chapter four I will discuss the movement of Inuit people from camps to rental housing in the 1960s. I will first address the greater work burden created for many women through southern housing design and the introduction of home economics programs in the settlement. The inadequacy of the rental housing for women's and men's work related to the hunting way of life, as discussed by women, and how this is connected to government interests and policy in the north will also be addressed.

Having presented the appraisal provided by women in Igloolik of the system established in the settlement and the changes in the value of their work and workload, several connected issues will be considered. The point will be made that, despite the many difficulties women have encountered through the transformation of their work relating to sewing in the settlement, women continue to see sewing as a valuable skill and believe that younger generations of women should learn these skills. The fact that younger women generally have not learned traditional sewing skills since the move to the settlement and introduction of schooling is discussed. Some steps taken by older women in the community to determine younger women's interest in learning these

skills suggests that they would like to possess this knowledge. While they do not feel that they can fill the position of older women, sewing is seen as having important cultural roots and as a way to bring the generations of women together. Also, women's sewing makes an important economic contribution to the household. This is true of both traditional skin sewing and machine sewing with cloth materials. Many younger women do use sewing machines to make clothes which draw upon the designs of traditional skin clothing, but are meant to be worn in the settlement. In a sense this can be seen as a reformulation of tradition. In the same way older women desire to open a sewing centre to pass on both traditional and nontraditional sewing skills to younger women. This will provide employment for different generations of women, and is a way of combining social, cultural and economic concerns to address the issues for both tradition and change which are of importance to women today in the settlement.

Rental Housing and the Changes in Women's Work

The lack of acknowledgement by government and researchers about the substance of women's contribution to the hunting way of life, or the different structure of the division of labour within the subsistence economy, is reflected in policy. The paternalistic and patriarchal structure that has been legitimized in northern communities is connected to the ideology of modernisation and progress

associated with industrial development and southern capitalist culture. The government goal in colonizing the north was a combination of the exploitation of resources through large scale resource extraction (Berger, 1977, 1992), and the establishment of territorial control over the area. It is clear that the lifeways of the Inuit people who inhabited the north was not attended to in policy, except in terms of their elimination. Many small-scale programmes were initiated in the 1960s to deal with the northern inhabitants. This included relocation into settlements and the migration of Inuit families to southern communities for the purpose of assimilation (Stevenson, 1968).

This process of ethnocide was in keeping with policy concerning aboriginal people throughout Canada during this period. The 'White Paper' is just one example of assimilationist legislation proposed by Department of Indian and Northern Affairs. The idea was to extinguish the Act so that there would be no distinct services for Aboriginal peoples. The resource base that Aboriginal peoples were seen to possess, reservation land set aside by treaty, was to pass into their hands, likely would have been lost as a result because of the resources required to pay taxes on property. At that time, the government position was that Aboriginal peoples did not have any other legal claim to land or resources other than those provided by treaties. While Inuit in the north had signed no treaties and were not

covered under the Indian Act, it is clear that northern policy paralleled this paternalistic intent to 'civilize the natives' (Paine, 1977). The substandard housing that was provided along with compulsory education and a government infrastructure in Inuit communities of the Eastern Arctic during the 1960s suggests that the goal of the government was to introduce a southern social and economic structure in northern communities, and to do this as cheaply as possible. As the structure of the State is both capitalist and patriarchal, women experienced more subtle and overt forms of outside intervention in their everyday lives.

It was noted in chapter three that the primary responsibility of women in the camp was sewing. These skills were crucial because they provided warmth and protection on the land. This was achieved both through the production of clothing for the household members, and through the sewing performed to create a habitable living space, either solely or partially made from skin materials. The point was also made that women's everyday work commitments did not include house cleaning, nor was there a major emphasis placed on the preparation of large and varied meals, or cleaning the dishes which accompany this time consuming process. Women's work activities on the land were distinct from those which exist for women living in rental housing. The latter is modeled from a southern design. These considerations provide the basis for understanding how

women's work obligations changed in the move to the settlement, and how a double burden was created for them.

The experience of women who moved from camp to settlement provides an alternative perspective from which to critically evaluate the development process. What is interesting, though unsurprising, is the lack of consultation with Inuit in the formulation of housing policy, and the failure of this policy to make any allowances in the design of housing for the continuation of activities related to the hunting way of life. That women did not clean house, do dishes, do laundry and other notable aspects of duties taught to them in the settlements suggests the mistake of assuming timeless and universal roles for women in the household.

The assumptions of government policy and researchers who carried with them the discourse of the timelessness of women's work and its secondary status in comparison to men's work, have influenced changes that have taken place for women since the move to settlement housing. However, the meaning given to the role of 'housewife' in the southern context and the duties it entails does not apply to the camp life. Women spent the majority of time in camp, if they were not hunting themselves, but the concept of the house, and home as hearth, etc. that has become a part of the southern discourse cannot be applied in this case, though there are references to the separation of the home and the

hunt by researchers attempting to project a southern structure onto very different organisation of life on the land.

The following quotes reinforce the point that Inuit people did not identify two separate work spheres. The comment to follow from a report concerning the relocation of Inuit families to the South during the initial period of settlement provides a good explanation of the sense of everyday life and work which existed for men and women on the land.

> "Stated in a general way, an obvious barrier to readjustment of migrant eskimos in southern communities would be attempts by them to retain the daily patterns of activities which they were accustomed to in Northern settlements. Still another area of concern about different ideas of work in terms of separability from household activities and in terms of worthwhileness. To Eskimo males first entering the wage earning situation, the distinction between place of work and home is strange and uncomfortable. For the trapper-hunter the tent or house is simultaneously a place of work and a home. Similarly, the immediate geographical area is home and a place of work. Again, the sharp distinction between work and play found in industrial societies is much more blurred in trapper-hunter societies such as the Eskimo" (Stevenson, 1968:2).

This passage from Smith's book, "the Eskimo", also provides this different sense of 'house and home'. While this tale concerns the Inuit of Greenland much of Smith's work refers to regions of the Canadian Arctic and specifically to the Baffin region.

> "There is a tale told in Greenland of a great hunter who loved his settlement so much that he never left it, and on the only occasion that he

> could be induced to go on a journey, he was so affected at seeing his home again that his heart broke, when from his old mountains he saw the sun rise over the sea and its rays break against the iceberg on the horizon. There is in this little legend a hymn to 'home' more heartfelt than is usually credited to a primitive people; but there is also an implied wonder at something strange, that a man can grow so attached to one place, here I don't refer to the West Greenlanders of today - are a wandering people. Even where there are permanent winter houses it is the exception for a family to live in the same settlement for more than a few years at a time" (1971:142).

What can be inferred from these comments is that women would also have a different conception of what was meant by home. Women were isolated at times in small camps or in winter weather, but the 'home' was not separated from other spheres of life. Women and men both performed aspects of their work related to hunting within the dwelling space or outdoors depending on the time of year and other factors. Also the family travelled together, and presumably, permanence existed in this collaborative effort. Women may have had a significant connection to their dwelling space in that they were responsible for constructing the tent and providing much of the preparations for the Igloo. But this point which relates to control over the means of production is also contrary to the southern conception of the housewife. Though Birkett-Smith makes the point that Inuit don't have the connection to home, referring to a house, because they travel and are associated with the land, this does not stop him from asserting that Inuit men require good 'housewives', projecting southern distinctions of the public

and private sphere onto the very different organisation of work and social life on the land.

Hugh Brody in his account of life in an Inuit settlement in the early seventies makes this suggestion about women's role when on the land.

> "The traditional division of sex roles were related to a clear distinction between the home and the hunt ... Now that a man can no longer depend on his wife's unquestioning subservient position, he is apt to feel uneasy and suspicious. This is very apparent on hunting trips where men are more unwilling to stay away for very long. Because the expression of uneasiness and suspicion is considered a fault in character, most men tend to keep feelings to themselves and suppress them, accepting to all appearances, their predicament and their wives activities. It is not surprising, therefore, that a man, when drunk may attack his wife with considerable ferocity" (1973:218).

This comment reflects assumptions held and perpetuated by male researchers about women's role and the importance of their work on the land. However, the clear distinction between the 'home and the hunt' referred to by Brody and the 'unquestioning subservient position of women' are both cast into doubt when the significance of women's work on the land as discussed by women themselves, and in the above quotations, is taken into account. It is interesting that both Birkett-Smith and Brody feel the need to mention men 'thrashing' their wives when discussing relations between women and men. However, the way that they discuss this issue provides an interesting contrast. Birkett-Smith suggests that Inuit men are more henpecked then European men, though according to him, this is not to say that they

never thrash their wives, it is simply to say that they are more henpecked then men generally. In Brody's analysis he seems to be suggesting that in the past men dominated over their wives. However, today men can not control their wives. However, they feel the need to resist being henpecked, a word Brody also uses when quoting a man who was doing 'women's work'. Men are very frustrated by the lack of obedience of their women. Therefore, according to Brody, after a few drinks it is understandable that they beat their wives. The sexism that pervades these comments is blatant.

I will suggest a third possibility. In the past relations were egalitarian and autonomous, thus everyone had their space and attempted to interact peaceably. However, forms of outside intervention and control over the lives of Inuit people that have been in place in the settlement since the 1960's in most of the Eastern Arctic have had a very negative impact on relations between men and women at the level of the household. This has been especially detrimental for women.

Ideology, then, has played a role in the difficulties women have encountered, and hegemonic discourses have been established in the settlement infrastructure, through the school system, the Church, rental housing and government agencies generally (Gramsci, 1992). It must also be noted that increasing involvement in the cash economy or capitalist market has also had a major effect on women's

work. As pointed out by many scholars, an analysis of changes that have taken place at the level of the household provides a basis for examining the total impact of capital on every day life. Such changes reveal the web of connections that exist between household, community, state and market. Yet it is still important to recognise agency as a significant factor in the variability and complexity of relations at the household level (Hedley, 1976, 1985, 1992; Phillips, 1987, 1989).

When considering the construction of patriarchal texts relating to men's and women's work in Inuit society within the settlement context what was expected of women and what was taught in schools to young girls and women, was the southern ideology of the good housewife. Home economics programs were established in the settlement to teach women the domestic skills necessary to maintain southern standards of hygiene and cleanliness within the domestic sphere. A study by Keith Crowe (1968) which provides some of the history of the Igloolik area has this to say about the establishment of housing in Igloolik.

> "A programme of adult education is part of the housing scheme, much of it paid for by a grant made by the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation. In the Igloolik region housing education began in late 1965. The programme included several phases as follows:
>
> Phase 1
> Explanation of the nature and intent of housing scheme. Preliminary allocation of houses and election of housing management officers.

Phase 2
Education for families in housekeeping, hygiene, budgeting, and general maintenance.

Phase 3
Continuing guidance of the housing management committee.

Phase 4
Training of local women to carry on the home management teaching." (p. 20).

Thus, women were provided with housing education, but housing in which women were expected to take on this new role was substandard, in that it was too small and was built using a southern design. Families were also required to pay rent to live in this housing. This further incorporated them into the capitalist economy and helped to undermine the viability of a subsistence lifestyle. Women lost control over this production, the creation of the living space, and a binding obligation was created to obtain money to pay the government for rent, which created both a dependence on and an answerability to government. The move to a permanent settlement also placed major restrictions on the mobility of women since they have generally not been in control of transportation vehicles. This has implications relating to the privatisation of women's work, as mobility and money are connected within the subsistence oriented hunting economy within the settlement context. Hunters are sometimes able to access subsidies for hunting costs, although women did suggest that these are not open to all hunters, or easy to obtain. However, vehicles are generally used for hunting

activities in families that still participate in these activities. A social network and a degree of mobility therefore exists for men who participate in hunting. For women who participate in these activities, they are less likely to go out on the land today, with the exception of spending time in spring and summer camps. Their sewing is generally in the house and a network which provided the traditional forms of recognition or prestige for women's sewing skills and work well done is no longer in place. Cultural and economic forms of validation and appreciation are given to the activities of men within the hunting economy. However, as women are not supported through subsidies for their economic contribution to hunting. Also, they do not have the same networks of support and recognition that existed on the land and still exist for hunters. The importance of women's work has not been fully acknowledged and is often taken for granted. In this sense women have lost some of the control they once maintained over this work. At the same time women were expected to take on a host of new tasks, such as housecleaning, doing dishes, and preparing meals within government housing. However, sewing is not simply an extra burden, because it remains important to women despite the difficulties they have encountered in the settlement. In this sense sewing can be viewed as a measure of women's resistance to forms of outside intervention and influence.

Changes in the Settlement: Women's Voices

I will now turn to the comments of women which reveal their perspectives concerning the change to settlement life. In the following comment Colleen discusses the introduction of housing in the settlement, which was brought in during the 1960s, and the resulting alterations in her work.

> "In 1965 the first houses were built. The little square buildings, (otherwise referred to as match box houses), I don't remember when they came. The slanted buildings came in 1965 and then more buildings started coming. There were very few people gathered in Igloolik so the people hunted much more. When I moved into the slanted house that is when I began to look after the house well. There were only three slanted houses on this side then. I do not know how many houses there were on the Anglican side" (Interview, 1993).

The movement to settlement housing had a profound impact on the lives of women. The introduction of southern housing created a greater work burden as many women continued to sew skin clothing for the hunters in their families, while also taking on the responsibilities associated with rental housing. In an interview with Jean she notes just how difficult it has been, undertaking work related to both the rental home and the hunt.

> "It is just like my work has doubled when I live in the house. I have to cook for the children. I have two brothers and a son-in-law, a husband and a grown up son and these are the five adults I have to make clothing for. On top of that in my spare time I have to be softening and preparing skins and I also spend time reading the bible. And although sewing what you make doesn't cost anything getting the skins from hunters, bullets are expensive and we use duffle a lot today and one needs money for this. So either way one lives

two lives, doing the cooking and so on and on the other side doing the skins for the hunters."

Jean's comment clarifies the changes in women's work and the added duties taken on by older women. It also suggests the increased pressure that is created today for women to obtain money to help support the needs of their families. In the following women express similar points related to changes in women's work. It also suggests the different dynamics within the community that make it difficult for women to get together.

> "Before we lived in houses and you didn't have to worry about a big house and doing lots of dishes it was a speedier day because when the baby wasn't crying or was sleeping one could work and sew very quickly but at those times women did not gather together to do one thing. Now if women have to gather together there would be some kids getting together and so you would require a babysitter."

This same assertion is made by Marie.

> "You can't sew all the time even if you put your mind to sewing because there are to many other responsibilities. Children to look after, house and dishes to clean, and if the children need something then you would have to leave your sewing. You can never just sit. There are always things to do.
>
> I feel that women should sew but women look after the rental housing today so we turn to other responsibilities. In the past women did not have to clean up so we spent our time sewing. And today if you are doing seal skin or caribou skin clothing they dry out because of the furnaces. In the past in the igloo they did not dry out."

In the following quote Leslie discusses some of her many responsibilities and the place of sewing within her work.

> "I sew because I enjoy it, but what happens a lot of times is that you have your housework to do and

> your laundry to do and I have parents who are getting very old and my husband likes me to go there and help my parents every now and then. When you are sewing something and it is nice and it turns out the way you wanted you feel proud and so you want to do more. But when you are sewing and you have to leave because you have to go see your parents or do the laundry, by the time you get back it is not as much fun as at the time you started."

Leslie's comment suggests the many social obligations that women also must fulfil. It can be noted that older people maintained an important place in camp life in the past acting as elders with knowledge to pass on to younger generations. As the camp setting had a more extended familial base any responsibilities in assisting parents could be met more easily. Women would not be required to take care of their parents and the needs that they may have for the upkeep of their own home within the settlement context. Therefore social obligations to elders which may have been met without great difficulty on the land are more time consuming in the settlement context.

When I asked June if she did any volunteer work she had this to say: "Yes, I used to be a part of the women's auxiliary and if there is a death in a family I will stay and help around the house." This kind of work also came up in general conversations with women where it was suggested that a particular woman was very helpful and often assisted families after a death. This suggests the fairly frequent need for assistance due to deaths in families that is a part of every day life to which women adjust themselves. Another

issue discussed by women is the inappropriate structure of rental housing for women's traditional work related to the hunting economy. After the move to the settlement many women were still required to produce skin clothing for the hunters in their families. Thus it is not simply that their traditional responsibilities were eliminated, but rather for many women it become a matter of taking on many other work activities in addition to performing sewing duties. This has become more difficult because housing was not designed to accommodate the every day tasks of Inuit people who still practised the hunting and sewing way of life. One problem revealed by women is that houses do not provide an adequate environment for working with skins. This problem is clearly discussed by Kate.

> "Following the Inuit way of making things and government rules it doesn't match up and so doesn't go well. This is true for different reasons. You cannot take the skins into government housing because they dry up very badly. Housing is too warm. The building would need to have proper freezers so that the skins don't dry out."

Consequently, women will work in a separate building next to the house.

> "The reason why I am sewing out here, (in a sewing shed), is because it is cooler. It is too warm in the house and the skins dry out so much that they are difficult to sew. When I am going to sew cloth and other fabrics I go into the house."

Thus one possible, though not entirely adequate, solution to the inappropriateness of southern housing for work related to the subsistence economy is to build a sewing shed outside

the house where women can perform sewing work. However, as the following comment suggests, a sewing shed requires materials and labour to which women in the community do not always have access. For those without a shed, sewing commitments have been that much harder to fulfil.

> "I have often thought that a place should be provided in the house that is cool where skins could be kept. I would like to have a shed but I don't have one so I have to find room for the sewing machine all the time. I am presently making an amauti for my daughter so when there are people over I have to wait for them to go out and use the kitchen or the coffee table as a sewing table. So personally I don't have a shed but I would really like to. I usually do my sewing in the kitchen area but sometimes on the porch. I wanted a sewing shed but the material is difficult to get. My husband has started collecting for a shed but it has been in process for a long time. The boards are down but not a lot is happening."

The experience of sewing in the house also suggests that houses are overcrowded which increases the difficulties of domestic work, both traditional and nontraditional. It is clear then that an added work burden exists for women who continue to sew for their families while also undertaking domestic duties required by a southern housing design and standards. Rental housing also creates difficulties in that it creates a need for a cash income. In the passage to follow Betty discusses her decision to build her own house in order to assist her husband and alleviate some of these pressures.

> "We built a house on this side because there was nobody here, two years ago. It is better for my husband. For me it is harder though sometimes not. It is less convenient. I have to wash

everything by hand. My husband is mentally unstable and he had to pay rent and I thought that it would help him settle some of his problems and I didn't mind making my own shelter. When I was growing up we lived in igloos and sod houses. We had oil lamps which required a great deal of effort to keep going so it was much harder and then we were also hunting. But I am busy, washing clothes, keeping the house clean, buying groceries.

Yes, I am proud to have my own house. Other people have a blueprint but I had it in my mind. I new that it would be nice when I finished. When we lived in the sod house we had to scrape the floor where while now I wash it. I regret that I could not wash those floors. My youngest daughter still lives with us and she was sad when we moved. I asked her why and she said because in the sod house there was lice and so there would be lice in our new house." (There was laughter in the telling of this story).

As women's roles in the household have changed, as younger generations undergoing schooling fail to learn the traditional skills of their parents and grandparents, the cultural importance of sewing and the value of women's work related, are transformed. Marie offers some relevant observations concerning the ways that sewing activities have changed. Her commentary points to the isolation and lack of mobility of women in the settlement context which has contributed to the privatisation of women's sewn work and the accompanying change in attitudes toward sewing.

"The difference is that today's people take any pair already made whether they are poorly sewn or not. So young people cannot make proper kamiks because they want ready made materials. Another woman told me that I would be wasting my time to do it properly. This is not done the right way. (referring to a pair of kamiks she has made) This was done quickly. These are for me. If I were to wear this before I would say no, but maybe it is

> my age or something because I am no longer concerned. The reason why we were concerned in the past was because if we went to another settlement, if our sewing was not good, the women, they would look at it and laugh or something like that. But we are just in the house now. We don't travel to other communities by dog team. Our sewing is in the house."

Marie's analysis of changes in attitudes towards sewing and the reasons for this transformation indicates that on the land women's work was of a public nature. However, within the settlement context, women's work does not have the same worth or value, in the sense that now 'our sewing is in the house'. This point, that sewing today is in the house while daughters are outside the house, is one of the major reasons for why sewing skills are not being passed on.

However, there are younger women who do traditional sewing and many women who machine sew 'amautis' and other clothing to be worn in the settlement. The comments to follow discuss intergenerational changes in the acquisition of sewing skills. The perceptions of both older and younger women will be presented to draw out the continuing value and significance of sewing in the settlement context and reasons why these skills should be carried on.

In the following quote Jean discusses reasons why her daughters were not taught her skills after the movement into the settlement and the difficulties that this presents still today.

> "When my daughters were young and already in school I would ask them to sew some caribou skin and simple stitchery, but they didn't like the fur

that would stick to their clothes. I would ask them to soften skins and they would say that they had homework so that they did not have time for that. I would say that it was okay because I did not have an understanding of school. I would just let them be and assumed that this was the way that things would go on. But later when they are adults and they are into sewing now they want to learn. What I did not understand is that this would become an interest later in life, but I don't have time to leave my work and teach. So right now we are caught in a situation where my daughter wants to work but there is not time to teach her."

When considering the reasons why younger women should learn sewing skills today Kate has this to say.

"It is a must that younger women should learn to sew because sometimes I hear a young women on the radio who would be sewing in my time, they could learn how to do everything and are asking to buy seal skin or caribou skin clothing when they are so able. They could sew so nicely without having to wear glasses or their eyes getting tired because they are young enough. They also have good teeth to chew the skins and they could learn to make their own nice things."

Other women in the community make these observations.

"My daughters express an interest in learning to sew, but they tend to say that the things which need to be sewn are either smelly or there is too much caribou fur getting all over them that they don't like."

"In the past it was easier to learn because you learned as a small child going along after your mother so you knew it was possible. But nowadays kids do not learn until they are teenagers and when they finally try they can prove to themselves so easily that it is not possible to make things. It is too hard to make them. Some times I hear a woman say that in the future no one will be able to make hand made boots. Only a few young people are interested in learning."

"My oldest daughters, they learned to sew at home, but they are away and they don't touch it again. When I try to show them they don't know how to do

it because they have not done it since they left home. If you could teach them in a place where they could be taught as teachers teach in school they would continue this in their daily lives."

"Right now the school has funding for cultural inclusion so that they teach in school how to sew traditional things. That could go on, but there are people who never had that chance. Our young people, they are having children and they are not in school any more. These are the people that need to have a separate place to go because they can not go to school to learn."

"It is important for young people to learn. In the traditional way of sewing we tend to use very hard materials. Today the young people have no use for the thimble. It is uncomfortable. Different materials are used. Caribou skin is soft but you still need protection for the thumb."

Jean's daughter Tina makes these comments.

"The past two years I have also learned how to make seal skin boots also from skins that were cut. It had been dried on the rack and I took it from there. You have to soften it and stretch it and scrape the top layer. I did all that and got a pattern off of Tom's sister who made them for him with instructions and was very proud to finish from beginning to end ... I think I will stick to making these things. I will not ask my mother to make them for me any more. I have a pattern and know how to prepare it from the rack. I don't do as much as I could do if I really pushed it. I know I could do more but working full time, it takes a lot of work. I took it so much for granted before until I started to do a little bit. It is also a dirty job preparing skins. You have to scrape the fat. I guess it is something that young people are lazy to do, to get their hands dirty. It does smell but once you learn it is a valuable skill. Because I can sew myself, if I didn't have my mother to ask for skins I would probably be forced to learn how but I guess we are lazy in a way and it is very hard work.

But I really enjoy the part where you cut the pattern and put it all together and learn the different stitches. I am interested to learn but I have never been in a situation where I had to. I've learned what little skills I have because I

started to feel sorry for my mother because she has so much to do. I started to feel like I was part of the burden because she has so much to do. Women my age in my family are not sewing any more. I am thinking in the future when she is not able to do all this there is going to be a huge gap that she will leave behind."

Tina also offers this observation about the interest of young women to learn sewing.

"Not every one is in my situation so it would be good if there were a centre where women could go to learn to sew. Some other young women I know feel awkward to go and say I would like to learn this, can you show me, because they feel that they are imposing, as they know that the person they are turning to for help has other things to do besides teaching. Even though older women are very receptive, they want very much to pass on their skills because they are overburdened supporting people like me and yet they don't complain. Maybe that is part of the problem. They don't say maybe you should be learning how to do this. I knew how to do this when I was 16 or 17 and you should be doing the same thing. Their generation is very strong. They carry a lot and do not complain. I guess we take them to much for granted. It seems like it is easy for them to do but it is not. I think their responsibilities should lessen as they get older but it is just the opposite. The more families grow the more peole they have to sew and prepare skins for. I think there are some who have even given up trying to keep up. They are just tired. I know I would be. I know that I am not going to be able to do what my mother does and I am not going to try. I have already told her. You have to be organized and skilled. What my mother does now is to make clothes in varying sizes and then lends them out to the grandchildren when they are going out and then they bring them back. For the regular hunters she makes a full set of clothing but for the rest of us who only go out a couple of times a year she does this."

We should also note that women do not confine their sewing to traditional materials. They now make extensive use of cloth materials which can be obtained from the store. There

are cost saving advantages to sewing one's own clothing, but what is gained when comparing the initial price of store bought clothing to hand made clothing is not the only savings. There is also the option to repair clothing for longer wear and to recycle the material from clothing that is no longer being used to make something new.

The incorporation of cloth materials into women's sewing has also meant that new techniques are being developed. Another comment made by Jean suggests the willingness of women to encourage the adoption of alternative forms of sewing which would still have a connection to women's cultural role in the past without the difficult and time consuming work of traditional sewing today.

> "What I would like to see is women able to make nice parkas that they could wear around town. That does not require a lot of hard work."

What Jean is referring to here is the option to produce machine sewn parkas and 'amautis' which are often made with many inventive designs and require cloth material. Another woman suggests that,

> "My thought is always that if I were there (at a sewing centre) and the young people could come then they could decide what they would like to make. Stitches may not be the best ones but it is good enough for themselves. So the best approach would be to let young people choose what they would like to make and then after they become good at it then they could begin to sell after learning to make things for themselves."

As established above, sewing has social, economic, and cultural importance for women in Igloolik and for the community as a whole. What is important to recognize is that everyday life changed considerably following settlement in Igloolik. It is now very difficult for women to perform traditional sewing along with the new domestic responsibilities of their households. This is especially true for those who have employment in the public sector. However, women still value these skills and see their sewing activities as a basis for bringing women together.

The Economic Contribution of Sewing to the Household

Sewing also makes an economic contribution to the household, although the fact that it is not paid work has a connection to it being taken for granted as this comment by Jean suggests.

> "I have a lot of responsibilities and I get to the point where I cry because I have so much to make and so many things to do and when people take it without paying for it - I would sometimes appreciate it if I got a little bit of money for all the hard work I do."

This point requires some consideration when discussing patterns of redistribution and kinship networks in the north. Jean's comment suggests that obligations to one's kin can create a large work burden. The assumption that the same principles of redistribution and reciprocity are at work within the settlement context concerning the hunting economy fails to address important issues. The contribution that people make may not be equally reciprocated as the

literature on the northern economy assumes, (Usher, 1987; Lockhart, 1987), at least not in the cash economy in the settlement context where full time hunters may be able to access subsidies for hunting, but women's full time work within the subsistence economy is not acknowledged or subsidised. A further point that Jean makes which is not recognised in this literature is that for these women sewing is a full time job. However, women are also responsible for the work within the rental housing. Therefore the position of women within this economy has not remained unchanging in the settlement context. It has, in part, been undermined by the lack of support and the greater level of responsibilities women had to take on.

It would therefore be useful to recognise the contribution that women's sewing makes to the household, both through the production of clothing for family members and through money earned selling sewn goods in the informal economy. Both traditional and nontraditional forms of sewing, which still have a cultural component, need to be evaluated to demonstrate their economic contribution to the household.

The cost study provided below provides an estimate of costs for store bought and machine sewn clothing. The purpose is to provide an indication of the economic contribution of women to the household through sewing. The continual rise in the price of sewing materials decreases

the economic benefits of these activities, although women offset this problem by opting for cheaper materials. For instance, duffle is used by women for many different forms of sewing and is necessary both for traditional and machine sewn clothing. However, in the course of one year from August of 1992 to August of 1993 the price of certain colours of duffle rose from $40.00 to 50.00. Most women have therefore opted for a substitute which is approximately $13.00 to $15.00 a metre. Following the cost comparison some excerpts from interviews which discuss the economic contribution of sewing will be provided. I am not in a position to estimate the total value of women's economic contribution to the household through sewing. However, the figures below are indicative for the kind of savings that are provided by women's sewing. When the work of women such as Jean, who makes traditional skin clothing and boots on a regular basis for five men, as well as producing machine sewn clothing for family members and selling sewn items to people upon request. the significant contribution that sewing makes becomes clear.

Figure 1

STORE BOUGHT CLOTHING - HANDMADE CLOTHING
A COST COMPARISON STUDY OF SEVERAL COMMON ITEMS OF APPAREL

(All dollar figures are average prices based on 1993 prices)

Adult Parka

	Handmade			Store Bought	Amt. Saved
Item	Amount	Cost/Unit	Estimated Cost		
Cotton	2 metres	9.49	18.98		
Duffle	2 metres	45.00	90.00		
Duffle Replacement	2 metres	15.00	30.00		
Lining	2 metres	13.49	27.00		
Zipper	2	4.50	9.00		
Total Cost: with duffle			193.00	310.00	117.00
Total Cost (with duffle replacement)			133.00	310.00	177.00

Figure 2

STORE BOUGHT CLOTHING - HANDMADE CLOTHING
A COST COMPARISON STUDY OF SEVERAL COMMON ITEMS OF APPAREL

(All dollar figures are average prices based on 1993 prices)

Adult Wind Pants and Jacket

	Handmade			Store Bought	Amt. Saved
Item	Amount	Cost/Unit	Cost Estimate		
Material	4 metres	8.00	32.00		
Zipper (pants/jacket)	1 1	3.00 4.50	7.50		
Total Cost:			39.50	65.00	25.50

Figure 3

STORE BOUGHT CLOTHING - HANDMADE CLOTHING
A COST COMPARISON STUDY OF SEVERAL COMMON ITEMS OF APPAREL

(All dollar figures are average prices based on 1993 prices)

Children's Cotton Pants

	Handmade			Store Bought	Amt. Saved
Item	Amount	Cost/Unit	Cost Estimate		
Cotton	1 metre	7.48	7.48		
Zipper	1	3.00	3.00		
Total Cost:			10.48	18.98	8.50

As discussed above many women also make caribou skin parkas, pants and amautis for their families, especially for those who hunt. Seal skin can also be used. While an expense is incurred for hunting supplies, there is no cost for skin material and therefore the savings from skin clothing and boots is even more significant.

What becomes clear through the cost/price estimates is that significant savings can be obtained through producing clothing rather than purchasing it in the store. Quality of clothing is also controlled by women when they produce sewn goods themselves. A common point made by women is the lack of sewing materials and the major increase in the price of

those materials which can be purchased from the store in recent years. One reason offered by the manager of the northern store for the high price of sewing materials is that they are generally ordered in small quantities which are more expensive to ship. It is policy not to have too much of a product in storage. However, there is a clear demand for sewing materials, to the extent that when certain materials arrive word will travel and women will go to the store to obtain this material before it is all gone. It therefore seems possible that from a business standpoint the store recognises that more money is made from selling clothing already made. There is therefore an extensive variety of clothing apparel at the northern store. This suggests that an outlet which specifically sells sewing materials would be very useful for women.

Commodification of Sewing

Unlike carving development policy has not focused on sewing. Despite this there is evidence to suggest that some commodification has occured and women are able to contribute some cash income through their sewing. To follow are comments by women concerning the domestic economy and the opportunities in Igloolik to make money through sewing.

> "I sew kamiks, mitts, outer caribou pants and so on. I only sell my sewing if some one would like me to make a pair. When my daughter worked for the IBC the kadlunat wanted me to make kamiks, but it was rare now that my daughter is not there any more. When my daughter worked for the IBC I would make a pair with duffle socks for $200.00. If you make them fancy it takes much longer than a day."

"When I was doing a lot of skins at one time I made a lot of money selling seal skins. The only way to get money with the skins today would be to make the kamiks. My income from sewing varies from year to year. One time I kept a record for a few months and came up with a $1000.00. I know that I could make seal skin boots because no one else makes them."

"At the time when they moved here we could get a lot more money from the skins so that we would do more skins. Even further back when the skins were selling cheap it was worthwhile because it was very cheap to buy things. Duffle used to sell for $5.00 a yard. Now it costs forty dollars a metre."

"I have sold kamiks and dolls dressed in duffle parkas. It was a project of the Coop to make certain dolls with clothing. I would work from a sewing shop if there were machines, but not hand made. My wrists are swollen."

"I never sew with the intention of selling but only if someone asks me to make a pair of kamiks then I make those. Even if I was meant to sell something and it turned out well then I would prefer not to sell it."

"You could get a good project in the spring there was a flea market and you could buy a table to sell things and I sold some of the materials that I had, skins, and some already made things that the smaller kids grew out of. All the traditional things and everything sold so I realise you could make money selling sewing."

Conclusion

From the discussion it is clear that sewing in the settlement continues to make a significant contribution to the household economy and is regarded as being of considerable importance. With the move to the settlement we have seen that domestic work has changed in character and seems to entail more labour than in the past. Also control

over sewing activities has been undermined by these same demands, as well as by the inappropriate design of housing. It should be clear that women sew because it is of both cultural and economic importance. Sewing remains important to women despite the many obstacles and discouragement they encounter for it has retained its cultural and economic significance. Their continuing involvement in sewing provides an example of the strength of women and their resistance to government attempts to control their activities. Their resistance provides the basis for the following chapter which concerns the struggle of women to open a sewing centre in Igloolik and the obstacles they encounter to the realization of this goal.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE STRUGGLE TO ESTABLISH A SEWING COOPERATIVE

Introduction

At this point we have established the past and contemporary importance of sewing to Inuit women and their families, and have described some of the difficulties which they have encountered in attempting to continue their sewing activities in the settlement. In an effort to maintain and diversify their sewing, and resolve the difficulties they face, women have attempted to organise in an effort to establish a sewing cooperative. Several issues should be kept in mind when considering women's effort to start a sewing cooperative. The evidence suggests that women's traditional sewing contributes significantly to the well being of households and community. However, since the move to the settlement, there has been a change both in the way that sewing work is distributed and the control women maintain over this work. This is true in the sense that older women are often solely responsible for preparing the clothing for many hunters in their families, whereas in the past, as women's stories suggest, three generations of women would be involved in these activities. Another important point is that the working space available in rental housing is unsuitable for traditional sewing, and that the change in lifestyle prompted by this housing design and settlement life has created an additional set of work responsibilities

for women. In this respect, many women feel that their workload has increased since the move to the settlement and that it has been devalued.

However, there is another important issue discussed in chapter two which deserves to be stressed again. The perseverance of women today, and their concern that sewing skills be passed on to the next generation underlines the fact that sewing remains a source of pride and a measure of worth. It was also a skill over which women had control and shared with younger generations of women. A similar argument could be made with respect to the continuing importance of hunting for men. This is not to suggest that Inuit women want to return to the past; as the story about the name change presented in the first chapter suggests, is very definitely not the case. Women want to retain control over their everyday lives in the present. In this sense, sewing, in addition to being of value is an active symbol for women in their attempts to reclaim autonomy and control over every day life. A sewing centre is the means which women could attempt to achieve this goal collectively.

Igloolik Women and the Material Feminists: Parallel Critique of Housing Design

There are interesting parallels in the perceptions of Igloolik women and the main criticisms of 19th and early 20th century feminists concerning the institution of housing and its relationship to women's oppression. It will

therefore be relevant to consider the critique of early feminists related to southern housing design and the difficulties this created for women, as these perspectives are presented in the work of Dolores Hayden.

As a change in housing design occurred within the lifetime of these women, both the early feminists and women in Igloolik, each group of women provides a critique of this housing which is based on their own 'personal as political' experience. Experience also provides the roots for the solutions they offer to these obstacles. The main concerns of materialist feminists during the 19th century were economic and spatial issues related to housing design. Early feminists suggested that the single family dwellings which were introduced at the turn of the century were designed with the intent to produce consumer 'money pits' for capital through the introduction of mechanised appliances. But this mechanisation did not necessarily decrease women's work. Rather, new housing served to isolate women in their homes, privatize their work, increase their work load, and to devalue it by depicting women as consumers rather than producers. At the same time, women received no renumeration for their work in the capitalist economy. As Hayden suggests, "Time budget studies show that the housewife's hours of work increased rather than decreased after the 1920s, despite labour saving devices and commercial services" (Hayden, 1981:26).

It was the argument of material feminists, therefore, that women should develop socialised forms of housework and childcare. These ideas were put into practise through the establishment of cooperative kitchens, multifamily households and similar measures. To sum up the insights and objectives of these early feminists Hayden concludes that, "The material feminists argued for transformation at every political level, from the household to the neighbourhood, to the municipality and nation, setting an example for others who might want to unite against such diverse issues as housework, discrimination against women, housing policy and energy policy" (Hayden, 1981:130).

When considering the critique of housing design provided by Igloolik women and the solutions they offer to help remedy these concerns a number of issues are brought together, issues that connect the household, community, state and market. The goal to establish a sewing centre is justified by the inadequacies of rental housing, housework burdens, renewal of tradition, intergenerational communication, use of resources, access to employment and counselling for women. In other words, a sewing centre is seen to more than a work space for the production of commodities. This comment made by June discusses the relationship between sewing and hunting which promotes both Inuit culture and advocates a more effective use of local resources.

> "It would be pointless for a man to be hunting for meat when we are wasting the skins because you need to use the meat and the skins. It would not be good to eat the meat and throw away the skins which are so warm for this climate, they are the best stuff that you can wear in this climate."

The connection between housing, housework and discrimination against women is also made clear through women's discussion of increased workload and inadequate housing facilities. In relation to this, a cooperative sewing centre would decrease some of these difficulties by offering access to an appropriately designed collective work area which could be used for both traditional and machine sewing. It would also lessen women's work responsibilities and provide some income if women are given control over its organisation.

It is useful to review the problems that are created for women sewing in their homes. First, rental housing is not set up to accommodate the processing and storage of skins. The houses are too hot and dry. Housing is generally overcrowded. This also creates difficulties for many women because there is no available space for a separate work area for machine sewing. Some women have sewing sheds outside their homes for traditional sewing, but these buildings are small and therefore not appropriate for teaching purposes. As discussed in chapter four, the construction of a sewing shed also requires the skill and materials which are not always available and is, therefore, not an option for all women. Extreme cold during the winter months also makes a sewing centre a more desirable alternative.

A second point is that a collective work area would provide a more efficient and productive work space for women therefore helping to decrease their work load. Women could work collectively on certain stages of the skin preparation process to increase efficiency. As women have a varied knowledge of sewing some women have different techniques which other seamstresses can adopt to save time. It would also provide an economic opportunity for women which is much needed in the community. Another consideration regarding a collective work area is discussed by Leslie.

> "I feel that there would need to be different instructors because there are many good sewers but they only cut patterns, but there are many older women, older than they are, who will use their hands to measure a pattern."

It was also pointed out that some seamstresses can only sew from patterns while other women make their own patterns. This suggests that women would benefit from learning from many teachers rather than one. As women have limited time this would also mean that they could share teaching responsibilities.

Another reason why a collective work area would be beneficial is that hunters who would not otherwise use their skins could bring them to the sewing centre.

> "It is cheap to obtain seal skins because people just leave them on the beach rotting. We wouldn't waste the skins because we would be preparing and using the skins ourselves."

Also, women who do not have these skills could learn, which would also be helpful to older women, as Tina suggested.

For those women who are not interested or do not have time to learn traditional sewing, if interested, could learn to sew 'amautis' and other nice clothing to be worn in town, as Jean suggested. This would also provide financial benefits as producing clothing by hand is cheaper than store bought clothing.

Thus a sewing centre would provide a cooperative work place that would likely decrease women's work load. At the same time the goal to make money in this centre is also important. Women are suggesting that their work is valuable and important and therefore should be paid for.

Thus, as the cash economy becomes more central to life in the community women see entrance into this market as a means to revalue sewing. However, it is not as simple an equation as money = value. Kate has thoughts to share about the relationship between women's sewn work and exchange value within the context of a cash economy. Her perceptions about wage work in a capitalist market provides a basis for considering a different work ethic and set of values that are lost when a person is forced to sell their labour. These are values that Kate associates with working with one's own hands, working well, and making something which lasts that one can be proud of, and owning one's work. It was also mentioned by other women that when they make something which turns out well, even if they made it to sell, in a way they do not want to sell it. Marx suggests

that the difference between an artisan who creates something through her work and a worker bee who makes a very technically proficient bee hive is that the person is able to conceive of what she makes in her mind before she begins her work and then executes this vision through her hands. Marx also suggests that this is something which is lost by workers in the capitalist context. Kate's comments echo this assertion.

> "Sometimes when you are cutting a pattern you would like to finish certain parts but going through the regulated hours you may cut it and just when you are going to start the introduction the time is up and you can't go on. Nowadays the money controls you. If you set your mind to making money, you could easily do the volunteer work for the rest of the hour, but if you are being paid to do this for certain hours then you will stop. The problem is usually that I've been working long hours to finish this because it takes a lot. If I were working at an hourly rate you would be making a lot of money for this. So if you are working at an hourly rate then you may not even finish because the money you receive for this work would not reflect an hourly wage."

This commentary addresses the kinds of restrictions that are placed on people and their work when the work of one's hands is reduced to a wage or an exchange value. While Kate expresses some of the problems that occur when work is undertaken within the context of a capitalist wage system there is also an acknowledgement that a sewing centre would be useful for women, both because rental housing is not appropriate for the processing and storage of skins and because within the cash economy in the settlement today

there is an increasing need for an income which the centre could provide.

What should be noted when considering the goal of women to open a sewing centre is that changes that have taken place in the settlement are such that women do not have autonomy over their work. Although they may enjoy their work and envision it before they begin, women do not create their work space as they once did on the land. This has affected the proficiency with which they can complete their work. Also, women have many other jobs today, and though they may enjoy their sewing work, it was suggested that when one must leave this work to do other jobs by the time one returns it is not so enjoyable. Also the need for an income due to rental housing bills, changing tastes, especially of the younger generations, and costs for sewing materials, hunting equipment, etc. means that some form of employment is also necessary.

What the women are suggesting then, what they envision for their sewing centre, comes out of their own personal experiences of a period when they had more autonomy and control over their sewing. On the land sewing was the primary activity of women and was appreciated for all the reasons discussed above. Therefore women would like to have a sewing centre, not to become capitalist wage workers with no autonomy over their work, but rather to address their present day difficulties by working together in a sewing

centre and working well. There are two women's sewing groups in Igloolik, the organisation of these two groups will now be discussed, followed by a presentation of the problems that women addressed relating to the establishment of a sewing centre.

Sewing Groups In Igloolik

The two women's sewing groups in Igloolik are the Anglican women's sewing group and the Nalluat sewing group which is comprised of both Anglican and Catholic women. The Anglican women's sewing group performs an important function for the Anglican church and community, assisting parish members who may be in need of funds while also contributing to the church upkeep by producing sewn goods for sale. The following comments by members of this group discuss its role in the community.

> "There is a church women's group. We meet regularly once a week. We make duffle socks, and blankets. To make the blankets we make a pattern of each piece. A women will quilt each square and then we put all the squares together to sew with a sewing machine to put all the squares together. We sell this work by advertising that a piece has been completed or by having a rummage sale. It's all volunteer work. The money raised is used as needed to pay church bills, or if someone needs to fly out to the hospital or other such things. My son who lives in Chesterfield Inlet was in the hospital in Winnepeg when his father-in-law died. We bought him a ticket to come home for the funeral. When problems are brought to our attention through the church and the vestry we women try to deal with them however we can. Yes, these matters are dealt with at their meetings not involving our husbands."

The Anglican women's group is open to women from the community generally and I spoke to both younger and older women who took part in these gatherings once a week. However, it is controlled by the anglican women with the purpose being to provide support for the church and its parishioners.

The Nalluat sewing group was established in Igloolik in 1991. The purpose of this group is to start a sewing centre where all interested community women could go to sew and learn to sew. It would also provide an opportunity for women to make money in the community. Also similar to the Anglican women's sewing group the Nalluat group would like to produce machine sewn clothing as well as traditional clothing. Prior to the establishment of the Nalluat group, there was a women's sewing group in Igloolik in the early 1980s. Women worked together in a small building producing clothing for sale. Reflecting on her experience with the latter group of woman had this to say about the benefits of the centre.

> "I would really like it if a sewing group got started because there used to be a sewing group here at one time and it was really good for the community. Women could get together and they visited more and there was a bit of money that they were able to make."

A combination of factors eventually brought the end to the sewing group. It was suggested that there were too few women and they had taken on too much responsibility acting as the board of directors, management and workers. There

was a high demand for their products, but not enough time to produce what was required. This group seems to have been controlled by Anglican women, as they generally offered information about the centre. When this previous sewing project was brought up by a Catholic women, she said that she used to go and visit with the women and help them to chew skins, but it was not a group in which both segments of women were financially involved. Other related problems brought out concerning why the group did not continue was that the secretary decided to stay home with her newborn son. This would present a major difficulty as older women who were the main producers for the centre do not speak English or possess a general knowledge of accounting.

It is also worth noting that in the early 1970s women came together to sew at the adult education centre. I was told by the person who was the adult educator at that time that women were not concerned with making money during this period. They would use the sewing group as opportunity to meet and socialize. However, as people have become more integrated into the cash economy and prices for goods and services have increased priorities have shifted.

When considering the difference between the Anglican women's sewing group and the Nalluat group one woman had this to say.

> "They are volunteers who gather money to take to the church so that the church can run. It's not directed by women from that side alone. Anyone interested can go and sew with them but our goal

> is different. We want to involve the community and provide a place to work to make money."

The Nalluat group is comprised of women from the Catholic and the Anglican community. Igloolik is geographically divided along religious lines with Anglican women generally living on one side of town and Catholic women on the other. Women from both groups did express some difficulties and misunderstandings that had arisen between them over time due to a lack of communication. But this is also something which women would like to avoid by working together in a sewing centre.

The video women's workshop is another project that women have worked on together that has been successful. Therefore women of Igloolik know that it is both possible and desirable to work together in their community.

How the Sewing Centre is Envisioned / How Teaching Will be Incorporated

When discussing the reasons why women would like to have a sewing centre the issues of appropriate space, employment, passing on sewing skills for both tradition and positive change are addressed. In the comment to follow the need for a quiet, appropriately designed sewing space away from other home responsibilities, and the need for employment to accommodate the wishes of her children is discussed by Colleen.

> "I am really interested. I would want to see a sewing centre established because most of the time I want to go to a quiet place where there are no

children bothering a person and it is peaceful. It would be very informative because I could learn from women different techniques which would be useful.

My husband works and gets paid. He is the only one in the household who is working. The other kids ask me for stereos and things and I will say yes because I want to but in the end I can't. If I were working I cannot tell you what I would like to buy off hand. I would have to go to the store first and see what I need. I would not plan on anything."

Nancy makes this comment,

"I have gone to one of the meetings and we were discussing possibilities and I thought it was such a nice thing and I wondered why they had not continued but they had no answers.

When you have a sewing centre then you can sew and sell what you make and sometimes I could make my own things as well in order to be organized and I could make my own money."

Karen discusses the combined goals of women.

"Women would like a sewing centre to create jobs in the community. There are a lot of women who are unemployed here. Also to promote our culture which is dying. Young people know very little about the traditional way of sewing. It is important to see if women can prosper as well as men in the community and make money. It is not so much women having the same rights as men. It's mainly seeing if you can support a family and a home with the women making the money because we have always known men to be the breadwinners. So it is promoting women in the home, seeing if she can be as good as a man. Women want to do this but there is not much for women in the community."

Marie addresses several points concerning goals for the sewing centre. One central issue which is discussed by many women is that they would like to teach sewing to young women who are now having their own children, women who are no longer in school and cannot take advantage of the cultural

inclusion program which presently teaches sewing in the school system. For these young women there are also even fewer opportunities for work because the jobs that exist in the hamlet require a certain level of education.

> "Our goal is for the group to sew. A good portion of the time is winter and the Inuit need clothing so our goal is to supply the clothing to whoever needs it.
>
> And for the hunters who hunt walrus today they tend to wear rubber boots but those are slippery. It was our goal to make kamiks which are suitable for hunting. They are warmer and more convenient because they don't have heels that can catch on to the boat siding.
>
> Our goal is to sell clothing and now and then to teach sewing.
>
> I would like to see women not buying from other women. I would like to see women making clothing for themselves because there are many women who know nothing about sewing today.
>
> My goal would be to teach young people who are not going to elementary school, who are drop outs."

Tina suggests that there is a market in Igloolik for traditional clothing. While older women, like Marie, suggest that they would like to have a sewing centre so that eventually younger women will not be asking to purchase clothing, Tina suggests that for some women who have other employment and little time, the sewing centre would be good because they could buy traditional clothing.

> "I think a women's centre need to be organised to make and sell clothes. There will always be women who don't want to learn how but still need clothes. Women who are working and don't want to make them. If I do not want my mother to make things for me I am willing to buy, buy kamiks, things I am unable to make because they are too

> difficult. When you need these things and you can't make them you don't mind paying for them at all."

Kate has this to say about how she envisions the organisation of a sewing centre. Her comments emphasize the reformulation of tradition within the settlement context in a sewing centre, providing a sense of the ways that tradition is continually recreated.

> "I think that sewing is the best thing I know in life. I would be at the centre as much as I can. There are no particular hours for making certain things like sometimes when you are making seal skin bottoms you need to be sewing until it is finished because of the moistness of the skins one is working on. You need to gather all of the stitches. There is no break in between. Where as if you were in school a certain hour is up and so you must stop and start again. So if you were to develop the Inuit time if you start working on something then you continue to work."

In the comment to follow Karen makes the point that women would like to offer a counselling service as part of their vision for a sewing centre but this can not be accommodated to the current mandate of government economic development policy. At the conclusion of both field trips to Igloolik I stopped for several days in Iqualuit. During this time I had interviews and discussions with economic development employees. An independent agency, the Kakivak Organisation, worked with women in Igloolik in the spring of 1992, attempting to explain the procedures and restrictions involved in accessing funding for a sewing project. I discussed the issue of combining social and economic concerns with employees of this agency. I was told that

these issues are in different departments of government and due to the bureaucratic structure that exists there are many obstacles to combining these goals. In the comment to follow Jean again reiterates the desire of older women to teach sewing skills to young women no longer in school.

> "I teach in the spring beginners who have never touched sewing. I would like to teach women who are out of school who would like to better their sewing. I have been teaching at the school in the spring time for three or four years, 'kamik' and 'amautis' making. I do not know if it will continue."

In the comment to follow Leslie makes an interesting observation about changes in teaching and learning. As discussed previously, in the past young girls could learn sewing through observation, by watching their mothers. However, since the move to the settlement this process has not taken place because children are in school all day. For this reason the structure of learning imposed within the southern education system has become the primary mode through which young people have learned skills since the 1960s. Leslie feels that a sewing centre would provide a context in which skills could be taught in a manner similar to that followed in schools.

> "I feel that kids go to school to learn something and sometimes when you ask them to help you they say they can't do that. They have to go out some place to learn then they will gain confidence and I feel that there has to be some place like a centre where kids can go and learn and then they get the confidence and can do it at home.
>
> Right now the school has funding for cultural inclusion so that they teach in school how to sew

> traditional things. That could go on but there are other people who never had that chance our young people they are having children and there are not in school any more. These are either people that need to have a separate place to go because they cannot go to school to learn. I would be in support of young women. If they were interested in sewing then I would like to make things to help them prepare to sew skins or give them skins so that they would get by and learn to sew faster and better."

The following comment by Karen makes it clear that one of the aims of the Nalluat sewing group's proposal for a centre is to encourage the acquisition of skills by younger people.

> "We have discussed this in the group and we have decided that young people can come and learn sewing skills. They can join the group, not financially at first, but we will be there to teach if there are people who would like to learn. In this way the women can pass on their knowledge of sewing to the younger generation.
>
> Traditional knowledge should be taught by people outside of school time. When they try to put the kadlunat and the Inuit culture together in some ways it could work. But today you need at least grade ten to twelve education and so english should be emphasized. Funds should be provided for teaching Inuit knowledge outside of school time."

Interest of Young People in Learning Sewing Skills

The comments to follow suggest that younger women do have an interest in learning sewing skills. In fact there are many younger women who are presently attempting to learn or would like to acquire these skills. Thus, access to a sewing centre would be useful for younger women as well. However, for women such as Tina who have jobs outside the home, a lack of time necessitates an organised schedule for teaching sewing.

> "If there were a course in making different items for instance, a course in boot making, kamiks or mitts so that a time table was set up for people like me who work. If you know when it is going to begin and when it is going to end so that you make time to go to these classes. I would be interested if a particular course were to be offered. I am lucky because I have a mother who sews so I can go to her and I can get skins from her but a lot of young women are not able to do this.
>
> Probably younger women's expectations are different because they have more options but I don't see a lot of young women moving away. I moved away and now I think I have come back to stay. I have had enough of travelling and I can see that with other people. They may want to see other places but then home is always home."

The comment above suggests that there are few jobs in the community. However, moving away is not necessarily desirable or a realistic option for younger women. As previously discussed it was only in the last few years that the educational curriculum was extended to include grades ten through twelve. Prior to this the highest level of education one could attain in Igloolik was grade nine. Employment in a major centres and also in Igloolik generally requires a higher level of education. For this reason employment in a sewing centre would be very helpful for women. It was pointed out that once women begin to have their own children it is very difficult to go back to school. There are also training programs that may be offered in larger centres such as Iqualuit. However, it is not possible in many cases for women to leave their families to take advantage of this option.

Another young woman in her early thirties who is a member of the Nalluat sewing group had this to say.

> "I do both kinds of sewing traditional and nontraditional skin sewing and would love to be a part of a sewing centre. I would like to teach the kids how to sew or maybe knitting.
>
> Especially up north we need worm clothing. I get my material from the northern store. Materials have gonc up a lot in the last few years. I get skins from my husband. I made him seal skin pants and kamiks. It was my first time. They turned out well. I will try to make caribou skin clothes next."

Jean also makes this comment about the interest of young women in learning to sew.

> "Kate and I decided to find the interest in young people so we went on the radio and asked people if they would be interested in coming to learn to make things and there was a very high turn out which shows that there is a lot of interest."

A young women in her early twenties had this to say.

> "I make kamiks, mitts, outer caribou skin clothes and more. I get skins from people at the camp. My family lived there for eleven year. It is boring here. Young people do not go out to a camp because they do not have the opportunity. People may ask me to make kamiks for them and then I do. Yes, I would like it if there were a sewing centre."

As the above comment implies there are not many activities for young people in the community.

Difficulties in Teaching Younger Women

One older women makes an observation which reinforces the assertion that it is difficult to teach sewing to young people because they are in school all day. She also

suggests that they move out of the house when they are still young.

> "It is much more difficult for older and younger people to get together today. Maybe this is because older and younger people can move into their own houses today so it gives young people a chance to live alone. In the past we were living together."

From these comments it can also be inferred that not all young people are interested in learning these skills. Many changes have taken place in the settlement and this is no longer an interest or possibility for all young people. In the same way many young men do not have the opportunity to become capable hunters. However, there would seem to be enough interest to carry these activities on to the next generation with the establishment of facilities such as a sewing centre.

Concerning the difficulties in teaching younger period it would seem that in the initial period after movement to the settlement there was a perception that Inuit knowledge would not be carried on. Since this period there have been many obstacles which prevent the acquisition of these skills by the younger generation including changing tastes in food and clothing and changing lifestyles. However, interest in learning to sew is still evident; though younger women do not seem interested in eventually filling the roles of their grandmothers or mothers many young women have an interest in acquiring some form of sewing skill.

In the comment to follow Jean discusses her perceptions about teaching sewing skills to her daughters.

> "My first understanding was that it was too hard and they didn't want to learn so I accepted this. But I didn't realize that they are going to become interested in learning. When they catch animals I am the one who prepares the skins and then they feel that these are my mothers skins and they don't come and ask for them because they realize that it was a lot of effort to do the skins. I have not noticed them wanting to do the skins but they want to take some skins to work on."

Leslie makes a suggestion about how teaching sewing could be organised so that young people would not get discouraged.

> "Yes it is very easy to get discouraged. Some young people can sew better than older kids. Everything should be put in categories so that one's who have not learned anything before can be separated so that they do not get discouraged by looking at others who are much better than they are and thus put themselves much lower and getting discouraged."

Sewing is also difficult and time consuming as Kate suggests.

> "Students are not used to working all the time. They go to school for a certain period then they have a break. They work only half the day. Then the rest is not working. Whereas an Inuk used to work all day. Young people are to used to these things and so they start them off that's how they would have to work and they could develop Inuk style of work over time."

Thus, to learn these skills one must be patient and willing to take the time necessary to complete the work. A combination of the time and patience to teach and learn would also be most easily fulfilled within the context of a sewing centre as this would allow many women to act a teachers, sharing these responsibilities. It would also

provide a location where younger women could learn together and encourage each other. As this comment suggests a sewing centre would also be useful because not all young women feel comfortable approaching women with these skills to ask for assistance. As Tina suggests,

> "Not everyone is in my situation so it would be good. Some other young women I know they feel awkward to go and say I would like to learn this, can you show me, because they feel that they are imposing as they know that the person they are turning to has other things to do besides teaching. After you make your first clothing item it is less difficult. If you have a pattern of a certain cut that you like it is a lot of fun. If you have an older woman that you feel comfortable to go and ask questions of."

Another younger woman I discussed this issue with, Jane, who is in her early twenties also suggested that one of the difficulties for women in this age group is that they do not want to bother older women and are therefore hesitant to ask for assistance. While Jane is a skilled seamstress herself and has learned many things from her own mother she has heard this from her friends. Another point which she brought out relates to the lack of opportunities for young women, at least until very recently. In many of the ccmmentaries there is a discussion of assisting young women who have dropped out of school. Concerning the fact that the school only went up to grade nine until recently. As Jane describes the situation for herself, her parents did not allow her to go to Iqualuit because it is perceived to be a bad environment for a young person. Jane suggested

that for many other young women this was also the situation. At the present time it is possible to finish high school in Igloolik. However, many of the young women who did not have this opportunity now have children and it is very difficult for them to return to school because there are no day care facilities in Igloolik. Jane attributed the high rate of teenage pregnancy in Igloolik to the many difficulties in the home life of many young women. She suggests that this is one reason that young women move out of their parent's houses when they are still young.

For these reasons Jane sees the sewing centre as an opportunity for young women for whom there are few jobs or options in the community. It is worth noting that most jobs in Igloolik, while there are few to begin with, require an education level that most people do not have. The suggestion made by older women that they would also like the centre to provide a counselling service and a place for younger and older women to meet was something which Leslie feels is definitely needed and would be very helpful for younger women.

Time and Money: Women, Work and Everyday Life

Karen has had some involvement with the Nalluat sewing group since its inception. She has these observations to make.

> "It takes a lot of education. We had to bring in these people from the kakivak organisation to tell us how to proceed in order to get funding. Women don't get the input they need between the white

culture and the Inuit culture. Women do not understand these procedures. To do more than break even time will be very important to us. Because in a year we want to do more than break even. We will try to incorporate like a coop. We will have shares and once a profit is made women will get a return.

First I wish that those who council could understand exactly what we are trying to do but it is very difficult with the language differences to translate everything into inuktitut. I wish that my people could proceed without difficulties verbally or in writing. I get someone into speak, he is a kadlunat. I interpret everything that is said and this is the big barrier to getting what we want. Language is very difficult because everything we do has to be translated between those who control funds and women. This I would like to see changed. Before the white man's culture we never wrote. We had verbal contracts and we abided by them. This is the hardest part of trying to start something. Everything has to be written down and in the past this was not a part of our culture."

Kate had this to say regarding the sewing group and the sewing centre.

"Actually I just moved here from another place and I recently have been elected to a women's organization and I always feels that we could do more and try harder to push things ahead so that we may have younger people involved and to belong as we do with the organisation.

The hardest thing always seems to be to get a place. It seems that you don't get together because you don't have a building to start. They tried to get the old mission but it was too costly to try to renovate the old building."

Jean makes a point about lack of time which is reiterated by other women. However, she also suggests and several women confer, that they would support a sewing centre. It is simply a matter of proper organisation and not expecting too much from any one person. A second

related issue is also brought out through this commentary. As women's goal is to undertake a kind of 'community development', their desire is to be in control of organising to meet their needs and fit into their everyday lives. Therefore a project run from the outside with a purely economic orientation clearly would not work for women in this community.

> "I am almost sure that if funds were available to us for teaching people would take the time to learn. The problem I am having is that I could not go out there and teach because I have so much to do all the time. Kate mentioned that it would be really good to get funds but if you are doing it yourself then you can teach anything you want to teach but if you are getting funding they give you have rules and regulations and you end up teaching something other than what you wish to teach. If we could decide what to teach and when this would work."

Leslie's comments to follow reinforce this point.

> "When I was learning to sew we didn't require any funding from any where. It was just a matter of doing it. But since there was a school everything has required funding. This is something that people who are experienced in these things should look at.
>
> Looking at it in a cultural way yes it is very complicated but today things are running that way so it is the normal way.
>
> I feel that men are always involved because they are the ones who hunt and bring you the material you need to sew. They have to be in agreement that you can be gone. Most of the time when you have an organisation and you start being away from home all day ever day of the week that gets very hard and some times that cause failure of the group. If we could involve different women at different times at their own time for their family and the organisation, then it would start and succeed for much longer. If we did not have to be away all day but had one chosen day to be there."

Another woman makes this comment.

> "If you stay away all day then you would get behind in your work at home and there is no way that you could go on with the other things when your home is not running well. It would be useful to choose your own day and your own subject and what type of materials you are going to work with."

As I have already noted, this is not the first time that a sewing group has been established in Igloolik. In the early eighties some women joined together and began working in a small building. One woman I interviewed acted as a secretary for the group and when she was no longer able to do this it made it difficult for the women to continue. Another woman suggested that the leader of the group passed away. What came through generally in discussions with women was that many women in the community should be involved because the previous group's problems stemmed from too few women taking on too many responsibilities while already working in their homes. This is therefore an issue of concern for women who would presently like to establish a sewing centre.

A connected issue which emerged in these discussions is the necessity for women to maintain control over the project because the goals that women would like to meet through this organisation are many and are related to the issues they must deal with every day. The desire to start a sewing centre as a possible solution to many present difficulties is therefore about establishing an autonomous women's group

which would reinforce the importance of women's role in Inuit culture and community today.

Though it would be useful to provide arguments which suggest that these skills should be supported within the northern economy what needs to be stressed is that economics is not the basis for these activities, autonomy and control over every day life should be the basis for alternative community development. Therefore women's sewing in whatever forms they choose to undertake it should be encouraged in a way which allows women to make a cooperative effort such as a sewing centre fit into their every day lives.

In the summer of 1993 I worked with women in the Nalluat sewing group to draft a proposal for economic development funding for a sewing centre. The group also wrote a letter to the community council requesting the use the old post office to house the centre. This request was granted. I spoke to the economic development officer in Igloolik in the fall and he informed me that the proposal had been prepared more completely with information related to the building. It was now a matter of waiting for funding to be approved. Shortly after this, the officer left his job. He was not replaced until the summer of 1994. In the meantime nothing more has been done about the request for funding submitted by the sewing group. However, the new economic development officer in Igloolik is aware that women would like to start a sewing centre and says that he intends

to work with the women in the fall when every one returns from the land. Whether a sewing centre will become a reality in Igloolik therefore remains to be seen. The question of its success, should it be established, is also tentative. As discussed by the women themselves there are two possible scenarios that may occur. What is suggested by women, especially older women who are the base of the sewing centre project, is that they are very busy, and have more than enough work to do presently. There are also many social problems and financial difficulties that women must deal with as part of their every day lives. Therefore, what women propose is a centre which allows them to address all of the issues which are of concern to them, and provide both a space and time within the structure of their daily lives to meet their collective goals. It is not simply about providing jobs because women in Igloolik already work.

Another possible scenario for a sewing centre once established is described by women in their commentaries. Women could be dictated to about how the centre would look, what hours it will be open, and when they would have to be there. They may be told what kinds of sewing they will produce, and what they are allowed to teach and whether they are being productive enough. They may be informed that the sewing centre is no place for counselling. There may be no consideration for whether women are meeting their own multiple goals, whether they are able to adjust their work

lives at home with the time they spend in the sewing centre, or if they are reaching and teaching younger women. In this scenario the comment made by Karen about the difficulties of the language barrier for women becomes very relevant. The women do not know how to communicate with economic development officers because, as women suggested, there are communication barriers created through language and cultural differences. Also, the bureaucratic structure through which funding is accessed requires extensive proposals, long range plans and goals and some proof of economic viability. It is both difficult and intimidating for women to communicate their own goals adequately in this context. When a project fails Economic Development is perplexed by women who have been given an 'opportunity' and can't seem to succeed. It would be far more useful to recognise the inadequacies of this bureaucratic agenda. What should be the basis, then, for measuring the success of a community development project?

The issue of what constitutes real community development, according to the people who will be involved in projects at the local level, is a main issue I have tried to address in the thesis. By establishing a sewing centre women are attempting to create a stronger support network so that work within the household economy is made easier, work within the caring economy is shared, and younger and older women are more easily able to communicate, and teach and

learn sewing skills. At the same time women require a cash income and hope to obtain this through working in a sewing centre. If these multiple goals are considered, rather than simply the purely economic success of a sewing centre, the simple correlation between time, money and value will need to be reformulated to incorporate the concerns and everyday work lives of women. In other words, whether local knowledge is being accessed and the people are in control of their own projects must be the basis for determining the viability of a project. Presently, this would not seem to be the basis for determining the viability of projects within the rubric of community development in the North. The future remains to be seen.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

In the thesis I have attempted to provide an understanding of both the obstacles women face in their attempts to establish a sewing centre, the difficulties that may prevent its achievement, and most importantly, the connection between this goal and the everyday perseverance of these women. From the perceptions of women provided in the thesis, it is clear that sewing has social, cultural and economic importance. Sewing skills are more difficult to perform and pass on today than in the past. However, women strive to maintain the importance of sewing in their everyday lives and to foster an appreciation for these skills in the younger generations. Older women do not want younger generations of women to have to work as hard as they have worked. In this sense, sewing with skins or cloth provides a connecting thread across generations and is a way through which older women exemplify their strength and resistance, and their hopes for the future.

There is a growing body of research which has assessed the monetary value of self-provisioning through hunting, and has identified the nutritional value of country food (Cox, 1987; Freeman, 1976; Lockhart, 1987; Rees, 1987; Usher, 1976, 1986). These studies leave little doubt about the continuing importance of the hunting economy and support the

contention that, "The North may be the only place where a poor man's table is laden with meat" (Usher, 1976:19).

It might also be argued that the north is the only place where a poor 'man's' person is, or could be, ladened with furs. Given the interest in the 'traditional' economy, it is surprising that this research barely acknowledges the use to which skins are put, or makes any attempt to assess the value of women's activities to northern households. While I am not in a position to estimate the monetary value of women's sewing to the household, the findings of this thesis clearly suggest that a full appraisal would strengthen arguments which seek to establish the significance of traditional pursuits for the northern economy. This leads one to suggest that any evaluation of government policy towards traditional activities should not be male focused but should include a thorough examination of women's work.

Based on a summary of research on the value of hunting, Cox argues that further encouragement should be provided for hunting through subsidies. He cites the subsidisation programs of Quebec as a model.

> "Here I have in mind the Income Security Programme for trappers, established in 1976 by the James Bay Agreement. This program provides payments of up to $2,400 per year for each adult in a harvesting unit, calculated in constant (indexed) dollars. This sum is compounded of "an amount of $10.00 ... for every day not spent in the bush" and not receiving other income. This program seems predicated on a mixed economy. ... The Quebec program is cited here simply to show what might be

done to strengthen the native mixed economy" (Cox, 1987:264).

The argument Cox makes is that hunting provides a significant contribution and should therefore be supported, especially due to the lack of alternatives in the northern economy. This same argument could be applied to women's work within this economy.

In relation to this, the point was established in the thesis that women's sewing makes a very significant contribution to the household economy. Therefore recognition and consideration for these activities using the same arguments applied to encourage support for hunting activities is needed and would further strengthen the 'traditional' economy. This would help to establish 'community development' standards in the northern economy. It would also be useful to further encourage the skills possessed by women. Marketing of sewn goods would be an asset, but sewing should also be encouraged in subsistence terms. Therefore not only should hunting receive a subsidy, the work that women perform to support hunters should also be subsidised. Beyond this, an alternative should be provided to the overpriced sewing materials that women can obtain from the local stores. As the following comment made by Jean's daughter Tina suggests,

> "The past two years that I have bought fabric duffle has been very expensive. My mother is sometimes looking for fabrics that she can't find, napping, pattern paper, big roll of paper for patterns because she has at least three boxes of

> patterns with her. There is always something she would like that you can only get at a fabric store. We don't even have the specialised catalogues. There are so many kinds of sewing."

An outlet which could supply sewing materials to women should be organised and taken over as a community development project because there is a significant captive market for a larger variety of sewing materials at more reasonable prices.

The lack of consideration for women's work carries over into other spheres of opportunity within the northern economy. Women's sewing of parkas, amautis, and other designs which have been adapted from the traditional sewing, but which now use machines, could be marketed but are given little support. Those researchers who have been influential in terms of northern development must therefore address women's role in the northern economy. A summation of the comments made by Peter Usher at a conference of government policy makers and researchers concerned with northern development suggests the lack of consideration given to women's work.

> "The small communities have informal economics because people know each other well, share similar values, and aspirations and can easily see for themselves what is required and how to do it. Large cities or nations have formal economics because most people are strangers to each other and do not necessarily have similar values and aspirations. They must devise formal institutions and rules about procedure because no individual can know or act on the common good based simply on his or her own experience or desires. Some of these formal institutions seem to be just the opposite of informal ones: competition versus

> cooperation, hierarchy versus equality, market relations versus kinship relations, hierarchy versus equality, contracts versus long term reciprocity, specialisation and a division of labour and concepts of property" (Usher, 1982:68).

An obvious point is that these issues concerning the village economy, to use Usher's term, are being discussed within an institutional setting. To suggest that there is equality, reciprocity, kinship relations and cooperation at the base of the economy in northern communities like Igloolik, ignores how relations have changes and the distinct problems that this has created for women. There are difficulties women have encountered concerning their work and lack of access to the resources of economic development. These issues must be addressed so that real community development is achieved.

In the same sense Alexander Lockhart suggests that,

> "Human development is orderly growth in a direction that a self conscious community of interests agrees to be necessary or desirable. Human development is based on social vitality, political efficacy and economic viability" (Lockhart, 1982:63).

To achieve the model of development which these theoreticians espouse, which is based on the Inuit way of life, they must first address the male bias in government policy and planning which has imposed a different structure of gender relations onto northern communities.

Another point also needs to be addressed in relation to women's work within the household economy in the northern context. As many feminist scholars have pointed out, in

times of economic restraint 'the economy of caring' (Elson, 1991) is one more area where women carry more responsibilities. Thus, within the sector which deals with social security benefits, these should not be directed towards men with the idea in mind that they are the heads of household, but should be directed to the primary care givers. It should be recognised that this work makes an economic contribution which is especially significant in the northern economy. This point is relevant in Igloolik because, as we have seen, one of the goals of women in opening a sewing centre is to provide counselling and a place for women to discuss social problems in the community. As Marie suggests,

> "What we had in mind was to get it going and once we begin to make money then we can start to provide employment for the community. We also had in mind to start a counselling service but we had to leave that out due to some difficulties with the government."

They were informed by the government that economics and social services do not go together for they are divisions of different departments. This must be reconsidered, for community development planning should address the concerns which people have at the local level. In other words, as community development is supposed to be the goal of economic development in the north it would make sense to broaden the focus of government policy. It is in this sense that local level knowledge should be tapped and utilised to establish 'community development' projects which are truly in keeping

with the everyday lives of women and men at the household and community level. To achieve this, provisions must be made to ensure that women, as well as men, can actively participate in formulating the policy which effects their lives.

ENDNOTES

1. All interviews were conducted in Igloolik during the summer of 1992 and 1993. Interviews were translated from Inuktitut into English by interpreters. The only further modification of the text is in putting all quotes into the first person.

2. Kadlunat is an Inuit term for 'white' people. A common translation is people with bushy eyebrows. However, when I asked my interpreter and a women I was interviewing the meaning of the word they suggested that it means people who talk and talk.

2(B). The experience of doing research also inspired me to write a song during my second summer in Igloolik which is titled "Kadlunat."

This is my story with Jean, Jack and Fred.
We came to study both the living and the dead.
Jean is going to tell you the first words of the young.
Jack is going to tell you the size of a walrus tongue.
I'm going to tell you about women's sewing and
Fred's going to dig up the bones of someone's ancestors and friends.
Then we'll take it all back to the university and store it a thousand miles away for posterity.

Tell me a story of how the white world was begun
and why we think we own everything under the sun.
White like the angels, white like the dove, and
white like the pure clean heavens above.

This is a story about a women named Bark.
She wanted to make her home in a park.
The government said that don't belong to you
because we took it from your people in the treaty of '92'
so get yourself back to the settlement my friend.
Because if you're not there what will the Kadlunat study then.

3. Herstories is used in the thesis to emphasize the point that the contributions women have made to history have not been documented by male researchers and historians.

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