

**ABORIGINAL LAND CLAIMS
AND CULTURAL PRESERVATION:
A CULTURAL GEOGRAPHY OF THE
MACKENZIE DELTA INUVIALUIT**

A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in the

Department of Geography

University of Saskatchewan

Saskatoon

by

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Fall 1996

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ABSTRACT

The Inuvialuit Final Agreement (IFA) is a comprehensive land claim that was finalized in 1984 by the Inuvialuit of the Western Arctic. One of the principal motives for the land claim was the preservation of Inuvialuit culture. This thesis attempts to determine if the Inuvialuit have been successful in their bid to preserve their culture in a rapidly changing Northern society, and what role, if any, the IFA has played in those efforts. It also addresses the potential for employing postmodern theory in examining Aboriginal land claims such as the IFA.

The research revealed that the culture highly spatial and place oriented and that Inuvialuit culture identity is closely tied to land-based activities, such as hunting and fishing, and specific locations. The redevelopment of Shingle Point on the Yukon coast of the Beaufort Sea, since the signing of the IFA, is a positive indicator of the culture's survival. This historical location has been used by the Inuvialuit for hunting, trapping and fishing for over a thousand years, and has recently experienced a resurgence as a summer community for Inuvialuit from Inuvik and Aklavik. While Shingle Point was always used by the Inuvialuit, there has been a dramatic increase in the numbers of cabins built there since the signing of the IFA, and especially since the reinstatement of the bowhead whale hunt. The redevelopment of Shingle Point as a location for harvesting and preparing country food, its traditional spatial groupings, and social practices suggests that the efforts to preserve the culture have been successful. The research reveals that the IFA has played an important role in achieving that success.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to gratefully acknowledge my research supervisor Dr. R.M. Bone for sharing his expertise, providing support, direction, and encouragement, as well as allowing me the freedom to pursue this research in my own way. I would also like to acknowledge the advice, encouragement, stimulating comments, and detailed editing provided by my committee members, Professor J. McConnell and Dr. M. Wilson. I would like to thank my external examiner Peggy Martin-McGuire for graciously agreeing to join my committee on very short notice and for expediting the process. I would like to thank the Northern Scientific Training Program for giving me a grant to carry out my research. I also wish to thank the Hamlet of Aklavik and the Aklavik Hunters and Trappers Committee for approving my research, and the Science Institute in Inuvik for issuing me a Research License and providing logistical support. Finally, I wish to thank all the Inuvialuit of Inuvik and Aklavik without whom the study would not have been possible. In particular, I would like to thank Jacob and Billy Archie for taking me to Shingle Point; Cathy Greenland for helping me get a ride with Jacob and Billy; Jacob and Elizabeth Archie for their support and kindness at Shingle Point; and Billy Archie for sharing his knowledge and his friendship.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my wife, Melinda and to my daughters, Jocelyn and Leanne. You are my life.

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1. INTRODUCTION

It is a widely shared view by Aboriginal leaders in Canada that to preserve their respective cultures a satisfactory land claims settlement is essential (Bone 1992a, Armitage and Kennedy 1989, Asch 1989, Dyck 1992, Speck 1989). The Inuvialuit Final Agreement (IFA) proclaimed on July 24, 1984 includes a land claim known as the Inuvialuit Settlement Region, and it states that one of the principal objectives of the agreement is: "to preserve Inuvialuit cultural identity and values within a changing northern society" (IFA 1.(a) 1984).

It should be noted at the outset that nowhere does the IFA specify or suggest preservation of a dormant or static version of Inuvialuit culture. This is important because it is unreasonable and unrealistic to confine the definition of Inuvialuit culture to some vision of an idealised past. The acknowledgment that northern society is changing is crucial to permit an understanding of Inuvialuit culture that includes the adaptation of technologies developed externally that improve the ability of the Inuvialuit to carry on their traditional practices. Moreover, it is unfair to assume that in this era of global economies and communications that outside influences will not affect the Inuvialuit. In fact, it was partially to avoid being over-run by the dominant culture that the Inuvialuit sought a land claim in the first place (Freeman *et al.* 1992). What the Inuvialuit hoped to secure through IFA was some political authority through environmental controls, subsurface mineral rights including oil and gas, and a land base from which the Inuvialuit could continue to practice and reassert their traditions. Having been in place for over ten years a progress report, or evaluation of the effectiveness of the IFA in achieving these objectives, is warranted. Furthermore, since all cultures are "spatially constituted" (Jackson

1992, 100), and Inuvialuit culture is land-based, it is uniquely suited to human geographical analysis.

1.1 Problem Statement

There are two main problems that I wish to address with my thesis. First, the problem of trying to determine whether the IFA has been successful in its stated goal of preserving Inuvialuit culture. Trying to define exactly what culture is and what constitutes any given culture are complex issues without any absolute answers. Moreover, the perspective or context of the observer will also influence what aspects of culture are perceived and how much importance they are assigned. I address these issues in the methodology chapter (3).

However, I would argue that culture is not only spatially constituted but also spatially informed. Therefore, the human geographical landscape has very powerful cultural indicators inscribed upon it. These are visible to anyone, not only to those who have the privilege of writing about them. In my thesis I examine the community of Shingle Point, Yukon, in an effort to determine whether its resurgence can be attributed to the success of the IFA in achieving its goal of preserving Inuvialuit culture.

The second issue that I address is that of placing Aboriginal land claims in a contemporary theoretical context. Post-Colonial imperialism is one theory that has been proposed to explain Aboriginal land claims in a number of different disciplines (e.g., Economics, Anthropology, Sociology, Law and Human Geography). The underlying assumption of this theory is simply that Europeans came to North America and took the land, and Aboriginals want some of it back. While it would be absurd to deny the historic validity of this

approach, it seems to me that social scientists have overlooked other theoretical explanations. The imperialist approach tends to isolate the issue of Aboriginal land claims without taking into consideration some of the wider concerns and influences that have conspired to make the land claims issue particularly prominent at this point in Canadian history. The Inuvialuit land claim offers an opportunity to examine Aboriginal land claims and at least tentatively place them within a contemporary theoretical context in human geography.

I adapted recent (or perhaps recycled) philosophical approaches in cultural geography to both justify the thesis and to give the thesis its theoretical anchor. There are elements of postmodern theory in human geography that I believe can help to illuminate some of the possible motives for negotiating a land claim settlement that go beyond the approach noted above. I do not intend to speak for the Inuvialuit; rather, I intend to investigate the possibility that some of the influences and processes (i.e. global capital and communications, globalization of culture, and cultural fragmentation) that have produced what Soja (1989), Cooke (1988), Ley (1987) and Zukin (1988) have identified as postmodern geographies in an urban setting, are at the root of Aboriginal land claims generally, but also very specifically of the Inuvialuit land claim. But, perhaps most important, I believe that postmodern theory and its sensibilities offer non-Aboriginals a new way to look at land claims without hostility. It opens the door to understanding and supporting Aboriginal land claims by showing the value of Aboriginal cultures and how all our lives are enriched by their preservation.

1.2 Hypothesis and Objectives

My hypothesis is simply that the IFA has been effective in promoting traditional activities and preserving, or in some instances (e.g bowhead whaling) rekindling, Inuvialuit culture. My main objective, then, is to try to determine (as far as it is possible to do so), whether the implementation of the IFA has been successful in its goal of preserving Inuvialuit culture. By documenting both the historical importance of Shingle Point, and its resurgence as a hunting community in this decade, I hope to show how influential the IFA has been in helping to preserve Inuvialuit culture by playing a part in the rebuilding of this community. Since harvesting, consumption, and sharing of country food is fundamental to Inuvialuit culture, I will also detail how these activities are carried out at Shingle Point, and how they are spatially constituted. In addition I have documented the settlement pattern at Shingle Point, the extended family ties in evidence in the construction of the various camps, and the spatial dimension of the social relations in the community.

A second objective of this thesis is to address the possibilities for examining Aboriginal land claims from the perspective of postmodern theory in geography; its potential for explaining the recent changes in government attitudes vis a vis Aboriginal land claims; and, to demonstrate how postmodern method is appropriate to this type of research. Much of Chapter 3 is devoted to exploring these possibilities, and to examining the impact postmodern modes of thought have had on the negotiation of Aboriginal land claims generally, and the Inuvialuit Final Agreement specifically.

1.3 Study Area

The general study area is the Inuvialuit Settlement Region (see Figure 1). One of the reasons for choosing this area is that, in the case of the Inuvialuit, there is an interesting parallel to one of the central issues in postmodern theory. The Inuvialuit are both culturally and geographically in the Canadian margin, but by negotiating their land claim they have created a center of Inuvialuit culture, both geographically and conceptually, within the margin as a place to resist assimilation by the dominant culture. This admittedly subjective connection to postmodernism makes the Inuvialuit Settlement Region singularly appropriate.

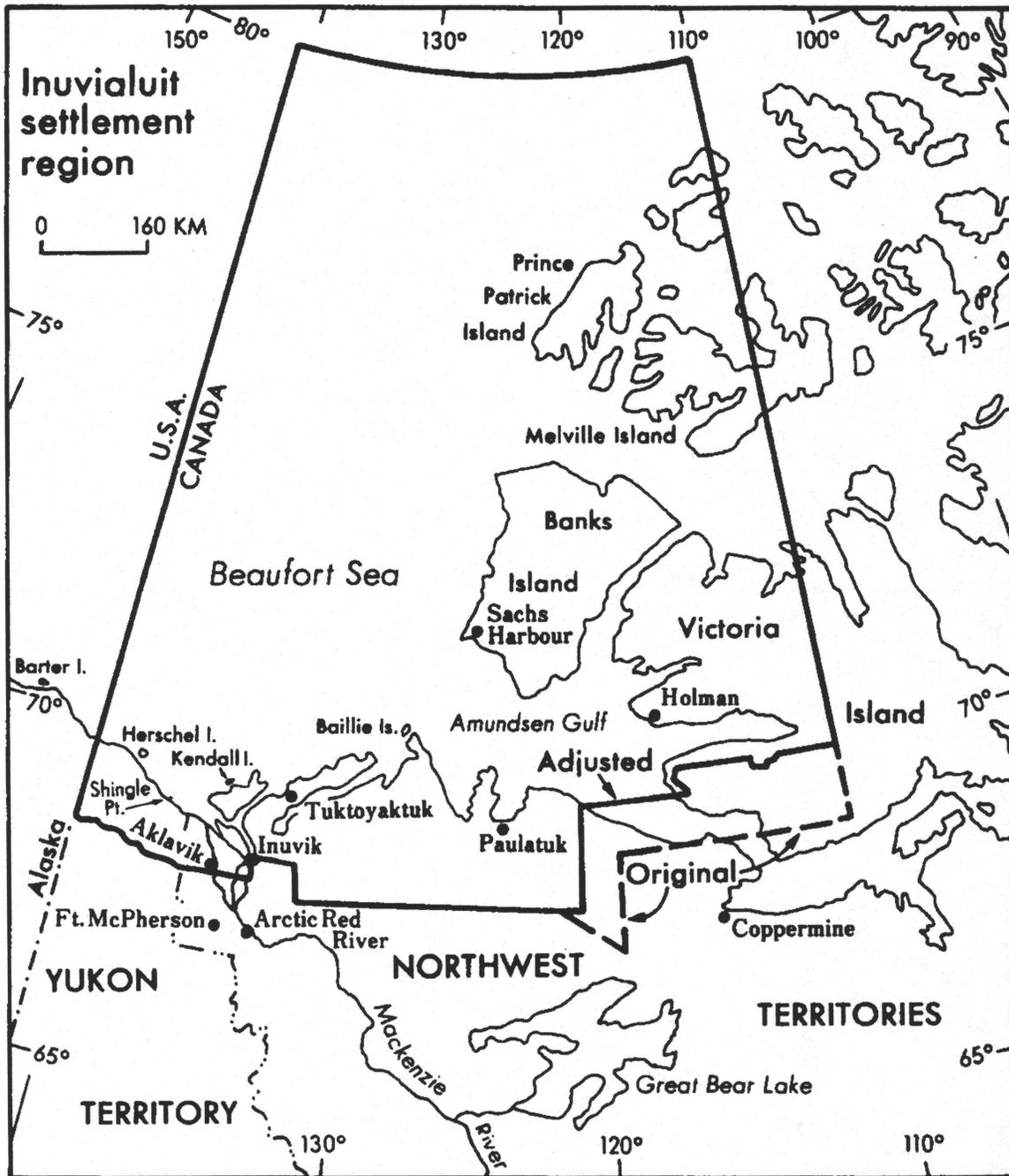


Figure 1. Map of Inuvialuit Settlement Area

Source: Freeman et al., 1992

The geographical focus of the thesis is Shingle Point in the Yukon Territory. But, since the people who use Shingle Point as a summer hunting, fishing and whaling base spend the rest of the year in Aklavik or Inuvik in the Mackenzie Delta, these two communities are also part of the geography. Figure 2 shows the Mackenzie Delta and the Yukon coast in more detail. The myriad of channels and streams that make up the Delta are an integral part of the geographical knowledge of the Inuvialuit. At various times during the ice-free season, different channels of the river must be used for travelling to and from Inuvik, Shingle Point, and cabins throughout the Delta. Moreover, the specific line to take within a given channel is also required knowledge if one is to navigate successfully. A Delta is a dynamic place where changes occur from year to year and even day to day. The intimate knowledge that the Inuvialuit have of the Mackenzie Delta is an example of traditional knowledge discussed in chapter 3; knowledge that is derived from constant and extended association with the landscape.

However, even though Aklavik and Inuvik are “home” for most of the year, Shingle Point is the main focus of this thesis because I believe that its rebirth as a community is a strong indicator of cultural preservation for several reasons. First, when at Shingle Point there is a profound and very real transformation that takes place in the Inuvialuit people compared to their behavior when in the Delta communities. Whereas there is a tendency toward a rather aimless or unfocused energy, simply because of a lack of employment opportunities, especially in Aklavik, once on the land the energies become highly focused on

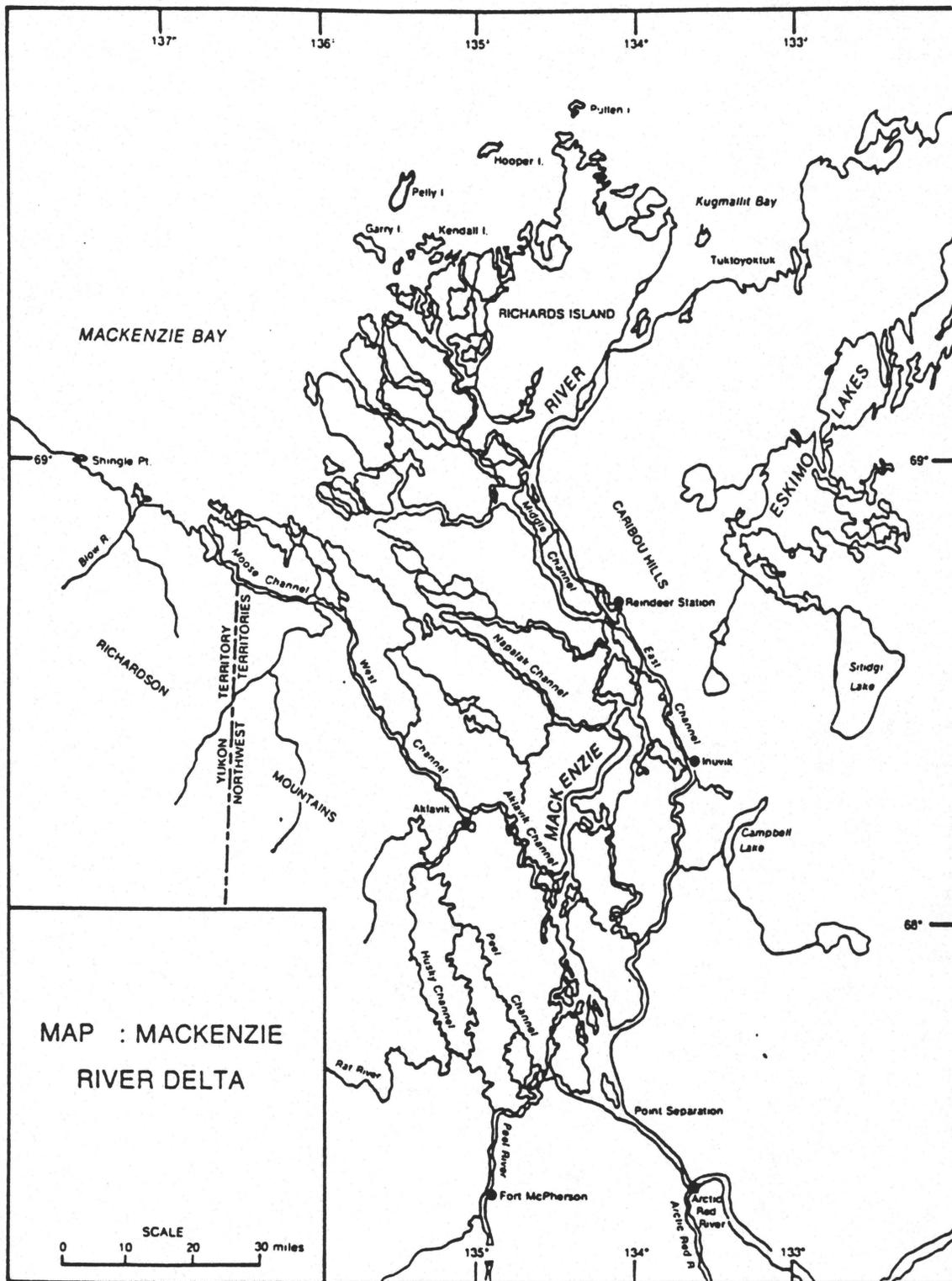


Figure 2. Mackenzie Delta

Source: Gmith, 1975

traditional activities. At Shingle Point the true spirit of the Inuvialuit surfaces, and the rise in self esteem is palpable. Being part of this community means truly being Inuvialuit.

Second, the impetus for rebuilding the community is also steeped in cultural values and traditions. The entire focus of the community at Shingle Point and its main purpose is to facilitate the traditional activities associated with harvesting country food. There are a number of other reasons for the Inuvialuit of the Mackenzie Delta to migrate to Shingle Point during the summer months, and I will detail those as well in the thesis, but harvesting country food tops the list.

A third reason for focusing on Shingle Point is that the first bowhead whale harvested by the Inuvialuit since the 1920s was taken at this location. Moreover, since the successful bowhead hunt of 1991 there has been a dramatic rise in permanent structures being built at Shingle Point. Although the Inuvialuit have been using Shingle Point for many years, until recently, most used tents. However, since the bowhead hunt there has been great interest shown by the Inuvialuit in continuing this revived tradition, and they have therefore built numerous cabins to better accommodate the people involved in the hunt, such that there is a total of thirty cabins now at five different sites.

Finally, there is perhaps no greater indicator of cultural preservation than the building or rebuilding of a community solely for the cultural group in question. Therefore Shingle Point offers a unique opportunity to explore the importance of space and landscape to culture, and offers substantial support to the hypothesis that the IFA *has* been at least partially successful in its goal of preserving Inuvialuit culture.

1.3.1 The Setting

Shingle Point is a narrow sand spit on the North Slope of the Yukon Territory on the coast of the Beaufort Sea at 69° N latitude 137° 25' W longitude (Figure 3). It is approximately 4.5 kilometers in length and varies in width from 50 to 300 meters. Since it runs parallel to the main coastline, it provides an excellent sheltered harbour for the small craft used by the Inuvialuit for summer transportation (Figure 4). The terrain of the adjacent mainland is characterized by rolling hills that are covered with a thick layer of mosses and short grasses, intermingled with an abundance of wild cranberries and cloudberry. There are some very small shrubs that grow on the north-facing slopes in some areas, but no trees. Otherwise, the landscape is dotted by small lakes, ponds and streams. The sand spit also has patches of vegetation consisting largely of grasses and a leguminous species of unknown variety (to me). There is an abundance of driftwood that has been piled on shore, that is useful for building as well as for fire-wood. Across the bay from the sand spit a fresh water stream flows into the bay, and provides drinking water.

Shingle Point and the Mackenzie Delta have been inhabited by various Inuit tribes for thousands of years. While the Inuvialuit of today are descended from relatively recent Alaskan immigrants, the cultural roots of the Inuvialuit date back much further. To fully understand the relationship of the Inuvialuit to Shingle Point and the Delta, and to appreciate the importance of these places in their culture, requires exploring the history of the region. In the next chapter, I examine the historical geography of the Inuvialuit from the perspective of academics, and then compare and contrast these views with Inuvialuit oral history.

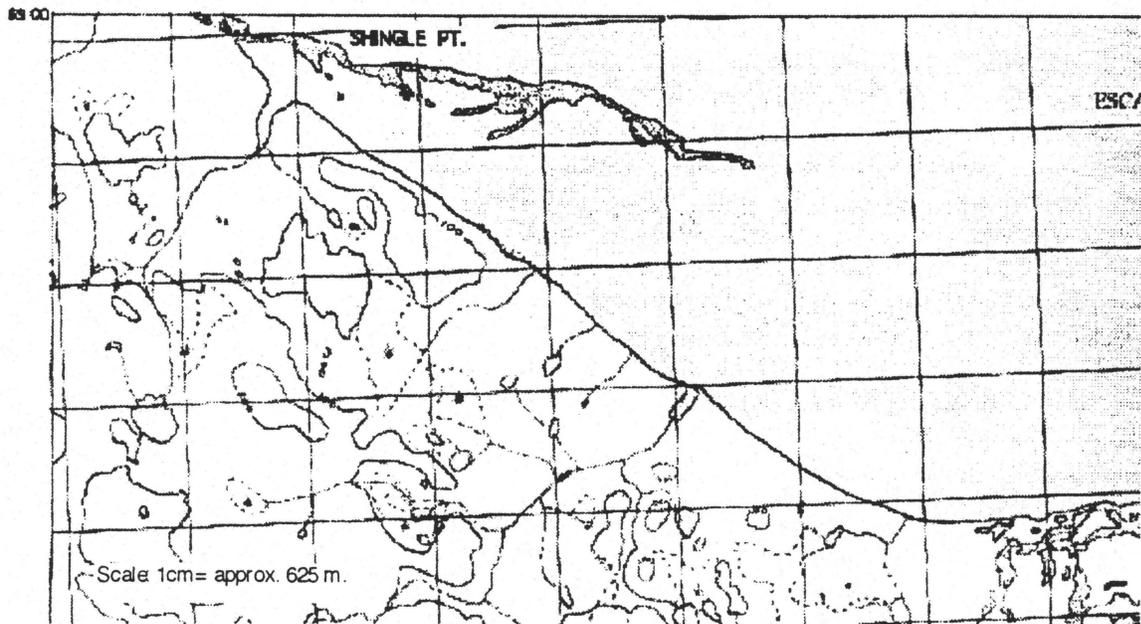


Figure 3. Map of Shingle Point, Yukon

Source: Canada 117 A/15 E



Figure 4. Shingle Point, Yukon, August, 1995

2. HISTORY OF SHINGLE POINT

2.1 Introduction

The history of Shingle Point can be characterized by four distinct phases of use and occupation. The first stage covers pre-history up to the commercial whaling era. Investigating this phase reveals that Shingle Point was a site of Inuit occupation long before contact with Europeans occurred. The second stage is the commercial whaling era that dominated the region between 1888 and 1908. This was an era of profound change for the coastal Inuit, and one that had a major impact on shaping the present Inuvialuit culture. The third phase is distinguished by the fur trade, which began around 1914. Further changes to the lifestyle and culture of the Inuvialuit were experienced during this phase. Although the fur industry still exists to some degree, the most intensive activity at Shingle Point occurred between about 1917 and 1929.

After the 1930s the area went through a period of relative inactivity, or at least a time when there were no buildings or permanent structures at the point. However, it is important to note that Shingle Point (or Tapqaq in Inuvialuktun) was never abandoned totally. There were always some people who spent part of the summer there, but there was a period between the 1930s and late 1970s when there were no buildings at Shingle Point. The current (fourth) phase has seen a reconstruction of a community there with permanent structures. This is the focus of the thesis, but the historical use and occupation of the site by the Inuit is critical to understanding the cultural significance of its redevelopment.

It is important to note that there are two different perspectives on the history of Shingle Point. The majority of written work is based on the findings

and writing of non-Aboriginals. Much of this history is either reconstructed from archaeological evidence and anthropological studies, or drawn from written records kept by non-Aboriginal explorers and members of the ubiquitous trio in the North: Missionaries, the Hudson's Bay Company, and the RCMP. That is not to say that these accounts are inaccurate or invalid, but clearly an Aboriginal account is likely to have a different perspective at the very least. Moreover, an Aboriginal perspective would surely bring to light facts and details that simply could not be known or captured by outside observers, and this is clearly the case in the *Yukon North Slope Inuvialuit Oral History* (1994). In this chapter on the history of Shingle Point, I have chosen to separate Aboriginal versions from the chronicles of non-Aboriginals. The Inuvialuit oral history is presented last because it is the most recent publication, and it gives the Inuvialuit the last word, for it is their history that is of significance here.

2.2 Pre-history to Commercial Whaling Phase

The coast along the Beaufort Sea has been occupied by different Inuit groups or cultures for several thousand years. However, McGhee (1976, 1978), believes that the technology to hunt large sea mammals in open water, developed by the Old Bering Sea culture, was spread across the Arctic by the Thule culture. According to McGhee large sea mammal hunting was first practised in Alaska in the Bering Sea and spread eastward into Arctic Canada. The expansion and diffusion into the Beaufort Sea and Amundsen Gulf, thought to have taken place about 900 years ago, coincides with several centuries of relatively milder conditions in the Arctic. McGhee indicates that during this period the tree line advanced 100 kilometers north of where it is presently. Sea

ice also retreated during this period, which extended the range of the bowhead whale, the main food source of the Thule culture, considerably farther north. According to McGhee, it is possible that the bowhead and Arctic Greenland whale occupied an area from "North Alaska, across the High Arctic, to Baffin Bay and Greenland" (1978, 86). The Thule culture, which possessed the technology for open-water whaling was thus able to expand, hunting familiar animals.

While the Inuvialuit of today are descendants of more recent Alaskan Inupiat migrants, the roots of the Inuvialuit culture go back to these early developments in whaling technology. McGhee notes that, "almost the entire technology of the historic Canadian Eskimos (sic) can be traced back to that brought from Alaska by their Thule ancestors" (1976, 115). The technology includes the two types of boats made of skins used by the Inuit. The "umiak" which holds up to twelve people, and the single occupant "kayak". Besides the boats, the technologies developed for whaling include: the toggling harpoon and harpoon float gear used for whaling in open water. Although there have been advances in technology, especially in terms of the materials used, the essential elements of the toggling harpoon and float gear are still in use today.

Even though there is no archeological evidence that puts Thule culture specifically at Shingle Point, according to McGhee, "sites along the entire route are littered with whale bones" (1976, 114), and in particular, bowhead whale bones. I think it is reasonable to assume, then, that these early Thule whaling communities would have recognized the strategic value of the point as a base and undoubtedly occupied it on a fairly continuous basis.

McGhee indicates that there is substantial evidence to verify that after about A.D. 1200 "arctic climates began to cool, reaching a cold peak known as the Little Ice Age between roughly 1600 and 1850" (1978, 103). During this period the extent and duration of the sea ice increased, reducing the range of the bowhead and Greenland whales, as well as smaller whales. The Thule culture was forced to adapt to these changes by either altering their food sources or migrating to areas where they could still hunt whales. McGhee reveals that "the Little Ice Age resulted in a series of local cultures, each adapted to the resources of a specific area" (105). These local groups have been denoted as tribes by anthropologists. Among these tribes are the Mackenzie Eskimos, named for the area which they occupied; the Mackenzie Delta and the adjoining coasts of the Beaufort Sea between Cape Bathurst and Barter Island. Along the coast they occasionally hunted bowhead whales, while in the Delta they survived mainly on fish and beluga whales (McGhee 1978, 116).

The first mention of a community of Inuit thought to be near Shingle Point is in the narrative of Sir John Franklin (1828). Franklin reported that he met a hostile group of Inuit at the mouth of the Mackenzie, but that he had met a friendlier group along the coast of the Beaufort Sea in July of 1826 (Franklin 1828, 203-217). This is believed to have been in the region between Shingle Point and Herschel Island. Franklin noted that there was evidence of European trade having taken place because these Inuit had European trade goods. He surmised that these goods had been distributed by North Alaskan Inuit after trading with Russians.

The Inuit that inhabited this coastline, as noted above, are referred to in the literature as the Mackenzie Eskimos (Usher 1971, McGhee, 1974, 1976,1978). They derived most of their food from the sea including fish, seals, beluga and bowhead whales. Usher (1971a) has suggested that the number of Inuit living along this coast at that time numbered between 200 and 300. According to Stefansson (1978), his Inuit informant nick-named "Roxy" reported that during his childhood (prior to 1889 when commercial whaling began) there were eight villages along the coast between Herschel Island and Escape Reef, including one at Shingle Point. These villages had an average population of between 30 and 60 people. Just how long Shingle Point was occupied by these coastal Inuit is unclear; however, since sites of Alaskan Thule culture have been identified farther east at Cape Parry, radiocarbon dated A.D. 1350 ± 150 (McGhee 1976, 114), it is likely that Shingle Point was in use for at least as long.

2.3 The Commercial Whaling Era

Commercial whaling in the Beaufort Sea brought about the first sustained contact between Europeans and the Inuit of the Mackenzie Delta and the Beaufort Sea coast. Commercial whaling began in the western Arctic in 1848 when a whaling vessel called the *Superior* sailed through Bering Strait and discovered an untapped resource of bowhead whales (Bockstoce 1986). The bowhead whale quickly became a prized target for commercial whalers because it was exceptionally profitable. According to Bockstoce (1977), the bowhead yielded "on average one hundred barrels of oil and fifteen hundred

pounds of baleen per animal" (17). The oil was used for oil lamps, and the baleen was the only substance available that provided the flexibility and resilience found in today's celluloid and plastics.

Commercial whaling was conducted for forty years in the western Arctic before its impact was felt by the Inuit living along the shores of the Beaufort Sea. Then, in the summer of 1888, a man by the name of "Little Joe" Tuckfield went east from Point Barrow, Alaska to investigate the prospects for whaling in the eastern Beaufort Sea. He returned the following summer having successfully passed the winter in the Mackenzie Delta and produced the baleen to prove he had harvested a bowhead whale. This news set off a flurry of activity in the region and had a lasting impact on the community at Shingle Point. Much of the activity revolved around Herschel Island, but whaling took place all along the coast, and at least two whaling vessels were forced to spend the winter of 1896-97 at Shingle Point. The *Mary D. Hume* and the *Fearless* were both trapped by the ice at Shingle Point before they could make it all the way back to Herschel Island that winter (Bockstoce 1977, 1986). The impacts felt at Shingle Point will have been very similar to those experienced at Herschel Island. I raise this point simply because the whaling era is much better documented for Herschel Island than it is for Shingle Point. Therefore, I will draw upon historical accounts from Herschel Island, to some extent, to attempt to recreate the scene at Shingle Point.

The impact that commercial whaling had on the region and its Indigenous people was twofold. First, the resources of the region were severely depleted by the time commercial whaling ended in 1914. Second, the lifestyle and culture of the Inuit were changed through their relationship with commercial

whaling. Table 1 shows the number of ships that wintered at Herschel Island or Shingle Point between 1890 and 1908, the peak whaling years in the region. It also shows the number of bowhead harvested in the Western Arctic during these years. Bockstoce (1986) estimates that the total bowhead harvest during the whaling era in the Western Arctic was 18,650. Moreover, each ship carried a crew of approximately 35 men. Thus, in the winter of 1894-95 there were over "five hundred whale-men wintering there" (Bockstoce 1977, 42). Bockstoce also notes that naturalist Andrew Jackson Stone estimated in 1896 that "each ship...accounted for more than 10,000 pound of caribou meat a year" (43). Clearly, if Stone's estimate is remotely accurate, the presence of the whaling ships exerted considerable pressure on the caribou herds in addition to decimating the bowhead population.

Table 1. Ships Wintering at Herschel Island and Shingle Point, and Bowhead Harvested in the Western Arctic, 1890-1908.

Year	Number of Ships	Bowhead Harvested
1890	3	127
1891	1	234
1892	4	317
1893	7	141
1894	15	151
1895	13	94
1896	6	58
1897	2	73
1898	1	228
1899	0	208
1900	0	112
1901	1	29
1902	3	132
1903	4	95
1904	4	74
1905	6	93
1906	1	36
1907	1	70
1908	0	33

One of the most significant effects of the contact with European whalers was the heavy toll exacted by European introduced diseases. Small pox, scarlet fever, and measles epidemics in 1900 and 1902 ravaged the coastal population (McGhee 1976). As the Mackenzie Eskimos in the coastal villages succumbed to disease, Alaskan immigrants began to take their place. Many of these immigrants came on the whaling ships either as whalers or as servants on the ships. Moreover, as Usher (1971a) has noted, "many stayed [and] and most of those who did were caribou hunting inlanders" (173). Whereas the previous culture was based almost entirely on what could be harvested from the sea, the influx of these inland people changed the culture of the region by introducing the hunting of land mammals. These caribou hunters were particularly valuable to the whalers for their hunting skills and were employed by the whalers to harvest caribou. The whalers gave the hunters credit, which they used to outfit themselves for their hunting trips. This was the beginnings of a system that carried on into the fur trade era, but the immediate effect was to reduce the local country food supply.

Being in such close proximity to white American whalers had a profound effect on the culture of the region as well. The circumstances surrounding the expansion of commercial whaling into the Beaufort/Mackenzie region and its impact on local culture is described by Usher:

The whalers, and to some extent the Alaskan Eskimos, (sic) were a new phenomena to the Mackenzie people. They came in great numbers, in very large boats, with a variety of goods and tools. The year-round presence of these people and their material culture made Herschel a relatively much more important place to the Mackenzie group than previously; a place which would be visited at least once a year by practically everyone...men women

and children alike were in close contact with American whalers and acculturated Alaskan Eskimos (sic) for extended periods, some even permanently. They worked with them, traded with them, socialized with them, even inter-married with them; they learned their language, their customs, their technology, their value systems and economic goals. (1971a, 173).

While Usher singles out Herschel Island because it was the base from which whaling operations in the Beaufort were conducted, it is important to bear in mind that Shingle Point was an important stopping place for the whaling ships on their eastward journey. Stefansson (1919) remarked that "Shingle Point...is on the regular route of boat and winter travel from the Eskimo (sic) settlement on the island to those in the Delta and east of it" (41). Furthermore, since Herschel had become so important, the people living at Shingle Point would undoubtedly have made the trip to Herschel relatively frequently, since they were within one or two days journey. This, of course, is in addition to the fact that there had been interaction between the coastal communities long before the arrival of the whalers.

There were some additional deplorable and long-lasting side effects of whaling crews wintering in the Arctic. The introduction of alcohol to the local population was one consequence whose repercussions are still being felt. Zaslow (1971) cites missionary accounts of the impact alcohol had on these communities. According to one missionary, Herschel Island was "the world's last jumping-off place...where no law existed and no writs ran, a paradise of those who reject all restraint upon appetite and all responsibility for conduct; when a dozen ships and five or six hundred men of their crews wintered here, and scoured the coasts for Eskimo (sic) women" (Quoted in Zaslow 1971, 258). Another missionary reported that alcohol was used as an enticement to get

women “away from their husbands” or to induce men to “rent out their wives” (259). One can only speculate as to the long-term social and cultural effects of these abuses on the local population.

Some of the cultural changes that took place as a result of the commercial whaling era were brought about by the in-migration of the Inupiat from Alaska. But, a more profound change took place because of the trade in material goods and technologies that began with the arrival of the commercial whaling industry. Usher (1971a) suggests that these changes were of such a magnitude that “regardless of origin the resident population would have been unrecognizable to their aboriginal forefathers...they had become oriented to a market economy and dependent on the white man (sic) for many of their food stuffs as well as for hunting and household implements” (176). These changes in material culture were exacerbated during the fur trade era that followed.

The picture that emerges of Shingle Point during the commercial whaling era is of a community in transition. Many of the original inhabitants fell victim to various epidemics of disease. Alaskan immigrants, whose lifestyle included hunting land mammals, moved in to the villages to take their place. Stefansson’s notes, written at Shingle Point in 1906, indicate that there was “evidence of at least ten houses” (1978, 157) there at that time, although all had been abandoned for the previous three winters. Stefansson also recorded that, although there were no permanent houses in use at the time, there was a “village of from ten to fourteen tents” (1919, 41). Moreover, his local informants indicated that Tapqaq (Shingle Point) was one of the locations that was always inhabited before commercial whaling began. There is also pictorial evidence (Fig. 5) taken by Stefansson that shows the lagoon with a number of beached

boats and a tent village at the western end of the point (now referred to as "Down the Hill"). This photograph from 1908 shows that the Inuit had adapted technology brought by the whalers, because all the boats in the lagoon are whale boats of the type used by commercial whalers and not the traditional umiaks and kayaks. Stefansson reported that many of the whaling captains traded spare whaling boats for furs, meat or labour, and that the Inuit were becoming "expert and daring sailors" (1978, 192).



Figure 5. Inuvialuit Camps and Schooners at Shingle Point, 1908.

Yukon Archives/Mathews Collection Print no. 77/50 #3

In August 1914, ethnologist Diamond Jenness stopped at Shingle Point as part of the Canadian Arctic Expedition 1913-1916. He noted that "the settlement contained about 12 tents, with three or four abandoned winter houses" (Jenness 1991, 270), as well as remarking on the presence of whale boats and the remains of a whaling schooner, the *Penelope*, which had wrecked there in 1907. Of equal significance, is his note that the inhabitants were "greatly mixed with foreign blood and foreign customs" (270). This is significant because it clearly indicates that Inuit society at Shingle Point was

changing as a result of its exposure to the American whaling fleets. These changes would see further developments brought on by the subsequent fur trade.

2.4 The Fur Trade Era

For all intents and purposes commercial whaling was over in 1908 when the price of baleen collapsed. In the words of Bockstoce (1986) "by 1912 the handful of remaining whaling vessels had given up any pretense of serious whaling" (338). The ships that remained were ushering in a new era entirely, that of the fur trade. Between 1915 and 1919 there was a sharp rise in fur prices, especially arctic fox, but also marten, mink and muskrat. Muskrats were found in large numbers in the Delta and could be harvested with minimal effort. This began to shift some of the focus for the Inuit to the Delta. However, with Arctic fox furs selling for \$50 each (compared to \$1.50 for muskrat), many coastal Inuit remained on the coast to trap foxes; thus the fur trade flourished both in the Delta and on the Arctic coast.

In his book, *The Mackenzie Yesterday and Beyond* (1981), Aquilina describes how the seasonal spatial patterns of the Inuit changed as a consequence of, first, the whaling era, and then the fur trade:

In the 1890s, whalers began employing Inuit to hunt fresh meat and the prospect for employment encouraged migration from Alaska and a shift from the Delta to Herschel Island.

Before the arrival of the white man (sic) the Inuit of the Western Arctic were hunters rather than trappers. They followed the seals at the floe edge, scouted the rivers for the fish runs and sought the great caribou herd in the hinterland. This seasonal movement changed when the demand for fur resulted in the establishment of trading posts...the need to be nomadic was obviated by the presence of the trading post. (153).

The change from a nomadic lifestyle to one focused on permanent or semi-permanent settlements is significant, because it altered the seasonal migrations following food sources, and made the Inuvialuit more dependent on trade to procure their food.

The establishment of a trading post at Aklavik in 1915 was undertaken by the Hudson's Bay Company (H.B.C.) specifically to attract trade with the Inuvialuit from the coast Wolforth (1971, 44). Other trading companies followed suit and Aklavik became the dominant trading location in the Mackenzie Delta. A number of fur trading posts were also established along the Arctic coast, including two relatively short-lived posts at Shingle Point. The first, opened in 1917 by H. Liebes and Company, closed in 1921 a year after the H.B.C. opened their post in 1920. The H.B.C. closed their post at Shingle Point in 1928 after only eight years of operation (Usher 1971b, 106.) Figure 6 is a photo taken at Shingle Point during the fur trade. This was the period of peak activity and occupation before the present resurgence.

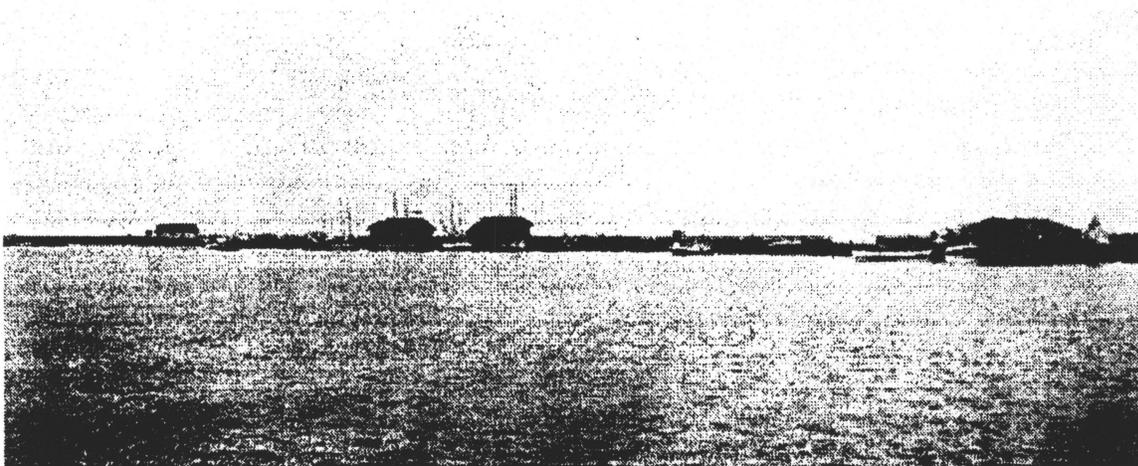


Figure 6. Anglican Church, Residence, HBC Post and Schooners in the Harbour at Shingle Point, 1928. Yukon Archives/Anglican Church Coll. no. 89/41 637

Usher (1971a) reveals that the decade of the 1920s was when the fur trade was most intensive and most lucrative in the Mackenzie Delta and the Arctic coast. He writes that "this was a period of unparalleled prosperity in the region" (Usher 1971a, 177). Annual cash incomes for trappers in the region at that time were often in excess of the national average, totaling in the thousands or even tens of thousands of dollars per year. The high incomes being generated, initiated another wave of Alaskan immigration to the Mackenzie Delta and the nearby coastal areas. It was also during this period that year-round occupation of the Mackenzie Delta first began.

There were a number of repercussions of the fur trade that affected the lives of Aboriginal people in the Delta and along the coast. The fur trade brought substantial wealth to the local trappers during its peak. It also initiated the integration of traditional and cash economies. As a consequence, some trappers who had become particularly dependent on the cash economy experienced hardships during the 1930s because the fur catches declined sharply during that decade, both in the Delta and along the coast (Usher 1971a). At the same time as catches were declining, prices also fell increasing the hardship for those who had become accustomed to the cash income afforded by the trapping way of life.

It is unclear just how long the buildings at Shingle Point remained in use after the trading posts closed. However, an Inuvialuit informant, who was part of the Alaskan migration of the 1940s, reported that there were no buildings at Shingle Point when his family moved to the Delta. Although some people from the Delta still travelled to Shingle Point in the summer, it appears that after the 1930s it experienced a period of relative inactivity until the 1970s. In the late

1960s the availability of lower cost aluminum boats and better motors ("kickers") made travel to this traditional hunting, fishing and whaling area more practical for Delta residents.

2.5 Inuvialuit Oral History

The works I have cited in the preceding sections are the work of non-Aboriginal historians, researchers and writers. In this section I consult a document entitled *Yukon North Slope Inuvialuit Oral History* (1994). This document is the result of a project undertaken in 1988 by the Inuvialuit Social Development Program (ISDP), a branch of the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation created under the IFA, to record Inuvialuit oral history. It is a translation of conversations with Inuvialuit elders reminiscing about their lives on the Yukon coast, including Shingle Point. The very existence of this ISDP document is another indicator of the success of the IFA in helping preserving Inuvialuit culture, since the ISDP only exists because of the IFA.

It should be noted that this oral history is told by Inuvialuit of Alaskan origin, i.e., either they were born in Alaska or their parents were. This does not minimize the value of this history; rather it verifies unequivocally that most of the Inuvialuit of today are of relatively recent Alaskan decent. This document also provides valuable information from the Inuvialuit point of view. In some cases, it validates the history recorded by non-Aboriginals. There are, however, several points that it raises that are not mentioned elsewhere, and it flatly contradicts some information previously thought to be true. Moreover, it provides a rich cultural and historical context for Shingle Point, and the people who used it, that has not been documented elsewhere. Finally, the document reveals an

explanation of how Aklavik became an important Inuvialuit settlement and why the Inuvialuit moved there from the Arctic coast.

One of the non-Aboriginal expositions that is corroborated by Inuvialuit oral history is the missionary reports of the debauchery by the whalers. Inuvialuit elder, Peter Thrasher says: "when they [the whalers] first started to come they had no priest. You know that time when they [whalers and Inuvialuit] started drinking they try and kill each other, fight, drunk. Their wives [Inuvialuit], they lost them to those white people, those people, their daughters they fooled around" (Nagy 1994, 38). The arrival of Anglican ministers apparently curtailed these activities, and the positive effect that the missionaries had on the whalers was obviously appreciated by the Inuit. Thrasher refers specifically to Bishop Stringer as having been a positive influence saying that, "when that preacher came all the bad people they stopped. Bishop Stringer, yeah!" (38).

The Elders also remember the devastating flu epidemic of 1928 that decimated the Inuvialuit population. Diamond Klengenbergl recalls that, "from everywhere we heard that people were dying. From Shingle Point on...people came from Tapqaq with boats to Aklavik, that is how a lot of them died" (56). The population of Shingle Point in 1928 before the epidemic was 95 Inuvialuit. Nagy offers that written reports indicate that there were 9 deaths at Shingle Point recorded, but that the number was probably higher. Remnants of the graveyard on the hillside overlooking Shingle Point still exist.

One of the points raised in this volume, that is lost in other histories, is the importance of the church and the Anglican Mission School at Shingle Point, in terms of their immediate and lasting cultural impact. The church was built in 1922. The school opened in 1929, and operated there until 1936 when it was

moved to Aklavik. Several of the Elders interviewed in the report were students at the school and recounted some of their experiences there. Their stories are similar to the accounts of other Aboriginal people in Canada who attended residential schools. Some of the memories they have of being in school there include: having difficulty adjusting to being away from their families, being unfamiliar with English, having to work all the time, and eating “white man food” (Nagy 1994, 40-43).

However, they also recall that they would go hunting and fishing and thus were allowed to eat traditional foods some of the time. Martha Harry recalls that Inuit men working at the mission and some of the bigger boys went hunting for caribou because that would be their food for the winter. She also recounts how the principal, Reverend Shepherd, let them eat “frozen fish with the skin off” (41) when he found out that was also what they ate in the winter time. She recalls how they spent Christmas at the school when she was about 15:

When we spend Christmas there, we had drum dance at Garret's house. Even we danced square dances too there...that's how we have Christmas long ago. And there they let us eat too, Garret and them. Us bigger children, like our own food when we are home, it sure was good. (Nagy 1994, 42).

The children apparently spent most of the year away from their families, spending both Christmas and Easter at the school. Some students stayed year-round because they had lost their families during various disease epidemics, while most of the children went to be with their families in summer. Figure 7 shows Inuvialuit students at Shingle Point in the 1930s. The photograph confirms David Roland's memory of around 30 students being there. He says, “14 boys were in school sometimes and sometimes 16 girls too. Some years they would be more boys too” (43).



Figure 7. 34 Inuvialuit Students at the Anglican Mission School, Shingle Point, 1930s. NWT Archives, Fleming Collection N79-050:0412

An issue that is raised in the oral history is the artificial and erroneous grouping of these indigenous people by Western anthropologists. As Nagy points out, anthropologists divided the pre-contact Inuvialuit into five groups, but the Tuyurmiat, who occupied the Yukon coast around Shingle Point, were not identified or acknowledged. They were generally considered by anthropologists to be Kittigariumiut. According to Emanuel Felix the difference is not a trifling matter: "They were always from that country, from Tapqaq (Shingle Point) and Qikiqtaryuk (Herschel Island)...[we] called them Tuyurmiat, those from long ago

at Qikiqtaryuk and Tapqaq. The Tuyurmiat were a different tribe. They were not Kittigariumiut!" (Nagy 1994, 27). This emphatic differentiation is not documented elsewhere, and is corroborated by other elders in the report who also indicate that associations with various locations were important to one's identity. For example, Lily Lipscombe explains that her father "was a Sigliq and he was from here (Yukon coast) but he always liked to specify that he was from Tikiraq (Kay Point), not from Qikiqtaryuk...because that's where his mom always was. He never really liked to say that he was from Qikiqtaryuk" (27). From a geographical perspective, this identification with specific places speaks of a strongly developed "sense of place." Non-Aboriginal accounts do not convey this sense of place nor the strong associations that people had for specific locations.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the elders in the report recount that Shingle Point was an important place for harvesting and preparing country food. Rhoda Allen explains that in summer "they would take off towards Tapqaq [from Aklavik] to hunt caribou also to pick berries too in August...That is how we were just hunting all the time" (Nagy 1994, 62). Kathleen Hanson also recalls hunting caribou in the winter at Tapqaq with her father and an employee of the Mission there. She says: "there was so many caribou up there...when there was caribou, it was my dad, me and Thomas Umuaq who would hunt caribou" (72). There is a significant point of departure from non-Aboriginal history regarding the hunting of caribou in the spring. Nagy reveals that, before this research, it was believed that caribou were not hunted in June. But, during the interviews with the elders, "at least four Inuvialuit repeatedly talked about hunting caribou in the springtime and early summer" (71). For example, Ishmael Alunik says that, "sometimes there is no caribou around...and sometimes they come only in

spring. This is where they would kill them, when they are moving...Some too would kill these young caribou with young ones inside in the spring” (71).

Besides hunting caribou at Shingle Point, there were a number of other foods harvested there. For example, they hunted seal in the springtime when the muddy water from the Mackenzie would reach Shingle Point. Hunters would take advantage of the muddy water by the breathing holes, because, as Fred Inglangasuk explains, “if it’s clear water it [the seal] stays down there, it sees you from down there and instead of coming up it goes other places” (72). Geese, ducks, and ground squirrels were also hunted there, and Sarah Meyook remembers that she “would always walk and go for berries from Tapqaq to the point of Tapqaq” and that, “it always have big yellow berries at...Tapqaq” (84). She also explains how the food was prepared and stored:

They made whale skin dry and dry meat and muktuk, raw muktuk... When there was caribou, we would make dry meat. We would put them inside the teepee here at Tapqaq. In August when there was seal, they would get some and dry the meat too...They stored dry meat and dry fish in wooden barrels. That was how my grandparents had their food. It was very good! (94).

Of course, Shingle Point was, and still is, an important fishing place. Sarah Meyook remembers living at Tapqaq with her family and having “lots of fun over there” (77) fishing and making dry fish in the smoke house. Bowhead and beluga whales were also hunted at Shingle Point and all along the Yukon coast, although West Whitefish Station (Niaqunan), seems to have been a favorite location for hunting beluga. It is closer to the mouth of the Mackenzie and beluga tend to congregate there to feed in the spring.

In the 1940s, people began to leave the coast to settle in the Delta. According to the elders, the main reason for the move was that food was

available more consistently in the Delta during the winter. Several elders recall traveling with their families along the Yukon coast in winter near starvation (Nagy 1994 86-88). The 1940s seem to have been a particularly bad time for trying to survive on the coast, and it was during this decade that many coastal Inuvialuit began to spend the winters in Aklavik. Dora Malegana recounts how her father shot an eagle, which they ate simply because there was nothing else to eat, even though it was not common practice (88). In the Delta, the Inuvialuit could snare rabbits and go ice-fishing in order to sustain themselves through the winter. In addition, people had become used to having access to a store, since there had been a store both at Herschel Island and at Shingle Point during the whaling and fur trade eras. Therefore, when the store closed at Shingle Point and the Mission was moved to Aklavik in 1936, there was added incentive to move their winter residence to Aklavik. Although some Inuvialuit continued to frequent Shingle Point in the summer, there were no cabins there again until the early 1980s. The time period that the thesis focuses on is the 1980s, and especially the 1990s, but the early geographical and cultural history is vital to providing the context for the developments of the past 11 years since the IFA was signed.

Hopefully what the preceding historical portrait shows is the traditional importance of Shingle Point to the Inuvialuit, both as a location for harvesting country food, and also as a "place," with all of the multi-layered meanings that have been ascribed to that term in geography. Houston (1978) provides an almost poetic definition of place when he writes that "place...has human context: space with historical associations...Place implies belonging. It establishes identity. It defines vocation. It envisions destiny. Place is filled with memories of

life that provide roots and give direction” (226). To the Inuvialuit, with their long abiding affinity for the land, Shingle Point is all of these and more. It is imbued with the lives of their ancestors, and evokes memories and emotions that speak of Inuvialuit history and traditions. It represents who they are, where they have been, and it gives tangible evidence and reassurance that their culture is viable and alive.

The historical geography of the Inuvialuit, presented in this chapter, establishes the long and continuing relationship the Inuvialuit have with the coast of the Beaufort Sea and the Mackenzie Delta. It reveals the cultural roots of the Inuvialuit and shows that harvesting country food, including whales, is a vital part of their culture. And, it illuminates how various outside influences have affected their lives and culture. In the next chapter I establish the theoretical basis of the thesis, and review the pertinent literature.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW: THEORY AND CULTURAL CONTEXT

3.1 Introduction

In this literature review I have two main goals. The first, is to construct the theoretical base of the study, and the second, is to provide the cultural context in which the study took place. The strategy in this chapter, then, is to trace the development of theory in cultural geography in an effort to establish a workable theory for this thesis. The approach will be to begin with a general theory of cultural geography, tracing the developments and changes in theory that informs the sub-discipline. Following that, I will narrow the focus to the relevance of that theory to the study of Aboriginal land claims, and finally, focus on the specific site and situation of the Inuvialuit of the Mackenzie Delta and Shingle Point.

3.2 Theories in Cultural Geography

3.2.1 Carl Sauer and the Berkeley School

In North America, cultural geography, as it is known today, owes much to the Berkeley school and its founder, Carl Sauer. Sauer's work and writing forms the basis for much of the cultural geography practiced between the 1920s and the 1950s. It is still very influential even though it has come under some criticism, especially since the mid-1980s. However, despite the criticism, there is still much to recommend some of the basic ideas espoused by Sauer and the Berkeley School. Some of the most often-cited works of Sauer regarding the nature of cultural geography and its mandate, as he saw it, include: "The

Morphology of Landscape" (1925), "Foreword to Historical Geography" (1941), and "Cultural Geography" (1962). These three articles, while by no means comprehensive, do give an indication of the evolution of Sauer's thinking over the course of his career, and as a consequence, also reveal critical aspects of the theory underlying cultural geography.

In the "Morphology of Landscape" Sauer concerns himself with a wide range of issues related to geography's areas of research and methodology. However, at the outset he declares that in the same sense as the focus of study for a botanist is plants, "area or landscape is the field of geography" (Sauer 1963, 316). This simple assertion is worth noting because landscape often seems to be overlooked in theoretical debates; but, as geographers, landscape is ultimately what unites us all in the discipline. According to Sauer, how we investigate, dissect or explain that landscape may be widely divergent, but it is (or should be) the common thread in all geographical study. Still, according to Sauer, geographers should not be concerned with "the energy, customs or beliefs" (342) of a people, but only with the visible impact they leave on the landscape. This would seem to limit the scope of geographical inquiry considerably, especially in cultural geography, where customs and beliefs are integral parts of culture. He is careful to point out though (after Vidal), that a range of possibilities exist within each environment for a culture to adapt to, and transform, the landscape; but, the culture itself, rather than its human participants, is seen as the agent of change that transforms the landscape over time. This seems to imply that culture is something with a momentum of its own independent of its human subjects.

Some of the ideas expressed by Sauer in "Morphology of Landscape" resurface in "Foreword to Historical Geography" as well. There is a notable focus on artifacts such as "food, shelter, furnishings, tools...fields, pastures, woods, and mines" (358). The landscape thus remains the primary locus of investigation because that is where these artifacts are visible. While some have characterized Sauer's focus on artifacts as excessive (Jackson 1989), I would argue that at least the focus then stays on the landscape where it belongs in geographical research. However, according to Sauer, "human geography...is a science that has nothing to do with individuals but only with human institutions, or cultures" (1963, 358), ironically almost removing the human from human geography. The implication seems to be similar to that of structuralism, where human agency, at the individual level, is seen as much less important or influential than the social structures inherent in cultures.

In the concluding remarks of this paper Sauer makes some interesting points. In particular, he points out that "we cannot...point to a uniform culture back in the dawn of Paleolithic time" (378) and that there are very few, if any, instances where there is only one system or method for accomplishing a particular end. He raises this issue in defence of other cultures, whose ways, he suggests, are thought of by people in western culture as "ignorance or stupidity" (378). The point he is making is that there has always been a myriad of different cultures and all have devised means of coping with their site and situation. The key here is difference, not superiority. In acknowledging, and yes, even celebrating these differences, Sauer is advocating some of the principles latterly associated with postmodernism, some 45 years before it became popular in geography.

The influence of postmodern thought in cultural geography has resulted in some pointed criticism of, and changes to, the theories Sauer advocated. Nevertheless, Sauerian cultural geography was the only cultural geography until the early 1980s when that new thrust for cultural geography began to take shape. The proponents of this “new cultural geography” are largely British, and are therefore educated with a different perspective than the largely American-dominated cultural geography of the 50s, 60s and 70s. One thing that the new cultural geographers have accomplished, is that they have provoked a renewed interest in cultural geography, which has spawned an explosion of publication in recent years.

3.2.2 New Theories in Cultural Geography

McDowell (1994) summarizes some of the recent developments in cultural geography and the philosophical foundation of these developments. She suggests that the accepted meaning of the term “culture” has itself changed and become more all-encompassing since the late 1960s. The accepted meaning of culture as a shared system of values is no longer adequate because of competing notions of culture different from the dominant definition. She cites “popular culture, mass culture [and] youth culture” (151) as examples of competing ideas of culture that did not conform to the standard definition. The wider meaning that the term has taken on is identified by Rosaldo (1992), who submits that culture “refers broadly to the forms through which people make sense of their lives” and that it “encompasses the everyday and the esoteric, the mundane and the elevated, the ridiculous and the sublime” (Quoted in

McDowell 1994, 151). The range the term culture covers now, incorporates the fact that different segments of society appropriate different meanings of culture to explain their own practices.

These meanings are also constantly evolving and vary spatially. For example, youth culture, while having some similarities, will vary considerably from one region or city to the next, often depending on what the landscape offers. Moreover, as McDowell says, "dominant or hegemonic meanings may be subverted, challenged and overthrown" (151), because the meanings of culture and the practices associated with it are specific to particular groups in society. Since the meaning of the term has become so fluid and elusive, it is not surprising that some geographers have felt a need to modify the fixed theories of the Berkeley school for contemporary applications.

Another reason that the new cultural geographers have felt the need for change is their recognition that both meanings and knowledge itself are "provisional and contested" (151). McDowell argues that this, more than anything else, is what sets the "new" cultural geographers apart from the Sauerian tradition. This is an important distinction because this recognition attempts to put the geographer on the same plane as the culture being investigated, rather than positioning the geographer as an expert or authority. It acknowledges that the writer is presenting a particular view, and that it is no more correct than any other. It also encourages presenting multiple views in an effort to reduce biases, or at least present a selection of biases.

Increasingly, the work of cultural geographers has been focused on the modern city as opposed to rural areas. Part of the reason for this is that, in the modern industrial city, cultural production has undergone an enormous change

because of the commingling of people from widely different backgrounds and cultures. McDowell points out that this has “made possible the cross-fertilization of ideas...[and] permitted new forms of expression and ways of living that were unheard of in more traditional settlements” (152). However, while she acknowledges the impact that global communications and capital have had on people’s lives, she does not specifically recognize that these impacts have been felt in rural areas as well as in the cities. In fact, global capital and communications have had perhaps an even greater effect on so-called hinterland areas, simply because the impact has been more abrupt and more recent. It has made possible the dissemination and diffusion of culture and ideas from their urban origins to the most remote parts of the globe with very little, if any, lag time. Whereas the genesis of these ideas may take a number of years or decades to evolve, and may require a very specific set of circumstances in the city, once they become part of the public domain (i.e., media or marketing), they are globalized almost instantly. The result is an assault on rural cultures that resembles the fast editing of a popular music video. Ideas, styles and ways of thinking are bombarded at rural and local cultures without the benefit of the context in which they are germinated, leaving a patchwork of cultural symbols that undermines and fragments the cultural continuity of rural cultures.

3.2.2.1 The New Landscape School

McDowell indicates that the new cultural geography has two schools of thought. However, it is the so-called “new landscape school” that provides a link to past theories in cultural geography and a base for the current thesis.

According to McDowell, new cultural geographers advocate the notion “that material landscapes are not neutral but reflect power relations and dominant ways of seeing the world” (161). Landscape has thus been re-theorized to include perceptions and particular views of the world as well as the material results of human interaction with the environment. The acknowledgment of diverse views incorporates an aspect of postmodern theory in that it calls into question positions of authority. It denies the possibility of an all-encompassing or over-arching view of culture from a site of privilege. As McDowell explains, “the geographer is also culturally situated and so how s/he sees the landscape is culturally and historically specific”(162).

As a consequence of recognizing that there are multiple views of any given landscape, and that knowledge itself is positional and multifarious, the agenda of contemporary cultural geography has changed, according to McDowell. She says that it has become topical to uncover “previously ignored senses of place and visions of landscape constructed by the powerless rather than the powerful” (163). An example of this is the growing literature devoted to the feminist perspective in geography, and studies that seek to represent the view of landscape held by indigenous people and cultures are also part of the new agenda. This thesis fits into the latter category. The Inuvialuit are an indigenous people whose culture has become a mixture of the dominant North American culture and their own alternative culture, sometimes juxtaposed beside each other, and sometimes layered. Admittedly, these are my words and my views; but whenever I can, I am attempting to present the Inuvialuit view as *much* as possible, to try to provide a balance between the dominant and alternative cultural influences and views.

The simultaneous existence of dominant and alternative cultures occupying the same spaces is one of the circumstances of the postmodern world that the new cultural geography tries to address. As McDowell (1994) suggests, "interconnections between global forces and local particularity alter the relationship between identity, meaning and place...[but] despite the growing homogeneity of international cultural production...there are spaces of resistance" (166). The spaces of resistance tend to be places in the social margin of the dominant culture, regardless of their spatial proximity to the center. Sometimes, these spaces are in the geographical margins as well. In the case of the Inuvialuit, they are both *culturally* and *geographically* in the Canadian margin, but by negotiating their land claim they have created a center of Inuvialuit culture within the margin as a place to resist assimilation by the dominant culture. The negotiation of the IFA can be seen as a local response to the hegemony of global forces that were threatening to consume or undermine the local culture and its landscapes. Of course, the land claim does not make the Inuvialuit or the Inuvialuit Settlement Region immune to global influences. However, for a culture that is intimately tied to the land, a secure land base is essential to preserving its own local identity and vitality in the face of these global pressures.

Trying to look at both the global and the local at the same time is one of the challenges facing the new cultural geography. As McDowell indicates, geographers are turning to new methods in their quests to uncover the "connections between globalization and local 'structures of feeling'...the multiple senses of place held by inhabitants...[and] the ways in which global trends are interacting with locally based customs and social practices to create

new layers of meaning” (167). As I have already alluded, some of the methods that are being employed in cultural geography are derived from postmodern theory. Specifically, McDowell suggests that approaches that are smaller in scale, that focus on details, and are qualitative, as opposed to quantitative, are becoming popular.

In a powerful essay titled “Geography is Everywhere”, Cosgrove (1989) also discusses methods for the new cultural geography. He argues that culture and landscape are indivisible, because a given landscape is the both result of a particular world, and also influences that view. Further, he suggests that landscape is a product of a people attempting to create “a visual unity” by ordering the external world into ways that reflect and mirror their values and beliefs (121). As a result, Cosgrove proposes that in order to decipher the cultural landscape the same kinds of skills that we employ to interpret books, movies, paintings and art in general, should be used. The scientific method and quantitative approaches are seen as inappropriate to the study of cultures, since culture is not quantifiable, nor is it possible to observe with detached objectivity.

Therefore, the new methodology also rejects the idea of the field as a laboratory site for controlled objective observations, because a field study is seen, to a greater or lesser degree, as a confluence of cultures interacting within spatial and temporal boundaries. The notion of having controlled observation in such an environment falsely assumes that cultures are discrete entities, and that non-interactive observation is possible. The new cultural geography makes no such assumptions. Rather, it acknowledges that geographers bring their own cultural and historical milieu to their work and

cannot separate themselves from it. Thus, the notion of providing definitive answers or statements to cultural questions based on controlled or objective observations is impossible. This, too, is derived from the philosophical views espoused by postmodern theorists. Since theory in the new cultural geography has been heavily influenced by postmodern social theory, it is prudent to review the impact of postmodern theory and ideas on geography.

3.3 Postmodern Theory and Geography

Postmodernism did not begin as a geographical theory or concept, but has had an impact on geographical thinking just the same. However, there is a continuing problem trying to define exactly what postmodernism is. In the words of Featherstone (1991) "the term is at once fashionable yet irritatingly elusive to define" (1). In geography a number of readings or definitions have been put forward. Curry (1991) and Dear (1988) have pointed out that the notion of postmodernism has arisen in (at least) three separate though related areas. These three areas are: style, epoch and method. What I intend to do is briefly examine the developments in each of these areas and then illustrate their relevance to the issue of Aboriginal land claims and the attendant negotiations.

Of the three areas noted above, postmodern style is perhaps the most familiar, and finds its most visible expression in architecture. Postmodern architecture began as a revolt against the austere sameness of modern architecture, which is epitomized by the concrete skyscrapers found in every North American metropolis. This style of building and landscape was designed to be functional and little else. However, it became apparent that people do not necessarily function well in these supposedly functional buildings. Humans,

being the irrational and emotional beings that they are, seem to function better in spaces that provide a modicum of variation, relief, and aesthetic appeal (Harvey 1989). Postmodern style offers this variation because it focuses on the human scale and attempts to sustain the continuity of historical and cultural symbols in the landscape.

The second area where postmodernism has evolved is in "postmodernism of epoch" (Curry 1991, 214), which suggests that we have entered a new era in which the principles and codes of the past no longer apply. This is the approach to postmodernism favoured by economic geographers such as Harvey (1987, 1989), and Cooke (1988, 1990). Their primary concern is the ways in which the spatial relationships and contexts of labour and business have changed under late capitalism. For example, Harvey (1993, 1989) shows how the inherent expansionism of capitalism and the global economy have left virtually no part of the earth untouched, and in the process produced what Featherstone calls "the globalization of culture" (1993, 170). Harvey indicates that the current state of capitalism is instrumental in producing cultural change. He suggests that "flexible accumulation has been accompanied on the consumption side...by a much greater attention to quick-changing fashions and the mobilization of all the artifices of need inducement and cultural transformation that this implies" (1989, 156).

The implication here is that global economic forces have conspired to produce a global consumer culture, thereby increasing the size of the market and the potential for greater profits. This rapid expansion of capitalism into so-called remote areas, such as Canada's North, has forced economic geographers to re-evaluate the Marxist model of capitalism, with its "linear view

of history [and] assumed inevitability of certain changes" (Cloke *et al.* 1991, 31). Instead, as in the case of northern Canada, some areas have by-passed various stages of the assumed progression in their economic development. Many of these northern communities have gone virtually from a traditional economy, to being plugged into the global economy overnight, essentially skipping the industrialization stage altogether. The impact of this new economic and social reality can be seen in northern Aboriginal communities where the influence of global culture has begun to erode tradition. As a result, there has been a greater importance placed on settling land claims by Aboriginal groups who wish to preserve their cultures.

The third area where postmodernism has surfaced in the social sciences is postmodern method. This is perhaps the most complicated and confusing area, but is also possibly the most enduring. The basic premise behind postmodern method is explained by Dear (1988) who argues that postmodernism "in its purest form...is basically a revolt against the rationality of modernism" (265), which engendered and relied on grand theories and totalizing explanations. Postmodern philosophy eschews the notion of one theory having authority over another, and rejects the idea of trying to establish one theory to explain everything. These hegemonic claims of superiority of one theory over another are, according to postmodernists, ultimately undecidable. In view of that, it is not too surprising to find that postmodernism rejects much of the theory previously practised in geography. For example, Gregory (1989) points out, that postmodern writers:

reject the notion that social life displays what could be called a 'global coherence': that our day-to-day social practices are moments in the reproduction of a self-maintaining social system

whose fundamental, so to speak 'structural' imperatives necessarily regulate our everyday lives in some automatic, pre-set fashion (69).

This rejection of structuralism is founded on the postmodern belief that there is no 'centre' around which social life revolves. It also rejects humanism on similar grounds in that humanistic inquiry places human agency at the center of social life. Since both humanism and structuralism began as rejections of logical positivism, it is inevitable that postmodernism also rejects positivism.

Based on the preceding arguments, it would certainly appear that postmodernism is a rejection of almost everything and an acceptance of almost nothing. However, that disguises one of the central issues of postmodern thought and its approach to culture: celebration of differences and sensitivity to heterogeneity. The postmodern sensibility, according to Geertz (1973), celebrates "the diversity of things" (18). A welcome by-product of that sensibility is that people who have traditionally been outside the offices of scholastic authority have been given a voice to present their views of the world. A clear example of formerly excluded cultures gaining a voice within the dominant culture is the growing number of Aboriginal land claims in Canada, and the willingness by governments to enter into negotiations to settle these claims.

Jameson's (1984) analysis of how contemporary economics, social relations and geographies have expanded our view of culture, and its spatial underpinnings, is useful here. He suggested that "a [new] model of political culture appropriate to our own situation will necessarily have to raise spatial issues as its fundamental organizing concern" (89). He proposes that while the spread of capitalism and its new global dynamics may have destroyed the semi-autonomy of the cultural sphere, it has also greatly enhanced what is

considered cultural. Clearly, if an expanded view of what is cultural is central to the circumstance of postmodernity, and spatial issues are to be the key organizing principles of political culture, this has profound and obvious implications for evaluating the process of Aboriginal land claims and the resulting human geographies. After all, Aboriginal land claims are nothing if not an attempt by First Nations peoples to make spatial issues *the* organizing element in their bid to establish or preserve a modicum of political and cultural autonomy.

3.3.1 Postmodernism and Aboriginal Land Claims

Aboriginal cultures have endured despite the best efforts of governments in Canada, at all levels (and for well over a hundred years), to coerce, persuade, discriminate and legislate them out of existence. Indigenous cultures and ethnic minorities world-wide have, in recent decades, been influenced by an insinuating and often more powerful form of cultural pressure: the pressure to conform and be swept up in the mass consumer culture of the global economy. If we can characterize late capitalism as the postmodern era, where flexible accumulation is the order of the day, and transnational corporations and the jobs they provide are footloose, often short-term and fleeting, it is not surprising to see amongst many people a resurgence of ethnicity and a search for the stability and assurance offered by inclusion in a long-standing tradition or culture. Since we live in "space" and all our activities have a spatial component, it is equally predictable to find people trying to establish or carve out a place for themselves, where their identity is mirrored and reinforced in the

landscape at every turn. First Nations attempts to establish permanent land claim settlements can be viewed as a concerted effort by Aboriginal groups to make just such a place to combat the erosion and fragmentation of their cultural and individual identities.

This spatial delineation of culture is a response to all three areas of the postmodern perspective. In the area of style, it is an attempt to preserve historical and cultural continuity in the landscape, which Ley (1987) points out is integral to postmodern concepts of style. For Aboriginals, one of the best ways to preserve that continuity is with a land claim that gives them land use jurisdiction over that landscape. While land claims fall short of transferring political power, they do create political agencies and committees that must be respected after the land claim is enshrined in the constitution.

A land claim is a reaction to the postmodern epoch, where local cultures are diminished and undermined by global interests. It is an attempt, in the postmodern era, to reverse the processes of fragmentation and dissolution brought about by these global influences. And, as I have already established, the postmodern view of culture is infused with the "postmodern sensibility" (Abler *et al.* 1992) associated with postmodern method, the view that celebrates differences, heterogeneity, uniqueness and diversity. A land claim can be seen to reflect and espouse this view, not as a thing to be feared or as "cultural fetishism" (Tuan 1989), but as an expression of the human need to belong. This is not to suggest that First Nations have all excelled in their 'postmodern lessons' and have arrived at these decisions as a result. Rather, the postmodern philosophy is a means for *non-Aboriginals* to understand the

importance of land claims to Canada's First Nations, without resentment and fear.

There are additional reasons for examining the issue of Aboriginal land claims, especially in the North, from the postmodern perspective. For example, ironic as it may seem, in many ways northern Aboriginal cultures appear to be the epitome of a post-modern culture. Traditional social relations and economics exist side-by-side with postmodern capitalism and its attendant social structures. But rather than over-running the traditional ways, many First Nations communities have adopted those elements of capitalism that suit their needs and incorporated them into their own culture. This parallels the postmodern concept of "pastiche," or blending of parts from different sources to produce something new. It is also a *proactive* rather than a *reactive* move, like claiming a space in the margin (Hooks, 1990) by asserting their own cultural identity from within the dominant culture and incorporating those elements of the dominant culture that enhance the reproduction of their own.

Clearly, since culture is not an entity unto itself, then if the people that reproduce the culture change the means of reproduction, for whatever reason, it does not necessarily mean that the culture is fading or dying. This is particularly significant in looking at Aboriginal cultures in Canada where it is often suggested that, since they use modern tools and equipment to carry out their otherwise 'traditional' lifestyle, their culture has disappeared or is in danger of doing so. This narrow view is similar to the super-organic view espoused by the Sauerian school of thought, which does not allow for socio-economic factors nor human agency in cultural adaptation (Jackson 1992). All cultures change over time. Should we not allow that technology and modern economics could

be adapted by Aboriginal cultures without them losing their own cultural essence? As Wenzel has so aptly noted in the case of the Inuit, "they are a people adapting southern artifacts, institutions, and ideas to their present ecological and historical situation" (1991, 15). The context in which these cultural changes are taking place is critical to understanding what those changes mean.

Peter Usher, who has studied northern Aboriginal communities quite extensively, reveals the integration of the traditional and the industrial Canadian economies and cultures in *From the Roots Up* (1986). He writes:

an hour's walk around a modern Inuit community or northern Indian reserve does not immediately reveal much that differs from a rural village in southern Canada...there are no igloos or teepees...instead there are likely to be rows of modest frame houses, snowmobiles and pickup trucks parked outside and TVs, freezers and sofas inside. Only the few pelts hanging outside reveal another economy...instead of a traditional economy being replaced by a "modern" one, there is now a distinctive "Native" or "village" economy (141-2).

The "village" economy that Usher is referring to is a mixture of the traditional subsistence economy, and the wage economy. According to Usher and others (Wenzel 1991, Bone 1992, Tobias and Kay 1994), the subsistence economy is vital to northern Aboriginal communities for more than just providing nearly half of their food. What the subsistence economy also provides is a cultural anchor, because integral parts of the subsistence economy are traditional activities and the social relations and networks based on kinship. Therefore, as Wenzel explains, "subsistence is more than a means of survival, it is a set of culturally established responsibilities, rights and obligations that affect every man, woman and child each day" (1991, 60). The way that the subsistence economy is articulated spatially has changed with the inclusion of the wage economy and

new technologies; however, its importance and essential characteristics remain intact.

As the passage from Usher indicates, the traditional economy and culture are juxtaposed with "modern" culture and economics in most northern communities. In recent years the linkages between the two systems have become more pronounced, with more and more emphasis being placed on the wage economy. As a result, many First Nations are re-asserting their ties to the land and, according to Usher, even choosing not to accept wage employment offered by the government at times, because they have found that wholesale conversion to the wage economy destroys "the balance of their social and economic life...and life [is] not as enjoyable" (1986, 150). In addition, Usher states that "Native peoples do not see the issue as a stark choice between a high-tech, urban industrial future [or] returning to a romantic bucolic past...instead, the issue is to find the right balance between formal and informal activities" (150). In essence, this is suggesting that a form of pastiche, reminiscent of postmodern thinking, be employed, blending economic strategies and methods of cultural production to create a workable and meaningful system.

Descriptions of the mixed economy of northern Aboriginal settlements provided by numerous authors (Usher 1986, Wenzel 1991, Bone 1992, Freeman 1993, Tobias and Kay 1994), make it apparent that the postmodern explanation of culture is appropriate, because construction of the "village" economy employs the same techniques of mixing and matching in its cultural production as postmodernism does in theoretical explanation. Moreover, the fact that First Nations are assuming a postmodern stance in choosing the

margin as a "site of resistance" and as a place to celebrate their uniqueness and difference from the dominant Canadian culture is another reason for adopting postmodern theory, because they put into practice what has been theorized by social scientists and critics.

Finally, I would argue that postmodern sensibilities have infiltrated government to some degree in recent years, and have been influential in establishing the type of atmosphere under which successful land claim negotiations can be conducted. The federal government has only recently thrown off its assimilationist policies, where First Nations peoples are concerned, in favour of an approach that allows for the different cultures of First Nations to exist within Canada. The notion of a comprehensive land claim coming to fruition under a government fixated on the modernist agenda is unlikely if not impossible. Granting sub-surface mineral rights and "rights to be represented on commissions to coordinate land-use planning" (Keeping 1989, 9), as in the case of the Inuvialuit Final Agreement, run counter to the modern approach to land use planning. The modern approach would tend to only see value in the natural resources the land could provide, not putting much stock in wildlife or wildlife habitat. Raw materials for manufacturing would be all that was considered valuable and development based on their extraction is typical of the modern program (and, yes, it still persists). Knowing that aboriginal value systems are different from Euro-Canadian values, for example, in their tendency to focus on wildlife, wildlife habitat, and conservation, but still allowing Aboriginal peoples to have a voice in land use decisions has required a monumental (dare I say it) paradigm shift in government, one that smacks of postmodern sensibilities. Of course a great deal of time and effort has been

required from Aboriginal peoples to finally spur governments to this point, but without a shift in attitude it probably would still not have happened.

Furthermore, there has been, overall, a greater willingness than ever before, on the part of most people and governments in recent years, to settle land claims. This can be attributed to several things. The environmental movement since the late 1960s has focused our collective awareness on the failure of the modern project to deliver its promised 'better life for everyone,' and has pointed out the unsustainability of the practices that were supposed to produce those results. In recognizing the devastation of the natural environment by the modern project, environmentalists looked to alternative sources of knowledge and theoretical frameworks to halt the damage.

Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) is one example of an alternative approach that has gained respect and influence in recent years. TEK is detailed commonsense knowledge that is gained from experience and passed down through each generation. It is therefore an all-encompassing knowledge of the land, its resources and their use. TEK is a holistic knowledge that involves the spiritual and cultural health of the people who use it and is therefore more than just a knowledge base, it is also a way of life. Until very recently it has been used largely as an Aboriginal source of biological and ecological information. However, it has gained influence more recently as an approach to managing natural resources and wildlife that is based on local knowledge of local conditions (Fast & Berkes 1994). For example, there are several co-management boards that incorporate traditional knowledge of wildlife resources with scientific knowledge to formulate management strategies. Likewise, there is growing interest in incorporating TEK, and all forms of traditional knowledge,

as a means for “aboriginal peoples to regain control over social change and the evolution of their cultures” (Report of the Traditional Knowledge Working Group 1991, 16).

Whether TEK is a pre-modern or post-modern method is immaterial, the point is that the recognition of different voices and paradigms is fundamental to the postmodern view, and without it these other systems, such as TEK, would never gain acceptance. Thus, if it has done nothing else, the debate over postmodernism has elevated the status of previously ignored or marginalized methods and knowledges, which in itself is well worthwhile.

In concluding this section, I would suggest that the diffusion of postmodern ideas throughout academia, and the population at large, has been at least partially responsible for the following changes in attitudes and conditions: (1) willingness to acknowledge the value of other systems of thought and different approaches to existing problems; (2) a renewed focus on maintaining historical and cultural continuity in the landscape, especially including ecological continuity; (3) a reversal of the fragmentation of local cultures by global consumer culture, particularly where a geographical space has been delineated to preserve that culture (such as Aboriginal land claims); and, (4) sanctioning cultural and ethnic diversity, and allowing the space needed for them to be expressed to ensure their survival.

Having explored the broader issues of theory in cultural geography, the influence of postmodernism, and negotiation of Aboriginal land claims in Canada, I will now turn my attention to the specific cultural context of the Inuvialuit.

3.4 Inuvialuit Cultural Context

Trying to establish exactly what constitutes a given culture is a complicated, and probably impossible, task; however, there are generally some aspects of any culture that help to define it more readily than others. Inuvialuit culture is no exception. While it would be impossible for me to know all there is to know about Inuvialuit culture, let alone write about it here, there are some aspects of Inuvialuit culture acknowledged to be fundamental by the Inuvialuit themselves. These aspects are those associated with the harvesting, preparation and sharing of country food. There have been some studies conducted on the Inuvialuit country food harvest by academic researchers, such as Condon *et al.* (1995) and Freeman *et al.* (1992), which I will briefly review first. But, perhaps the best evidence of the importance of the country food harvest and the associated lands to Inuvialuit culture comes from the Inuvialuit themselves, and I will present that information as well to verify the academic studies.

The study conducted by Condon *et al.* (1994) of Holman focuses on the subsistence activities of people in the 20 - 35 years age range. What they discovered is that this age group is less active in traditional activities than older age groups. There are a variety of reasons given for this, such as “family histories, motivation, skill, and knowledge levels, access to capital equipment, and availability of time” (37). It is also noted that many Inuit increase their involvement with these activities as they grow older; in effect “growing into subsistence” (Hensel 1992, qtd. in Condon *et al.* 1994, 38). However, of greater interest here is the continued importance placed on these activities even by the

younger group, even though they do not participate as actively. As Condon *et al.* report, "although there was great variation in terms of subsistence involvement, just about all households surveyed emphasized the importance of land food" (41). Moreover the importance of country food is not limited to just the economic benefits derived from hunting and fishing. There is in fact a strong ideological and cultural motivation that influences the importance of these activities. The Inuvialuit of Holman reported that traditional activities are critical to their sense of self-worth, and for those who are less active in these areas there is a sense that they are losing a "primary source of cultural identity" (43).

Sharing of country food is another integral part of traditional subsistence activities that contribute to the cultural identity. It provides an important integrating mechanism for the whole community, because sharing is based on a generalized form of reciprocity. Therefore, even those who do not do much hunting of their own have access to country food, and when they do hunt they also share. Thus, Condon *et al.* suggest that for young people who only participate sporadically, the times when they do are of great psychological importance, giving them cultural grounding that can not be acquired in any other way.

What this study ultimately determined was that the subsistence economy, which comprises all the activities associated with the harvesting, preparation and sharing of country food, is based on a complex set of relationships that are important for more than just economic concerns. Indeed, if economic efficiency is the sole criteria for judging the importance of hunting, Condon *et al.* suggest that "it will never be possible to justify Inuit subsistence in the Western sense" (43-44). They believe (as do I) that any attempt to assess the importance of

traditional activities must include social and cultural factors such as, the self esteem gained by the participants, and the sense of identity or belonging these activities provide in their cultural/historical connections. Moreover, familiarity with the geography of traditional activities, the hunting, trapping and fishing landscape, evokes a sense of place that is irreplaceable and economically unquantifiable.

For my purposes Freeman *et al.* (1992), *Recovering Rights*, is a landmark text in terms of its explanation and sensitivity to Inuvialuit culture in general, but also very specifically regarding the Inuvialuit of the Mackenzie Delta. To begin with, Freeman affirms that the negotiation of the IFA as undertaken by the Inuvialuit in response to developments which they felt were threatening their lands and their culture. Freeman says that "it was the sense of threat to the integrity of these food-producing land and water areas...that initially created the need the Inuvialuit felt to seek protection for their culturally distinct society" (8). Obviously the land itself is of vital importance to traditional activities and the culture; they are completely intertwined and the Inuvialuit sense of identity is as much dependent on the places where traditional activities are carried out as on the activities themselves.

However, in *Recovering Rights*, Freeman focuses more on the activities than the places. He quotes a variety of Inuvialuit sources who make it clear that the activities associated with the country food harvest are fundamental to the Inuvialuit way of life, and culture (Freeman *et al.* 1992, 40-44). Paramount among these activities is hunting. Freeman indicates that hunting is the activity that defines Inuvialuit tradition, identity and self-worth more than any other. He quotes an Inuvialuk woman who says, "my husband has never been to school

to learn to read and write. But he has hunted all the animals over the years. He is a man!" (40). Clearly the woman respects her husband for being a hunter and pursuing this traditional practice. Freeman also quotes a proud Inuvialuk father who says, "my son is only nine; he's a hunter...he pulled a caribou back into town last year; he didn't shoot it, just carried it back and took it to his grandmother's house, for her" (40). The father is obviously proud that his son is carrying on the tradition of hunting in his family, but this quote raises an additional issue that is fundamental to Inuvialuit culture, that of sharing the country food harvest.

It is important to make the distinction between the cultural importance of hunting and all of the other activities related to the country food harvest. Hunting and consuming country food are fundamental, but all the associated activities are important culturally as well. As Freeman notes "the social and cultural values associated with traditional foods relate not just to their consumption, but importantly to all phases of their acquisition, distribution and processing" (1992, 43). The above quote by the Inuvialuk man speaks volumes in its implicit recognition of the essential part sharing plays in Inuvialuit culture. The quote does not explicitly draw attention to the fact that the caribou is being shared (it is given to the grandmother), but in its casual acceptance of this fact it displays just how integral sharing is, at least in this family.

The document titled *Aklavik Inuvialuit Conservation Plan* (1993) is perhaps the best evidence of the importance of traditional activities to Inuvialuit culture. I say this because the document was written by and for the Inuvialuit in Aklavik. It also details the singular importance of lands and places to Inuvialuit culture. The whole purpose of the report is to formulate strategies for monitoring

and managing the use of renewable resources and to “help protect the environment in the Delta [as well as] onshore and offshore areas to ensure cultural survival of the Inuvialuit Community” (1.1).

Four goals laid out in the plan are:

1. To identify important wildlife habitat, seasonal harvesting areas and cultural sites and make recommendations for their management.
2. To describe the community process for making land use decisions and managing cumulative impacts which help protect community values and conserve the resources on which priority lifestyles depend.
3. To identify educational initiatives for the Inuvialuit...which will promote conservation, understanding and appreciation.
4. To describe a general system for wildlife management and conservation and identify population goals and conservation measures appropriate for each species of concern in the planning area. This will be done using the traditional knowledge of the Community and others with expertise.

These goals make it abundantly clear that traditional activities and the lands where they are carried out are deeply ingrained and the foundation of the culture. They enter into virtually all aspects of their lives, because, as the authors are careful to point out, “subsistence harvesting of animals and plants remains as vitally important today as it has been in the past” (1.4). Moreover, what unites all of these activities is that they are profoundly spatially based and dependent.

While other studies have shown the importance of traditional activities to Inuvialuit cultural survival, they have not documented the equally important issues of the land and culturally meaningful places to the culture and its survival. This thesis is an attempt to show that, in the postmodern world, spatial issues and the preservation of places and a sense of place are also vitally important to preserving Inuvialuit culture. I will try to accomplish this by using

recent developments in theoretical approaches in cultural geography outlined in this chapter which have highlighted the importance of presenting Indigenous views of landscape. Further, as a small-scale study this thesis corresponds to the agenda proposed by the new cultural geographers, because large-scale or generalized studies tend to overlook the local variations and contexts that are vital to the existence and understanding of cultures that function inside, or in the margins of a dominant culture.

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

Before discussing the methodology that I used in this study I want to address another, but related issue, the duration of the study. There was only sufficient funding for one month in the field, but there are some additional circumstances that help to lend credibility to the study in spite of this. I raise this issue because, generally, a study of culture requires considerable exposure to that culture in order to come away with any meaningful results. Culture is a multifaceted complex issue. Trying to say something significant about another culture without a reasonable time investment belittles the culture and its people, and for that reason I want to bring to light some contingencies that affect my research beyond the brief field study.

The first contingency that I want to mention is that I spent five months working in the Inuvik/Aklavik area in the summer and fall of 1989. In fact, it was that experience that piqued my interest in the region and its people. I lived and worked with several Inuvialuit during this time, and gained an appreciation for the culture which prompted this research. While I am not suggesting that I carried on anything remotely resembling systematic research at that time, I do believe that the exposure to the culture on such an intimate basis, provides a level of understanding and empathy that would not have been possible had the present study been my first and only experience with the region and the people.

The second point I want to make is that, I have maintained an ongoing dialogue with members of the Inuvialuit community in Aklavik, as well as with key staff at the Joint Secretariat, before and after the field study period. This

includes written and telephone communications regarding secondary data assembled by the Joint Secretariat, and discussions about the thesis with Inuvialuit in Aklavik and the Joint Secretariat. The two factors outlined above can not substitute for a longer field study, but they do give the entire study a broader frame of reference, one that helps to augment its credibility.

In addition to the communication that has taken place after the field study, there were a number of communications that were necessary before the field study could begin.

4.2 Obtaining a License and the Research Plan

Before I could attempt to do any field work I had to obtain a license from the Science Institute of the NWT in Inuvik. The Institute would only issue the license after a number of criteria had been met. To satisfy the Science Institute's requirements I had to acquire written permission from the Hunters and Trappers Committee in Aklavik, and the Hamlet, to allow me to conduct the research. I also had to submit a copy of the research plan and my proposed questionnaire for ethical review. Once all of these conditions were met the license was issued and I flew to Inuvik on a commercial airline, then on to Aklavik by bush-plane.

This being a study of culture, I felt that a quantitative approach was totally inappropriate because reducing the richness and subtlety of culture to numeric formulae is virtually impossible, and meaningless. In some instances, there are aspects of a culture that can be analyzed quantitatively, but for my purposes, there is no data that is open to statistical analysis. Census data can provide some information on the retention and use of language, an important cultural

indicator, but it is only one of many, and therefore, cannot be used to make any inferences by itself. Rather than trying to bend culture to a quantitative study, a qualitative approach was adopted, since this would be more appropriate to the subject matter. I have already described the historical context, which is also critical in the study of culture, because, indisputably, all cultures change over time and one can only fully appreciate the present state of a culture when its history is known.

The initial plan that was devised for conducting the research centered on a questionnaire that I had developed. This method was decided upon after reviewing several published studies conducted in northern communities (Freeman et. al 1992, Tobias and Kay 1994, Condon et. al. 1995). The questionnaire was not intended as a survey, but rather I planned to use it as a guide for conducting interviews with a sample of Inuvialuit from the community in Aklavik, which would be tape-recorded. The reason for proposing this method initially was that it offered the possibility of garnering fairly extensive data within the relatively short time period available to me.

However, while this appeared to be a sound strategy on paper, it was soon apparent that it would not work in practice. The main problems I encountered were that it was difficult to get people to agree to do the interviews in such a short time frame, and the results of the interviews I was able to conduct were less than satisfactory. It seemed that the presence of the tape-recorder and the air of formality surrounding the interviews was not conducive to open discussions. As a result, I decided to abandon that approach in favour of much less intrusive means: engaging in casual conversation over a cup of coffee or tea and maintaining a daily journal to record the information. This

proved to be much more effective and opened up the conversations considerably.

However, one event convinced me to change the focus of my thesis, and that was when I travelled by boat to Shingle Point. I went there because many of the Inuvialuit that I had hoped to interview were there. In arranging for a ride to Shingle Point I was told that there were certain individuals who commanded a great deal of respect in the community, and if I was able to persuade one of these people to give me a ride my reception at Shingle Point would be greatly improved. I was fortunate enough to arrange for transport by just such a person. The man that I contracted to give me a ride is an active member of the Hunters and Trappers Committee and was involved in the successful efforts by Aklavik Inuvialuit to re-institute the bowhead hunt. He is also an alternate captain for the hunt, and was involved in the initial negotiations for the Inuvialuit land claim. The reception I received at Shingle Point, as result of travelling with this man, was very enthusiastic. It was obvious that the community at Shingle Point respected him, and since he had agreed to give me a ride the rest of the community accepted me as well.

On the trip down the Mackenzie, but especially at Shingle Point I was awakened to a side of the Inuvialuit that simply does not emerge to the same degree in town. This other side of the Inuvialuit is apparent in the focus of the community as well as the in the social relations. Since there is a definite spatial aspect to these social relations I will describe and document them in my thesis. Indeed, it was during my visit to Shingle Point that I decided to re-focus my thesis on the redevelopment of this community and to detail its spaces, activities and functions.

4.3 Participant Observer Method

The approach I ended up using for collecting my data would best be described as the participant-observer method. During my stay in Aklavik and especially Shingle Point, I mostly just "hung out" with people and engaged them in conversation and frequently over a cup of tea a great deal of information would be divulged without my having to be intrusive. There were some questions that I tried to ask of as many people as possible to get as broad a spectrum of reactions as possible. The specific questions that I asked consistently were versions of these questions:

- Has the way country food is shared changed at all in the past ten years? How? (i.e. is there more or less sharing? Is country food exchanged for other items more or less now than before?)
- Is going out on the land important to you for anything else besides harvesting country food? If yes, why or for what purpose?
- What would you like to change -- or what would you like to get out of the land claim settlement that you have not gotten yet? What else can the directors do to help you out?

I felt that these questions would yield valuable information regarding these important aspects of Inuvialuit culture, and the IFA.

The participant-observer approach has a long and somewhat controversial tradition, particularly in the area of representation. But, I believe that in spite of the problems of representation associated with it, the approach is still reconcilable to postmodern theory underlying the thesis. One way of reconciling the two approaches is by contextualizing myself, or acknowledging

my own biases and cultural milieu. The practice of situating oneself as the author is typical of postmodern practitioners (Gregory 1989, Haraway 1988, Jackson 1993) and an element of postmodern theory derived from hermeneutics which "recognizes and theorizes the site of [the author's] representation" (Duncan and Ley 1993, 8). By positioning myself in relation to the thesis, the notion of an objective and dispassionate ethnography is dispelled. This does not mean inserting an autobiography, but merely acknowledging that I am a middle-class, white male, born and raised in Western Canada. I have another bias that I should mention, and that is that I have had a number of friends of Aboriginal ancestry in my life, and have always been sympathetic to their situation and concerns.

In addition to acknowledging the cultural context that I am approaching the research from, I have consulted with a well known and respected member of the Inuvialuit community in Aklavik during the writing of this thesis. The purpose of the consultation was to ensure that the Inuvialuit point of view was being expressed as much as possible. The consultant reviewed the entire proposal and made recommendations which have been incorporated and approved. With the Inuvialuit having direct input into the writing of this document the representation issue of the methodology is reconciled quite substantially.

Another argument that not only justifies the participant observer approach, but actually favours this approach by someone from a different culture, can be made on two fronts. First, someone from outside the culture may actually notice things insiders do not see simply because it is part of their everyday existence and is therefore taken for granted. I feel compelled to offer this argument because it was my experience at Shingle Point that people did

not really recognize the cultural significance of the community until I suggested it as a possibility, at which time they became quite enthusiastic about its potential to demonstrate the success of the IFA in preserving Inuvialuit culture. A second, though no less important, argument is that any governments, or government departments (e.g. DIAND), that may be interested in the evaluation would likely have someone with the same cultural bias as the researcher (i.e. a white southerner) doing the evaluation.

In addition to the information I gathered while at Shingle Point and Aklavik, I make use of other sources of data to supplement my own research. Particularly *The Aklavik Inuvialuit Community Conservation Plan* (1992) which is a document produced by the Inuvialuit. It presents their point of view and raises issues they want addressed by the IFA, and the joint management committees created. Additional secondary sources include: *The Inuvialuit Bowhead Harvest of 1991, Recovering Rights*, Freeman *et al.* (1992) in conjunction with the 1991 bowhead whale harvest; the information contained in the *Labour Force Surveys* (1989,1994) carried out by the Northwest Territories government; and, the data contained in the Report titled, "Inuit Land Use in the Western Arctic" (Usher 1976,21- 30).

These secondary sources further help to establish the cultural context because they contain fairly comprehensive data on who is hunting and trapping, in terms of age, gender, and ethnic group, when, and how often, as well as the species of game harvested. This is useful because, as has already been established hunting, fishing and trapping are fundamental components of Inuvialuit culture. Freeman's study is highly site specific and is based on extensive interviews and questionnaires of Aklavik Inuvialuit on food

consumption and food gathering. Usher's study is less exhaustive than the more recent data, but it is also based on information obtained from Inuvialuit informants, and is useful because it predates IFA, and contains some valuable information on the spatial dimensions of hunting and trapping.

5. FIELD ACCOUNT AND DESCRIPTION

5.1.1 Community Organization

The community at Shingle Point is organized loosely around several extended families and their friends. There are four separate camps that include three on the sand spit, and one at Running River on the mainland. Each of these camps contains as many as nine cabins. In addition, there are several individual cabins along the shore of the mainland across the bay, and, on the hill overlooking the camp that is situated near the junction of the sand spit and the mainland. The camps all remain in contact with each other via citizens band (CB) radio. Most cabins also have a Single Side Band (SSB) or trappers radio as well, which allows them to keep in touch with friends and relatives in Aklavik, Inuvik, Tuktoyaktuk and beyond, depending on the weather and reception.

A nomenclature has evolved for differentiating the various camps and cabin locations. The four main camps are referred to as "Down the Hill," which is at the extreme western end of the point; "Middle Camp" is about two kilometers east, not surprisingly, in the middle of the point; "Point" is about one and a half kilometers further east at the eastern end of the point; and, "Running River" is actually on the mainland about four kilometers from the sand spit. The cabin on the hill overlooking Shingle Point is referred to as "Up the Hill." It is right at the base of the point, about half a kilometer from "Down the Hill."

There are numerous families who use Shingle Point besides those listed below, but they do so with tents rather than cabins. I am focusing on the cabins because of their relative permanence. The following pages are approximate camp layouts and family connections for the four camps. They are not drawn to

scale and should not be mistaken for real maps, but they do give a good indication of the communities' design.

To preserve the anonymity of the residents of Shingle Point I have numbered the cabins for each camp, arranging them so that the first generation is represented by the lower numbers. The second generation connections to the first are contained in the descriptions on each map page. This does not necessarily represent a chronological history of when the cabins were built, although in most instances the cabins belonging to the first generation were also the first ones built.

5.1.1.1 Down the Hill:

- Cabins 1, 2 and 3 are owned by couples that are related through the females; i.e., they are sisters. This is the older generation.
- Cabin 4 belongs to the daughter (and her spouse) of the couple in cabin 1.
- Cabin 5 belongs to the daughter (and her spouse) of the couple in cabin 2.
- Cabin 6 belongs to the son (and his spouse) of the couple in cabin 3.
- Cabin 7 belongs to the nephew (and his spouse) of the couples in cabins 1, 2 & 3.
- Cabin 8 belongs to a woman who is the sister of the man in cabin 3.
- Cabin 9 belongs to a couple who are friends of the families

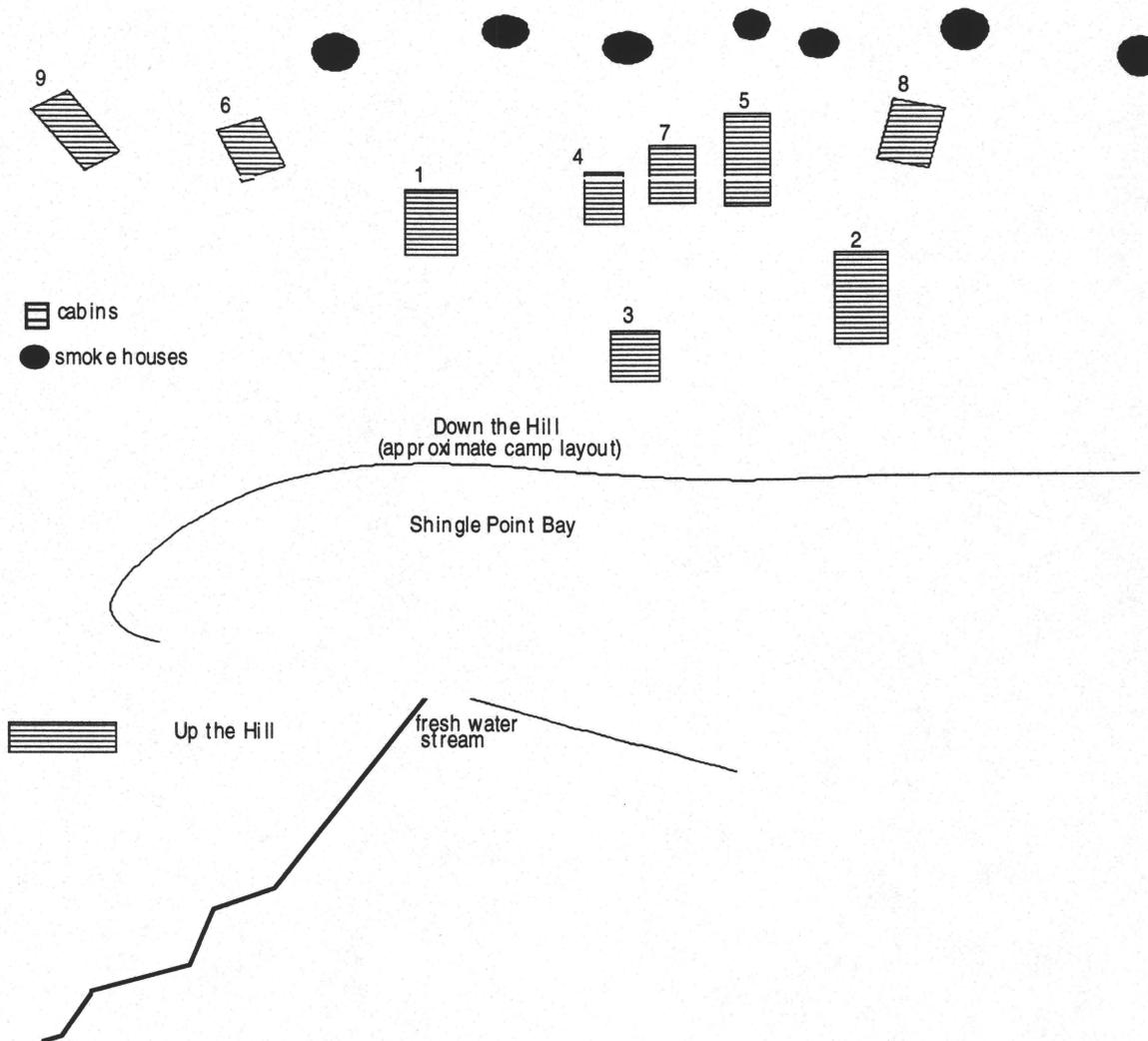


Figure 8. Camp Layout at "Down the Hill"

5.1.1.2 Middle Camp:

- Cabin 1 is owned by the senior male member of this camp.
- Cabin 2 belongs to his son and his spouse.
- Cabin 3 belongs to the nephew (and his spouse) of the man in cabin 1.
- Cabins 4, 5 and 6 are all owned by sons and their spouses of the couple in cabin 3.
- Cabin 7 belongs to the daughter (and her spouse) of the woman in cabin 8.
- The man of the couple in cabin 9 is related to the man of the couple in cabin 3 and the woman in cabin 8 at "Down the Hill." He is their brother.

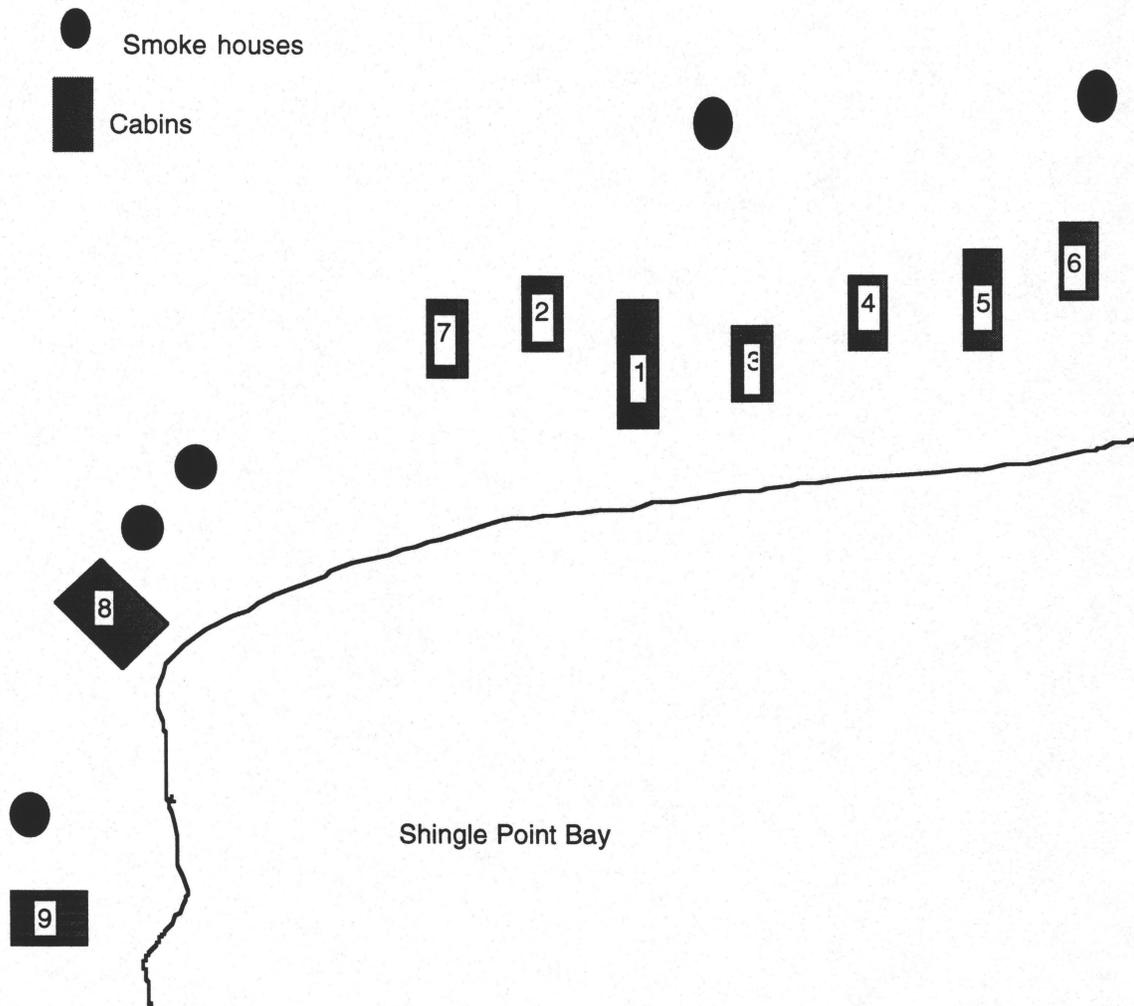


Figure 9. Camp Layout at "Middle Camp"

5.1.1.3 Point Camp:

- Cabin 1 is owned by an elder couple.
- Cabin 2 was built by an elder who is now deceased. His three sons and their spouses now use the cabin.
- Cabin 3 belongs to the son (and his spouse) of the couple in cabin 1.
- Cabin 4 belongs to the aunt and uncle of the men in cabin 3.

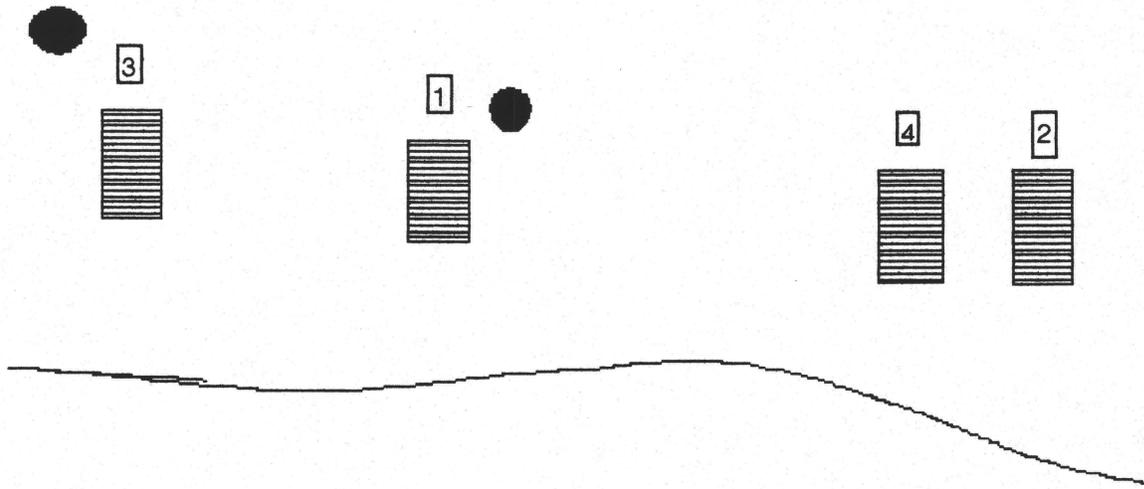
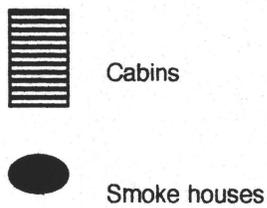


Figure 10. Camp Layout at "The Point"



5.1.1.4 Running River:

- Cabin 1 belongs to the senior couple of this camp (Inuvik).
- Cabin 2 belongs to their son and his spouse.
- Cabin 3 belongs to their daughter and her spouse.
- Cabins 4 and 5 belong to their daughter-in-law.
- Cabin 6 belongs to a couple who are friends of the family.

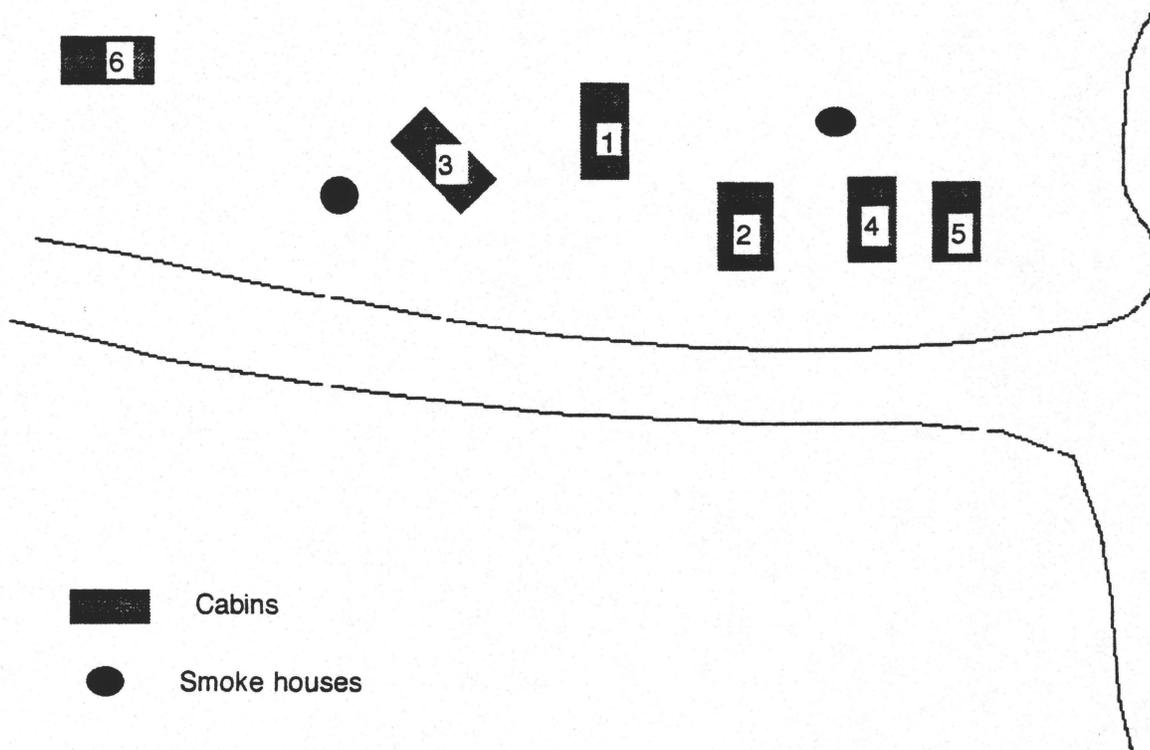


Figure 11. Camp Layout at "Running River"

Across the Bay:

- The male of the couple in the cabin across from "Point" is the brother of the male in cabin 6 at "Running River."
 - The cabin across from "Middle Camp" may be related to the main family at "Middle Camp." (same last name)
- * Their may be additional family connections, but these are the ones that I am aware of at this time.

According to local informants, the first cabins were built in the late 1970s and early 1980s. However, since no accurate records of camp development have been kept I can only go by the best estimate of the people involved. I am therefore using 1991 as a starting point for comparison, because that is when the first successful bowhead whale hunt took place, and there is at least some documented evidence from that period. Local informants and Freeman (1995, personal communication) have both intimated that, from their recollections, in 1991 there were only two cabins at "Down the Hill," another two at "Middle Camp," and three at the "Point." There may also have been one or two cabins at Running River or across the bay, but there were no more than ten cabins in the entire area in 1991, according to Freeman and various Inuvialuit informants. That list has now grown to 30 in 1995, and there were a number of people who expressed determination to build a cabin for themselves at one of the four camps next summer. The senior members of the "Point" are the senior members of the entire settlement at Shingle Point, and are revered elders of this community and the Inuvialuit communities in the Mackenzie Delta.

The importance of documenting the increase in the number of cabins at Shingle Point is to show the intimate connection between the return of the bowhead hunt and the redevelopment of Shingle Point. Many of the people indicated that the reason for the increase in cabins was that they wanted to participate in the bowhead hunt. And, since the bowhead typically migrate past Shingle Point around the end of August or beginning of September, the weather is often quite unsettled with strong cold winds blowing in off the Beaufort Sea. Living in a cabin under these conditions is simply much more comfortable than in a tent. There are plenty of reasons for the Inuvialuit to go to Shingle Point, but the main reason given for building cabins was the interest they have in participating in and carrying on the bowhead hunt.

5.1.2 Cabin Construction and Design

The majority of the cabins are constructed of logs, although a few are made with plywood. Logs are the most popular choice for construction because there is a large supply of driftwood logs freely available right at the point. Plywood construction requires bringing in the materials from the Delta by boat, which costs approximately \$175 per round trip. Moreover, logs have better natural insulation properties, which can be an important factor even in the summer at Shingle Point. The obvious advantage of plywood construction is that it makes building relatively quick and easy.

Regardless of the building material used, the cabins are all,

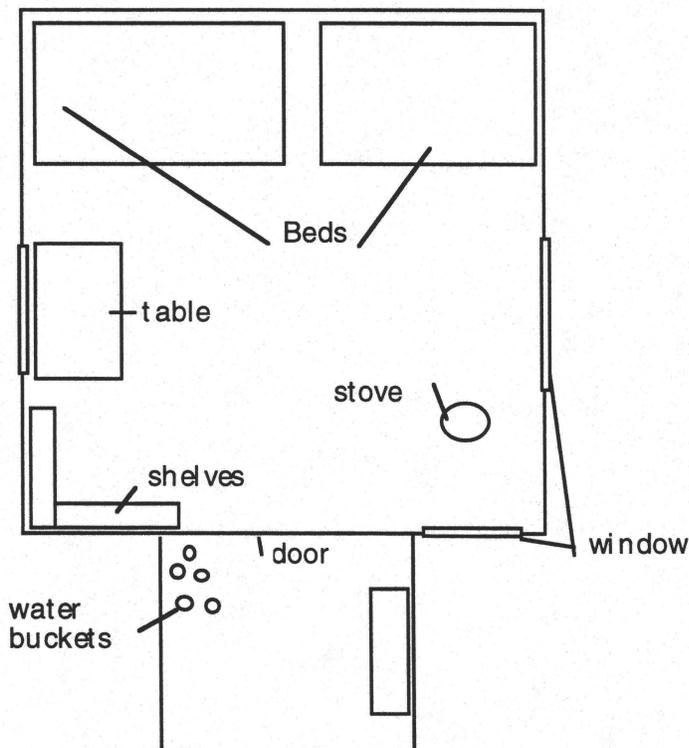


Figure 12. Cabin Layout and Design

understandably, of a rustic nature. Generally, they are of a simple one-room design, although some have a foyer that is used for storage of water and equipment, as well as for removing footwear and outer clothing. All the cabins have at least one glass window, and most have two or three. There is no plumbing, so each cabin has an outhouse with a “honey bucket” toilet. Each cabin has a wood stove which is used for both heating and cooking. The stove is often hand-made from a 45 gallon drum cut down to about 18 inches in height. Propane stoves are also

widely used for cooking. Many of the cabins also have small gas generators to provide electricity, which is used primarily for electric light, but also for tools such as saws, and grinders for sharpening knives. With electricity available, some cabins have installed modern conveniences such as small stereo systems, televisions and VCRs, deviating from the otherwise rustic nature of the cabin.

5.1.3 Community Population

I can only estimate the number of people that actually use Shingle Point, because there is considerable fluctuation from year to year, depending on individual and family circumstances. There is also variation from week to week. Nevertheless, a reasonable estimate can be derived from assuming a conservative number of occupants for each cabin and tent. According to local informants a conservative estimate would be four occupants per cabin or tent. The number of tents must also be estimated since that too can vary considerably from week to week and year to year. Four tents per camp is also a fair estimate, based on the number of frames for tents at each site as well as information supplied by the residents. This would suggest a total of 16 tents along with the 30 cabins. At four persons per dwelling that yields a conservative estimate of 168 people who visit Shingle Point at some time during the summer. The large majority of these people have their primary home in Aklavik, but there are a few from Inuvik, as noted on the community organization maps and descriptions.

5.1.4 Why Shingle Point?

There are several reasons for the Inuvialuit of the Mackenzie Delta to migrate to Shingle Point during the summer. The first and most dominant reason is the opportunities this location offers for harvesting country food, not the least of which is the annual beluga whale harvest, and more recently the bowhead hunt. The Yukon North Slope is both the calving grounds and the area where the Porcupine Caribou herd spends the spring and summer. Since caribou represents the single most important country food source for Aklavik Inuvialuit (Freeman 1992, 98), it is logical for them to be near this important food source.

A second reason is that the insect population in the Delta communities of Aklavik and Inuvik becomes almost unbearable, as anyone who has spent a summer there will know. Since Shingle Point is on the Arctic coast, it has a much cooler and windier environment than the Mackenzie Delta; hence, the insect population is drastically reduced and much more tolerable. For some this is no doubt reason enough to go.

Thirdly, the Arctic coast is where the Inuvialuit traditionally spent their summers when they were still a largely nomadic people, before they began taking up year-round residence in permanent settlements. Migrating to Shingle Point is, then, a cultural activity as well. Almost everyone I spoke to said that spending time at Shingle Point was the highlight of the summer, because it meant getting away from the usual distractions of life in the towns and represented an opportunity for families to be together and enjoy life on the land.

The fourth reason that the Inuvialuit of the Mackenzie Delta migrate to Shingle Point for the summer is the social aspect of the community. In recent years, this has become quite a significant pull factor, since so many people have cabins there. It is in some respects not unlike the passion that southerners have for going to "the lake" in summer. For the Inuvialuit, this has the added bonus of being a productive time as well as a "vacation" from life in town. Moreover, the social ties become much more pronounced, partially because of the extended family arrangement of the camps, living in much closer proximity to each other than in town, but also because of the singularity of purpose, the sense of freedom experienced here, and the fact that alcohol is strictly forbidden. The latter is a significant problem in Aklavik and Inuvik, disrupting lives and families. At Shingle Point no alcohol is allowed, therefore, people can go there to get away from it, and know that its influence will not be felt. The absence of alcohol, the strength of the social ties, and the focusing of community energies brings about a palpable change in demeanor and attitude in the Inuvialuit. This too is a welcome thing for many people, and an additional reason for them to go.

Finally, people migrate from the Delta to Shingle Point because of the value they place on being out on the land. It is difficult to convey, with the printed word, the depth of the emotion and spiritual overtones in the responses to the question I asked about the importance of going out on the land. The words are inadequate, but some examples of what they said are as follows:

"It is a chance to get away from things. It helps you get closer to yourself" (Female, age 22). "You get out there and it's peaceful...Your old life is back with you, and you relax so much" (Female, age 65). "You're out of everybody's hair. You can think. More happy out there than in town. Nothing to worry about" (Male,

age 60) "You forget about not having any money. You enjoy life. You become real Inuvialuit" (Male, age 28).

From these examples it is clear that being out on the land has a place very close to the heart of the Inuvialuit. Even though the intensity of emotion is lost in the translation from verbalizing to writing, it is obvious that being on the land still represents a fundamental aspect of Inuvialuit cultural, and the annual migration to Shingle Point is evidence of that fact.

5.1.5 Community Focus

The entire focus of the community at Shingle Point is on the harvesting and processing of country food. The exact quantity of country food harvested at Shingle Point is contained in data gathered by the Inuvialuit Harvest Studies conducted by the Joint Secretariat. These data were to be published in December 1995, but at time of writing, these data are still not available to the author.

However, I can offer some observations on the country food harvest and the communities commitment to it without these data. It became apparent even on the boat-trip to Shingle Point how important wildlife is to the Inuvialuit. I travelled with three generations from one family, the youngest about 10 years old. Any signs of wildlife were duly noted by even the youngest member. He often spotted wildlife along the river-bank or in the air before anyone else (or at least I) did.

Immediately upon our arrival in Shingle Point we were greeted enthusiastically by the members of the camp already there, and offered a bowl of caribou head soup. In the cabin there was caribou dry meat on drying racks placed over the wood stove. The dry meat was also freely offered, and it was

eaten almost like a snack food. Whenever someone was hungry, rather than having a bag of chips or a chocolate bar as they do in town, most people just cut off a piece of dry meat and ate it.

When I arrived at Shingle Point the Inuvialuit were in the process of trying to get another bowhead whale. Thus the talk revolved around what the plans were in the upcoming days, where and when there had last been sightings of bowhead. I was told that Shingle Point is also an ideal location for hunting beluga, because the bay is quite shallow and beluga often swim into the bay in their search for food. While I was not fortunate enough to see a bowhead in the time that I was there, I did see a beluga feeding along the sand spit a mere twenty feet or so from shore, casually making its way from west to east. However, since the beluga was on the north side of the sand spit where the water is deep, no one attempted to go hunt it because in deep water the beluga would simply dive at the first sign of a motor boat. Several of the men noted that if they had a kayak handy it would have been possible to get the beluga. Although the residents of Shingle Point had enough beluga for themselves, they wanted to harvest a beluga for the Inuvialuit of Holman who had assisted the Aklavik Inuvialuit in their bowhead hunting efforts.

One of the features of a moss and grass-covered landscape is that, while it makes walking fairly difficult, because one sinks into the soft cover, it makes it possible to use certain types of snowmobiles even in the summer. The Skid-Doo Élan is singled out by these hunters for this purpose due to its light weight and the bogey wheel track system. Having motorized transportation gives the hunters a much wider area to hunt in, and they do not have to wait for the caribou to come within walking distance of the community. Whenever caribou

are spotted in the surrounding hills a hunter can go after them. Having the snowmobile also makes bringing the dead animals back to camp much easier and quicker, and this also allows for a hunter to make a bigger harvest each time he/she goes out.

Being at Shingle Point also gives hunters the opportunity to make short boat trips to nearby areas where there are heavy concentrations of caribou. King Point, which is a few miles west of Shingle Point, is an area frequented by caribou in fairly large numbers and easily accessible by boat from there. I was told that a number of hunters had been quite successful at King Point in the days prior to our arrival. There were more trips planned to King Point, but the hunters were waiting, trying to keep boat traffic to a minimum, because it was feared that the heavy boat traffic was "scaring the bowheads away" (Shingle Point hunter, August 20, 1995).

The sand spit also provides an excellent location for fishing. On the north side of the sand spit, where the water is deep, gill-nets attached to long poles are pushed out into the water. There are a number of species of fish that are caught here including: arctic charr, cisco (herring) broad whitefish, coni, and cod. The preferred fish are arctic charr and herring. The herring is split; the bones removed, and then smoke-dried. They are very plentiful at Shingle Point and every smoke house had a large number hanging on drying racks. Arctic charr are cured in a similar fashion although they are not split first, and the bones are not removed. Arctic charr is a highly prized fish and several people suggested that it is a favorite food for special occasions. While I was at Shingle Point, it became obvious just how prized charr is, because it was the only fish that was being kept. All other fish were released unless they were already dead,

in which case they were fed to the dogs. This is partially because most households had what they considered to be enough of the other species of fish, but no amount of charr seemed to be too much or enough. This supports Wein and Freeman (1992) who found that arctic charr ranked very high on the food preference rating-- $4.9 \pm .3$ (Table IV, 166) for Aklavik Inuvialuit.

The Inuvialuit harvest their country food from the land, sea, and air. Shingle Point offers all three. In the fall, migratory birds, especially snow geese and ducks, that have spent the summer on Banks Island begin to head south. Many of them fly over Shingle Point, and some of them stop to feed on the berries growing on the hillside. Hunting these birds can be done from right in the camps as the birds fly over, or by making a short expedition to the mainland to hunt while the birds are feeding on the berries.

5.1.6 Sharing Country Food

Sharing country food is an integral part of Inuvialuit culture and tradition. One of my objectives was to gain a better understanding of how that is practiced now as compared to ten years ago and how it has changed. What I discovered is that there is a significant difference between the way sharing is practiced in the Delta communities and at Shingle Point. My informants told me that in Aklavik and Inuvik the amount of sharing has decreased substantially in the past ten years. There is more concern with the financial costs incurred in harvesting country food; consequently, many hunters now hunt primarily for their immediate family. In the past, food was distributed to anyone in the community who needed it, regardless of whether they were Inuvialuit or not.

Now the sphere of distribution has shrunk considerably. My informants all indicated that the majority of country food harvested stays with the immediate or extended family of the harvester. Just how that division takes place varies depending on the size of the catch or the number of animals harvested, the amount each person already has, and the size of the extended and immediate family. Some families are small, with virtually no extended family in the area, so the entire harvest stays with that family, unless shared with some of the elders.

Sharing in the larger families, especially extended families, can still amount to considerable distribution. For example, one of the families I spoke with consisted of the matriarch and her ten children all living in either Aklavik or Inuvik. Seven of them also have spouses and children, and each is given a share of the family's harvest. A portion of each hunter's harvest is brought to the matriarch (her spouse is deceased) of the family, and from there it is distributed to the family members according to their need. However, whoever made the kill also keeps some for themselves.

Since Elders are still held in high esteem by most Inuvialuit, there is also an effort made by many hunters to supply Elders with favorite cuts of meat or parts of animals. However, in my discussions with Inuvialuit of varying ages there was general agreement that sharing has declined considerably. This is attributed partially to the cost involved in hunting, the fact that there are fewer people doing the hunting, and they are spending less time at it. Employment also plays a part. People with jobs find it difficult to get away to hunt, so when they do, they tend to keep what they harvest for themselves; because, in spite of the reduced hunting, country food is still a vital part of Inuvialuit life. In fact, everyone I spoke to, when the topic of country food came up, indicated that they

had some form of country food every day. This compares favorably with the survey conducted by Freeman et al. (1992) where they found that country food was used "1.85 times per household per day" (89).

It was widely reported that in Aklavik and Inuvik gas and cash have become an important part of sharing country food. Increasingly, hunters are asking for cash or gas in exchange for a portion of their harvest. This has its benefits for people who have jobs but cannot get away to do their own hunting, and it gives those without jobs additional cash with which to finance their hunting trips. The high cost of equipment and gas is a severely limiting factor for many people. Exchanging cash, gas, or equipment for food helps to distribute both types of resources. However, in spite of these new strategies for sharing, the consensus is that the degree of sharing practiced in town is diminishing.

At Shingle Point the sharing of country food has a totally different expression, one that harkens back to the way sharing used to be done according to senior members of the community. At Shingle Point, with one exception, all the country food that is harvested is shared with everyone there. I was told of an incident early in the season when a hunter had killed a moose on the mainland, and everyone at every camp received some of the meat. This was also the case with beluga muktuk and dry meat, caribou, and birds. Fish, for the most part, are also shared with whoever is in need and whoever wants some. The one exception to this community-wide sharing appears to be arctic charr. Where arctic charr is concerned whoever catches it generally keeps it. The reason is simply that it is a favorite fish to eat (they are delicious!), and the catch is relatively small compared to cisco, and whitefish. Of course, as each family's stocks of country food increase the need to share becomes less important.

Nevertheless, sharing here is practiced much as it was when the elders were young. It is a source of pride for Shingle Point residents that this is so.

It is worth noting that, since all country food harvested at Shingle Point is shared amongst all the residents, when they return to their homes in town the food is effectively distributed over a much wider area. Even though most of the people in each camp are closely related, they are not necessarily related to people at the other camps, and even their own relatives do not all live in the same town. Thus, when the families leave Shingle Point, the country food harvested and distributed there is subject to further distribution among their family members back in the Delta communities.

5.1.7 Social Life at Shingle Point

There is an atmosphere of openness at Shingle Point that is not evident to the same degree in Aklavik or Inuvik. Social life takes on a different dynamic here because the focus of the community and its geography are different. The fact that the camps are organized around extended families and their close friends, and that they are in such close proximity to each other leads to an open door policy. People of all ages go from one cabin to the next and seldom knock before they enter. There is always a pot of coffee or tea on that is freely offered to anyone who enters. Meals are generally eaten in one's own cabin, but if a person happens to be in another cabin at mealtime they are encouraged to partake as well. Visiting one's neighbours and socializing is a joyous part of life at Shingle Point.

Besides visiting neighbouring cabins, there is constant communication between cabins and camps with CB radios. While this has a practical value in

that it keeps everyone apprised of the status of the hunt and what the plans are, it is also clearly a social activity as well. People seem to enjoy the style of communication that is part of the CB radio lexicon. While much of the talk is in English, older people tend to use Inuvialuktun on the radio as well as in face-to-face conversations. Interestingly enough, although the younger generation does not speak Inuvialuktun they do seem to understand it. I witnessed a conversation on the radio where an Elder in Aklavik contacted one of the cabins at "Down the Hill" and spoke mostly Inuvialuktun, while the person that answered spoke only English. Moreover there were a number of other young people in the cabin at the time who clearly understood the conversation, simultaneously erupting with laughter at one point, and nodding their heads in agreement from time to time. ¹

There are a number of other social activities that are engaged in as well. One popular pass-time day or night is playing cards. Gambling for small amounts of money is especially popular. These kinds of card games can carry on for hours, well into the night. Some other social activities include playing ball, listening to the radio (CBC) and, apparently in one of the cabins, watching movies and playing video games.

There was one other social event that took place, not at Shingle Point, but in Inuvik. I am reporting this event because of the impact it had on the residents of Shingle Point. The event was a bingo in Inuvik that had a top prize of \$15,000 or \$20,000. The lure of the big prize was sufficient to virtually empty Shingle Point of its population, even though they were in the process of hunting

¹ There has been an effort launched to preserve Inuvialuktun in the schools since the signing of the IFA. Therefore, the youngest generation is actually learning to speak the language and one of the Elders I spoke to was proud and pleased that her grandchildren could speak to her, even a little, in their own language.

for bowhead whales. The first hunt captain and his crew, and the first alternate captain went to the bingo, leaving only one crew behind. While no bowheads were sighted during the absence of the hunters, there were several people who expressed dismay and disgust that a bingo would take precedence over harvesting a bowhead. I will not comment on this except to say that bingo is a daily ritual in the Delta, and an important part of social life there.

5.1.8 Reflections on the IFA

Although a few people said that they were completely satisfied with the way things were being run, most people had something to say about what they would like to see changed; or, what they would like to get out of the land claim settlement that they have not already gotten. In answer, there was a surprising degree of unanimity across generations and genders. The overwhelming response was that money should be invested in programs for young people, including post-secondary education. And, a concerted effort should be made to try to alleviate some of the social ills plaguing the Inuvialuit communities. There were other views as well but virtually everyone voiced a sentiment similar to these in their response to the question. The ideas of investing in programs for young people and for “healing the community’s spirit” were singled out as essential for the well-being of the Inuvialuit in the future.

There were some differences particular to age groups. For example, the older generation was deeply annoyed by the specter of quotas being placed on fish and game harvests. The closing of one particular arctic charr fishery was a definite sore spot. During conversations with people about this closure, younger

people tended to disagree with their elders over the necessity to close certain areas, or set quotas. The older people felt that they had been betrayed because their understanding of the IFA was that it would prevent governments from imposing quotas on wildlife harvest for subsistence purposes, and now the directors of the Inuvialuit Game Council (IGC) have attempted to set limits. Apparently one attempt to set a quota on caribou failed, because people just ignored it. However, the closing of the arctic charr fishery at Fish River was enforced, and the older people were quite bitter about it. The younger people, on the other hand, felt that the IGC had done the right thing to ensure preservation of the fish stocks.

There was a couple of very specific proposals for altering the current arrangement, or alternative ways of investing put forward by some people. One of the respondents was quite adamant in the belief that individuals should have the option of being paid out their portion of any moneys being managed by the IDC in order to allow the individual to manage the money themselves. Anyone who exercised this option would relinquish any claim to further moneys, but would still have all the rights for hunting, fishing and trapping established under the IFA.

Another person had a very specific idea for investing money. This person suggested that money should be invested in the North rather than everywhere else, and proposed that one of the things to invest in would be an Inuvialuit co-op grocery store in each of the six communities. The person felt that this would accomplish three things. First, it would help bring down the cost of groceries in these communities. The combined buying power of a co-op would probably reduce costs, and the profit margin could be set lower to reduce consumer

costs. Second, it would keep the profits in the North. The current situation, at least in the Delta communities, is that the grocery stores are owned by southern interests, so the profits go south as well. Finally, although some local people do get jobs in these stores, a substantial number of the staff are southerners, especially the higher paid managerial staff. By investing in co-ops local people could get the training and be given first chance at these jobs, in a job market where jobs of any kind are scarce.

5.2 Secondary Data

The following information is presented to clearly establish in the mind of the reader the importance of the country food harvest to the Inuvialuit; its prominence and cultural significance; and, to establish the cultural importance of Shingle Point by its association with the country food harvest.

The food sources most often used by the greatest number of people are caribou and beluga whale. The results of the study conducted by Freeman *et al.* (1992) indicate that caribou is by far the most often used, and therefore the most important country food source for the people of Aklavik. In 1991, the year the survey was conducted, caribou was used "on average 145 times per household per year" (89). Some of the reasons given for caribou's preferential status include that it is considered to be their "main food," it is "very easy to get," and it is "traditional" (96). In the *Aklavik Inuvialuit Community Conservation Plan* (AICCP) (1992), it is also clear that caribou is of the utmost importance, and is considered "a highly valued food resource" (6-5). Moreover, the Bluenose

Caribou herd is also regarded as being important for having some (limited) potential for commercial harvest. The caribou populations are the most closely monitored, and the most comprehensive conservation measures have been drafted for the maintenance of these herds. The keen interest shown in the continued health of the caribou herds clearly shows how important caribou are to the Aklavik Inuvialuit.

However, as is obvious from the AICCP, *all* wildlife and potential sources of country food are of great importance to the cultural and economic well-being of the Inuvialuit and are therefore carefully managed for use now and in the future. The expressed purpose of this document was to establish "conservation of the renewable resource base as the foremost priority" (2-1), and "to ensure cultural survival of the Inuvialuit Community" (1-1). Freeman also stresses not only the economic, but the cultural importance of country food as well. He says:

there are important reasons why traditional Inuit foods cannot be substituted for by imported foods...the principle reason...is that the social and cultural values associated with traditional foods relate not just to their consumption, but importantly to all phases of their acquisition, distribution and processing (Freeman 1992, 43).

It is important to note that besides the high economic and cultural value placed on wildlife as a food source by the Inuvialuit, there are significant additional benefits derived from their harvest. Production of furs and skins is also an important aspect of wildlife harvesting. While the anti-fur lobby has had a substantial, and detrimental, effect on the commercial viability of the once prosperous fur-trapping enterprise, "furs are still very important for community use" (AICCP 1993, 1-4). Many of the arts and crafts that the Inuvialuit are

engaged in, such as hand made clothing, footwear and decorations, involve the use of skins and furs, which are then either used domestically or for barter and/or cash sales. In addition to furs and skins, the down from waterfowl is also "traditionally used in pillows and blankets" (AICCP 1993, 6-24).

The importance of harvesting country food to the Aklavik Inuvialuit is demonstrated by the number of people involved, for at least part of the year in some capacity, in the harvesting process. This is borne out in a succession of surveys that enumerate the numbers of people involved in hunting, trapping and fishing--the major sources of country food--(NWT Data Book 86/87, NWT Labour Force Survey 1989, Freeman 1992). Freeman (1992) indicates that in 1991, 89% of the Inuvialuit households surveyed in Aklavik had a hunter or trapper present. The graph below, derived from data contained in the NWT Labour Force Survey of 1989, shows the percentage of Inuvialuit in the Inuvik region, (includes Aklavik) who either hunted or fished in 1988. Clearly, harvesting country food is a central component of Inuvialuit life in and around Aklavik.

Inuvialuit Who Hunted or Fished in 1988

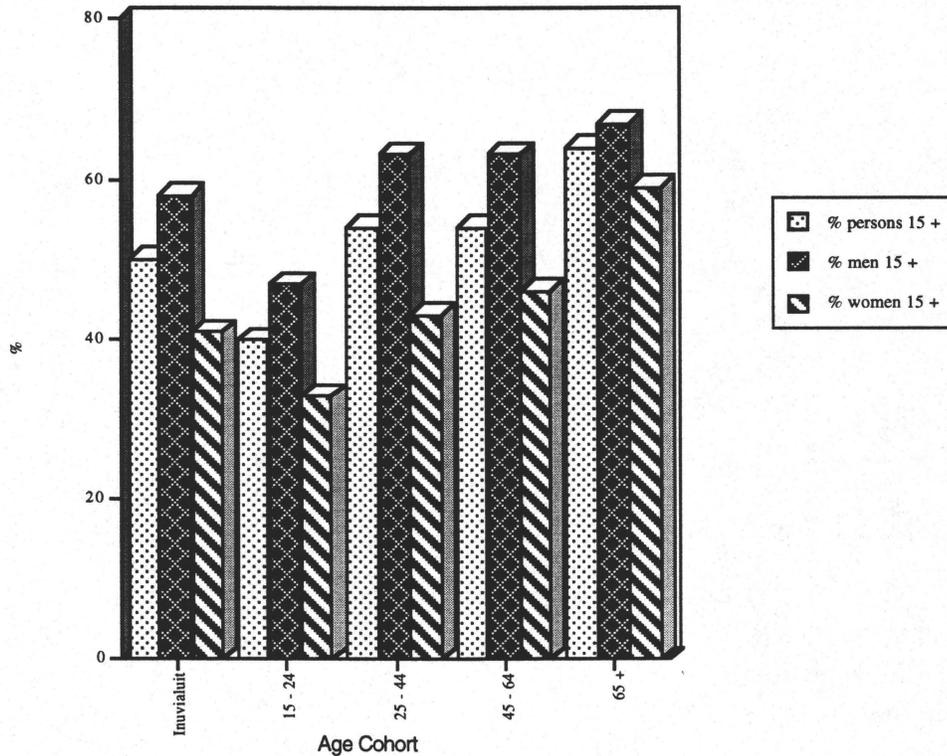


Figure 13. Inuvialuit Hunting Participation Graph

It is worth noting that these traditional activities, while generally associated with males, are pursued by a substantial number of women in all age groups, but especially in those over 65. While this is partly due to a higher participation rate overall in this age cohort, it also reflects the propensity for widows to engage in the harvest for their own subsistence needs (NWT Labour Force Survey 1989).

Although very few hunters and trappers (20% in Freeman's study) devote six months or more per year (the criteria for being considered full-time) to these activities, hunting and trapping do go on throughout the year. This is because

there is considerable seasonal variability in which species are available to harvest, and it also ensures a continued supply of fresh country food. Only two mammal species are harvested year-round, namely caribou and moose. Ptarmigan are also harvested year-round, and although the majority of fishing is done between May and December, fish are taken in every month of the year and make up a very important and dependable food source. Some plant foods are also harvested in August, particularly several varieties of berries, including: cloudbberries, cranberries, and blueberries.

The geography of the country food harvest in Aklavik encompasses an area that stretches from Shingle Point, Yukon in the north-west south along the Richardson Mountains to the beginning of the Delta, and north-east to Tuktoyaktuk. Of course, at times the boundaries of the harvest will vary and expand when food supplies are lower in the surrounding area. The maps below indicate the location of camps and cabins in the Delta owned and used by Inuvialuit hunters and trappers from Aklavik (Figure 14), the areas used for harvesting beluga whales (Figure 15), and the range of the Porcupine and Bluenose Caribou herds (Figure 16). The spatial extent of the harvest, the amount of time devoted to it, and the percentage of people involved for at least part of the year, clearly reveals that harvesting country food is a essential part of Inuvialuit culture, and as the ACCIP resolutely states "subsistence harvesting of animals and plants remains as vitally important today as it has been in the past" (1-4).

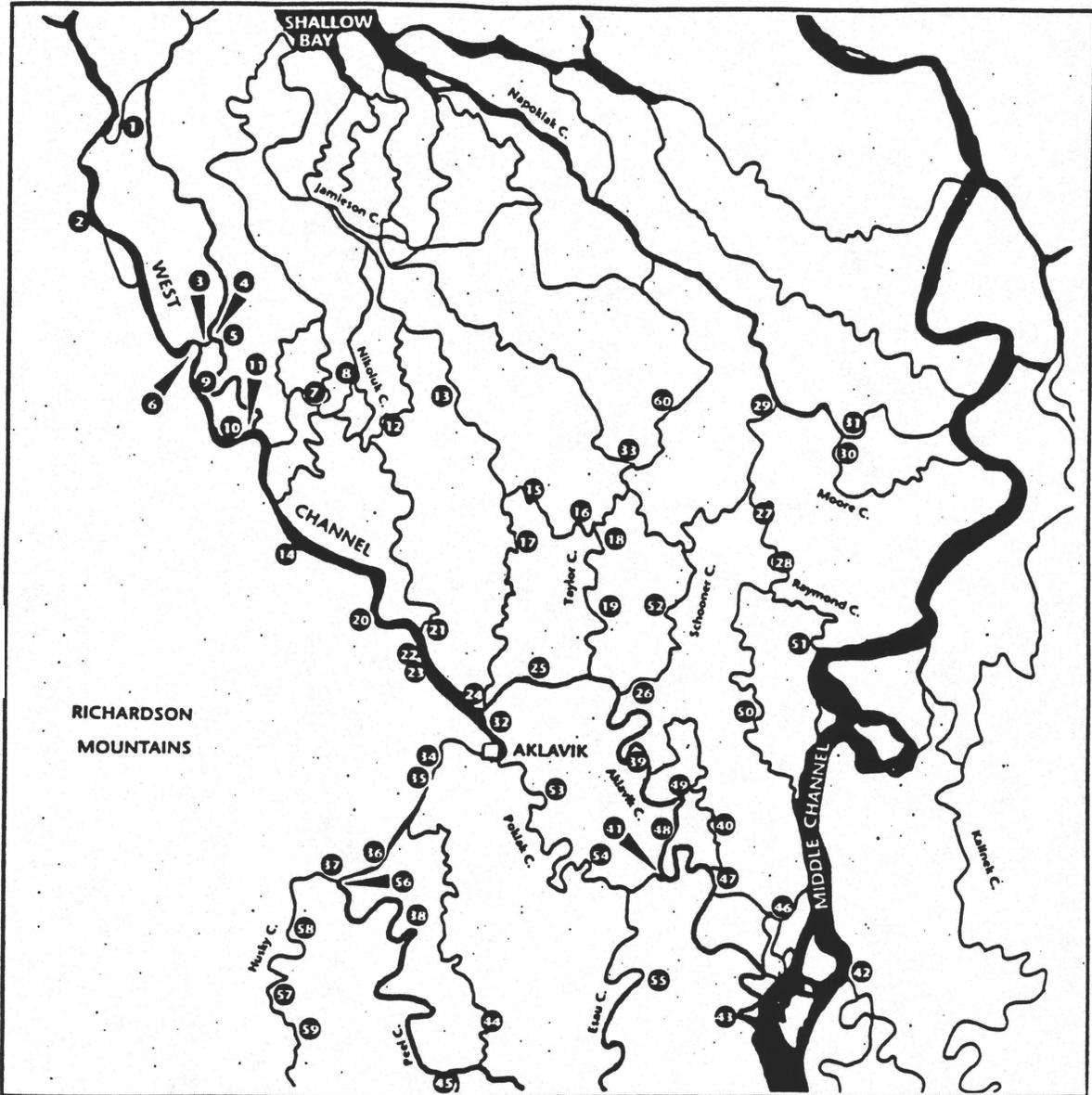
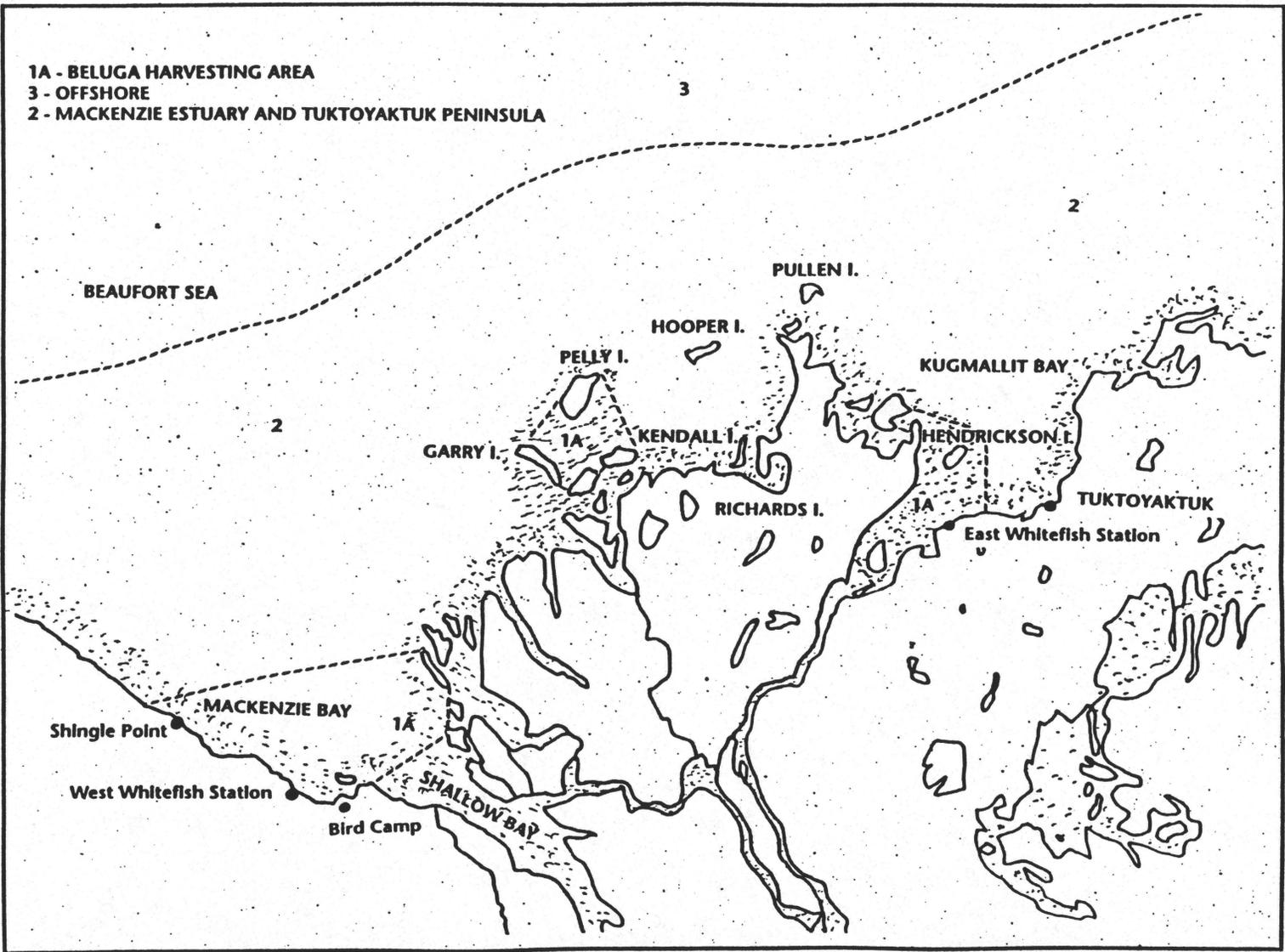


Figure 14. Aklavik Inuvialuit Cabins in the Mackenzie Delta

Source: AICCP 1992

Figure 15. Beluga Hunting Areas



Source: AICCP 1992

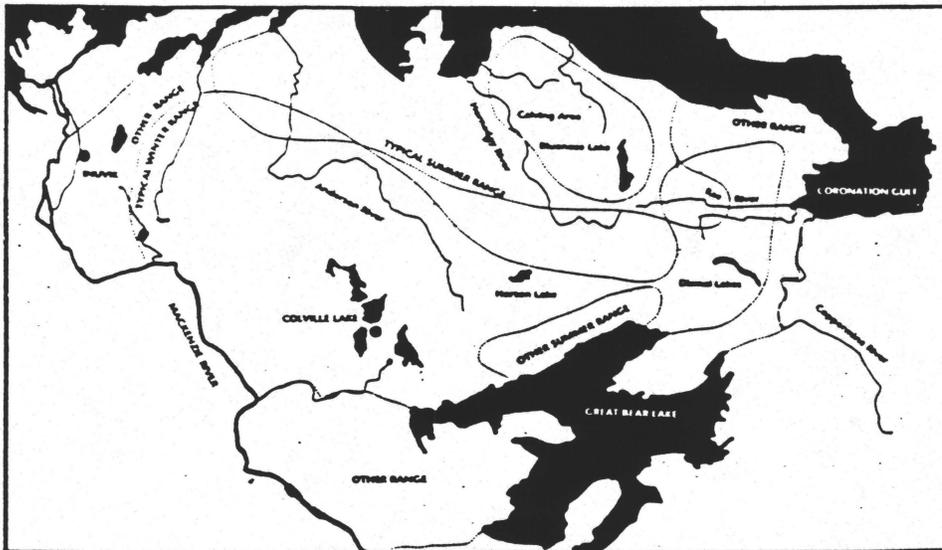
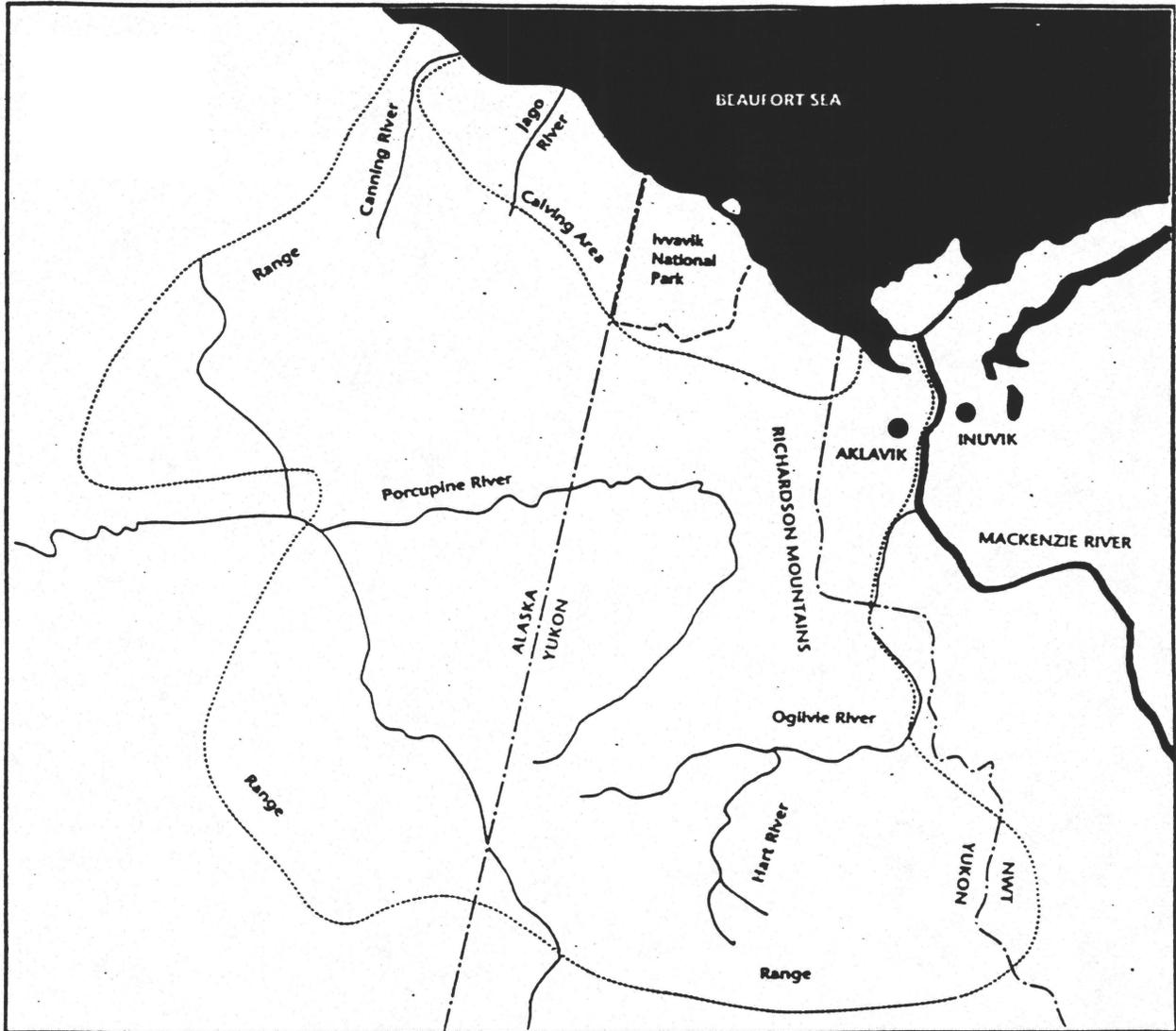


Figure 16. Range of Bluenose and Porcupine Caribou Herds

Source: AICCP 1992

5.3 Closing Notes

The preceding account description, in keeping with the theoretical foundation of the thesis, is intended only as a presentation and interpretation of my experience at Shingle Point and the Mackenzie Delta. I have also presented the Inuvialuit point of view wherever possible. The responses to the questions are as accurate as note-taking would allow. Since there is little conventional data presented, I will forego a chapter on analysis and combine it in the next chapter with my conclusions.

6. ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSIONS

6.1 The IFA and Cultural Preservation

The principal objective of this research was to try to determine if the IFA's objective of preserving Inuvialuit culture has been successful. My conclusion is that the IFA has been successful in that effort. I have several reasons for arriving at this conclusion based on my research findings.

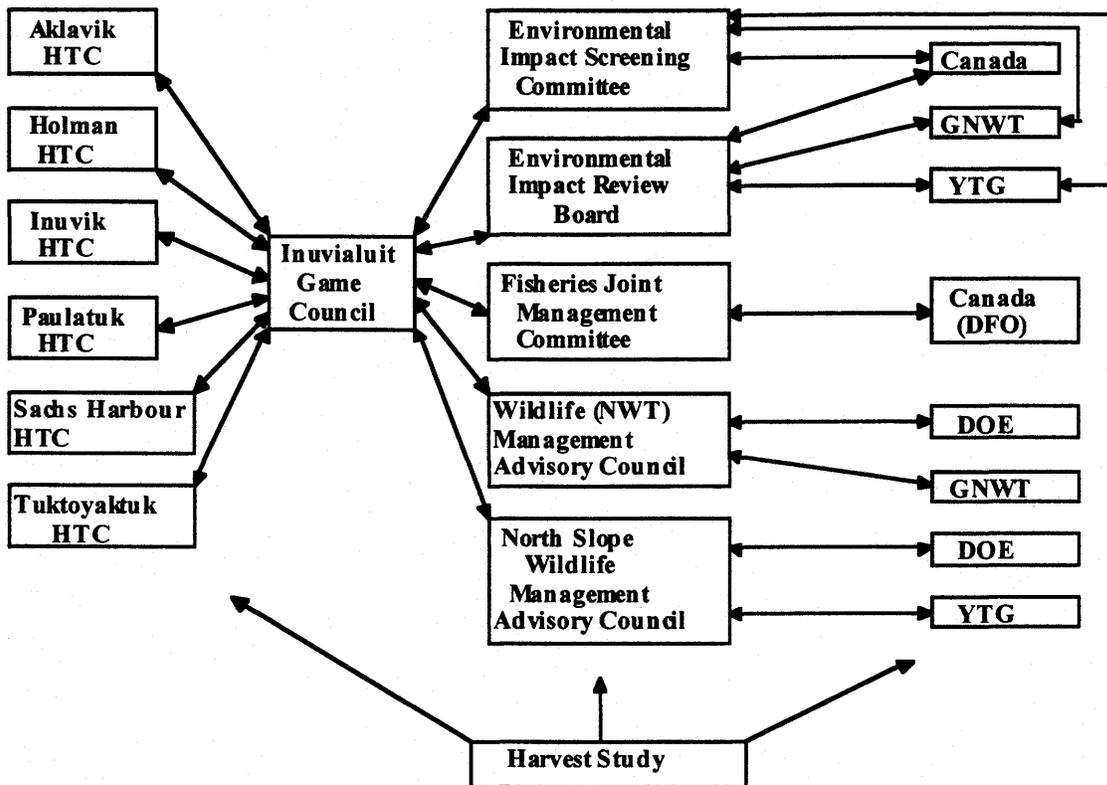
First and foremost is the successful bowhead whale hunt initiated by the Inuvialuit of Aklavik. The reinstatement of the bowhead whale hunt is irrefutably a direct result of the IFA. Between 1963 and 1988 numerous attempts to gain approval from the Federal Government for the Inuvialuit to harvest a bowhead were made, but all failed (Freeman *et al.* 1992). Without the IFA the Inuvialuit did not have had the political structure to secure bowhead hunting licenses for themselves from the Federal Government. The importance of the structure put in place when the IFA passed into law should not be underestimated, and deserves some explanation.

The chart below (Figure 17) illustrates the committees and agencies set up to delegate authority under the IFA and to facilitate communications between government and the Inuvialuit. A thorough explanation of each agency's function is provided in the IFA. However, a brief overview is provided here to gain some insight into the mechanism established under the IFA, and how the Inuvialuit put that mechanism to work in obtaining the right, and the license, to hunt bowhead whales.

INUVIALUIT

JOINT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEES

GOVERNMENT AGENCIES



NWT = Government of the Northwest Territories
 YTG = Yukon Territorial Government
 DFO = Department of Fisheries and Oceans
 DOE = Department of the Environment

Figure 17. Organization Chart for Renewable Resource Management Under the IFA

The Joint Management Committees, which as the name suggests are made up of government and Inuvialuit representatives, ensure that the Inuvialuit have direct input into any decisions or developments that affect the lives of their people. These committees, in turn, have direct access to the Territorial and Federal Governments and advise them on any issues that pertain to their specific area. The committees also act as a liaison between the Inuvialuit Game Council (IGC) and the government. The IGC is responsible for representing the

collective Hunters and Trappers Committees (HTCs) in wildlife interests, and reporting back to them on Joint Management decisions. The HTCs are responsible for local resource management and initiatives.

The Canadian government prohibited harvesting bowhead whales in 1979 except by special license from the Department of Fisheries. However, section 14. (6) of the IFA “provides the Inuvialuit with...the preferential right to harvest all species of wildlife, except migratory non-game birds and migratory insectivorous birds, for subsistence usage throughout the Western Arctic Region” (IFA 1984). Based on this section of the IFA, the Aklavik HTC began to petition the Federal government for a license to hunt bowhead for subsistence purposes in 1988. Figure 18 shows the political process the Inuvialuit go through to obtain a bowhead hunting license.

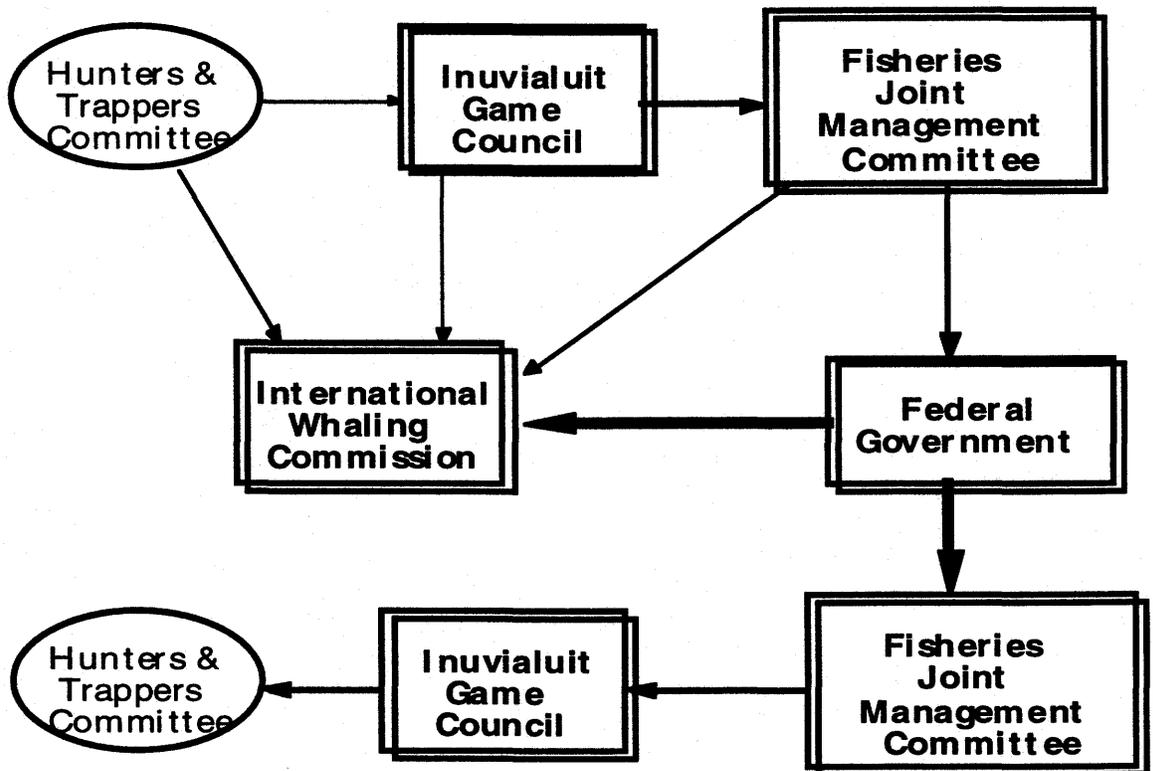


Figure 18. Political Process for Obtaining Bowhead License

The process is initiated by the HTC of one of the communities (so far the only community to do so is Aklavik). The application is then forwarded to the Inuvialuit Game Council, who passes it on to the Fisheries Joint Management Committee. Since the committee is a recognized and official entity, its recommendations are given serious consideration. Meanwhile, all of these agencies, including the Federal Government, can lobby the International Whaling Commission (IWC) to prevent one or more of the member countries from imposing sanctions against Canada. Since the Canadian government only has observer status, the IWC cannot issue a quota for bowhead harvesting. However, since the signing of the IFA and the recognition by the courts that Inuvialuit subsistence rights are constitutionally protected by the IFA, the Federal Government has given their full support in persuading the international community that the bowhead hunt is an Aboriginal right of the Inuvialuit. Moreover, they have reaffirmed the sanctity of the IFA within Canada by issuing a special license to the Inuvialuit to hunt bowhead.

The point is, without the IFA, no official structure for petitioning the government to allow a bowhead hunt existed. The Inuvialuit could still have tried to lobby the government to issue a license, but the joint efforts of the HTC, the IGC and the Joint Fisheries Management Committee would not have been there to direct and give cohesion to these efforts. Governments tend to be much more responsive to recognized official bodies or committees. Moreover, without the legally binding agreement in place, the government would most certainly not have felt compelled to pressure the member countries of the IWC to allow

the hunt without those countries imposing sanctions or penalties against Canada.

6.1.1 Interpreting the Findings

Part of my job as the researcher and author is to interpret my experience and what I saw. It is my belief that the community at Shingle Point is another strong indicator of the success of the IFA in preserving Inuvialuit culture. There is nothing here that can be linked directly to the IFA, the way the bowhead hunt is, but there is much to suggest its importance in the redevelopment of this community. For example, it is the consensus of Inuvialuit who have cabins at Shingle Point, and those who intend to build there, that the reinstatement of the bowhead hunt is behind the dramatic increase in the number of cabins since 1991. And, as has been firmly established, the structures created by the IFA were crucial to finally obtaining the license and government support to carry out the bowhead hunt. By association then, the IFA has also been important in the redevelopment of this historically and culturally important community.

As the historical geography of the Inuvialuit has shown conclusively, place identification is an important part of Inuvialuit culture, and Tapqaaq (Shingle Point) has been an important place for the Inuvialuit for generations. Its redevelopment represents a strong cultural symbol and suggests that cultural preservation can take unexpected forms. While the IFA does not stipulate preservation of this site specifically, it does provide that any proposed developments on the Yukon North Slope "shall be screened to determine whether they could have a significant negative impact on wildlife, habitat or

native harvesting” (IFA 1984, 18). Moreover, the IFA also specifies that the Inuvialuit have exclusive rights to harvest wildlife for subsistence, and “the right to possess and transport legally harvested game within and between the Yukon Territory and the Northwest Territories” (20).

These are extremely important measures for the community at Shingle Point, focused entirely on the country food harvest, and located on the North Slope. Before the IFA became law, the Inuvialuit had difficulties with the Yukon Territorial Government (YTG) over the issue of wildlife harvesting and transportation. The YTG insisted that the Inuvialuit leave their North Slope harvest in the Yukon. They also wanted the Inuvialuit to obtain Yukon hunting licenses before harvesting any wildlife there. This was a difficult and time-consuming process that thwarted the traditional practice of the Inuvialuit in the Delta. Certainly, these provisions in the IFA make the community at Shingle Point much more viable, and have undoubtedly contributed to its resurgence. These measures provide a sense of security, regarding these culturally important lands, and the freedom to pursue traditional activities without fear of reprisals from the territorial governments. With these concerns constitutionally protected the effort required by a family to build a cabin at Shingle Point is warranted and politically risk-free.

While the linkage between the IFA and the rebuilding of the community is not direct, except in reference to the bowhead hunt, the redevelopment of the community is clearly significant to Inuvialuit cultural preservation. As I have pointed out, this community is devoted to all aspects of the country food harvest which forms the cornerstone of Inuvialuit culture.

Furthermore, the community of Shingle Point can play a key role in ensuring that the high level of traditional skills required to make harvesting country foods successful is retained and passed on to subsequent generations. It is difficult for people who seldom go out on the land to acquire those skills without expert instruction. At Shingle Point there is an abundance of expertise available at all times, and a spirit in which cooperation on issues such as this is actively and enthusiastically encouraged. With the wealth of knowledge present in the older generation at Shingle Point, a person interested in learning traditional skills can learn from, and observe, many experienced individuals. It is my impression that the social atmosphere at Shingle Point is highly conducive to the exchange of ideas and information regarding the country food harvest, both in terms of exploring new technologies and passing on one's knowledge to interested parties.

It was also my experience that the social dimension of Shingle Point, as opposed to that of Aklavik and Inuvik, is a key element of Inuvialuit cultural preservation. The social problems that plague the Inuvialuit in the Delta communities do not pose a threat at Shingle Point. This is a place-specific phenomenon. The absence of alcohol at Shingle Point is part of the reason for the difference, but there are other reasons as well.

From a geographer's perspective, the significance of spatial factors is immediately apparent. At Shingle Point, the camps are all made up of close-knit extended families living in very close proximity to each other. This is not to say that these families do not associate with each other away from Shingle Point, but their other homes are much farther apart, and in some cases in different communities. At Shingle Point the spatial closeness fosters unity and kinship,

reminiscent of the way their ancestors lived. This provides a powerful link to their cultural past. It does not matter that Shingle Point is only used for a few months each year. What matters is that everyone who spends time there, is reconnected with their traditions and united in a community where common goals and interests take precedence over individual concerns.

Another reason for the improved social climate at Shingle Point, and another reason that this location is important to cultural preservation, is the sense of freedom the Inuvialuit feel here. This sense of freedom, as the data reveals, is an important emotional and spiritual aspect of being on the land. While it can be experienced individually or in smaller groups at other camps, the importance of the community at Shingle Point is that this sense of freedom is shared by the entire community, which, at times, makes up close to half the Inuvialuit population of Aklavik. This shared experience has a positive influence on their lives well beyond the time spent at Shingle Point.

Clearly, Shingle Point has become more than just a good location for hunting and fishing. It is a place to reaffirm social ties and to recreate Inuvialuit culture away from the pressures of modern life in the Delta. It is a cultural anchor for those who use it, and a symbol to those who do not, of the continued strength and viability of Inuvialuit culture. And, while the IFA does not specifically address Shingle Point as a site of cultural preservation, the entire agreement focuses on preserving the land and hunting rights of the Inuvialuit. It is more than mere coincidence that since these rights have been entrenched, the Inuvialuit have resumed hunting bowhead whales, and Shingle Point has grown both physically and in importance to the Inuvialuit of the Mackenzie Delta.

6.2 Postmodern Theory and the Inuvialuit Land Claim

Since one of the fundamental issues of postmodern theory is its rejection of totalizing explanations, it would be hypocritical for me to suggest that it has the capacity to explain all aspects of the complex relationship between preservation of culture and Aboriginal land claims. It does, however, offer some possibilities. One of these, and possibly the most important, is that it provides a framework for non-Aboriginals to view land claims without feeling threatened. The postmodern sensibility of celebrating differences creates an atmosphere for governments and non-Aboriginals to recognize that preservation of Aboriginal culture enriches us all. And, for those cultures to survive, they require the space to continue their traditional practices, regardless of what technologies they use.

The preservation of Aboriginal cultures through land claims is a rare opportunity, if not to right previous wrongs, at least to enrich the cultural life of all Canadians. While negotiating land claims is undertaken to benefit First Nations and give them some input into their own destiny, I would argue that it also secures for the rest of us a rich cultural diversity and heritage that we can all share and take pride in. While a steady diet of the dominant culture may be enough to sustain us, the variety of flavours and textures that Aboriginal cultures can bring to the table ameliorates the experience immeasurably. While this should by no means be the motivation for settling Aboriginal land claims, it is a positive by-product that non-Aboriginal Canadians can look to as something that favours them as well as First Nations. This is a key recognition for non-Aboriginals to make regarding Aboriginal land claims, and one that grows out of the postmodern sensibility.

A second possibility offered by postmodern thought is the willingness to include previously excluded ways of looking at the world, such as traditional knowledge, for helping to solve problems. The point is not to suggest that traditional knowledge has all the answers either. That would be making the same mistake that modernism made with science. Rather, it is important to recognize the contribution that numerous views can make to solving problems, and to better understanding the world around us. The success of the joint management structures created under the IFA represent how useful the marriage of different philosophies can be. There is, then, a practical value realized from being open to other forms of knowledge, in this case traditional knowledge, advocated by postmodern thought.

In addition to the avenues opened up by the celebration of differences promoted by postmodern theory, there are some additional reasons for employing it in examining the Inuvialuit land claim, and Shingle Point. It can be used to explain some of the tangible effects of global communications and culture, and the resistance to these effects embodied by the IFA. These global forces had begun to create expectations that were not easily realized in the North. They created expectations of lifestyles popularized in the media, but far removed from the local reality. As I pointed out in the theory chapter, the IFA was an attempt to halt the erosion of Inuvialuit culture caused by the onslaught of these global forces. It represents an attempt to create an Inuvialuit site of resistance, and choosing a space, their traditional space, to resist acculturation by the dominant global culture, consumer culture. The global influences are still there and not necessarily things to be feared, but by establishing their own

place through the IFA they have re-focused their attention on the local culture and what it still offers them.

Shingle Point is particularly significant from this perspective, because it provides a uniquely Inuvialuit place where outside influences are minimized. This is not an argument in favour of segregation, but merely recognizing that this site has enormous value because of its traditional focus. Anyone who visits Shingle Point can see that Inuvialuit culture is as viable and practical as it ever was. It is like a retreat that helps the Inuvialuit keep in touch with their traditions, in terms of making a living and its social life. It is a place where being truly Inuvialuit is valued above all else.

Exploring the possibilities of theories that have not been used in a particular setting before is a difficult and somewhat risky undertaking. If the results of employing postmodern theory in this study appear somewhat tentative and inconclusive, it is because theoretical issues are not easily resolved in one relatively brief study. To arrive at a more definitive assessment, a longer-term detailed study devoted entirely to the issue of employing postmodern theory when studying Aboriginal land claims would be necessary, as is true of most studies including the present thesis. Moreover, while the theoretical issues may be interesting and certainly have their place, they should in no way overshadow the principal objective and findings of this thesis. The research indicates that the IFA has been instrumental in helping to preserve Inuvialuit culture, and this is most evident in the revitalization of Shingle Point as a community where traditions are realized, revived and respected.

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