Donna Adams, Nancy Anilniliak, Okalik Eegeesiak, Leena Evic, Ann Meekitjuk Hanson, Rhoda Innuksuk, Nancy Karetak-Lindell, Madeleine Redfern, Joan Scottie, Elisapee Sheutiapik, Manitok Thompson, Sheila Watt-Cloutier

This book gathers the reflections of twelve Inuit women who have taken the risk of leadership in Canada and beyond. Whether an advocate, policy maker, or cultural leader, each woman tells the story of her journey toward becoming a voice for her fellow Inuit. Solid cultural values and a strong sense of service are their common denominators, even if their missions and personal convictions vary. Some are leaders in cultural development and environmentalism; others thrived as members of territorial legislatures. Some are advocates in their home communities; others took their passion for public issues to national and international arenas. In every case, these women are driven by a desire to see Inuit society flourish through its language, traditions, and institutions.

Edited by Louis McComber and Shannon Partridge

Arnait Nipingit

Arnait Nipingit was produced through a partnership between Nunavut Arctic College, Laval University's CIERA (Centre interuniversitaire d'études et de recherches autochtones), the Qulliit Nunavut Status of Women Council, and Nunavut's Department of Education. The book series entitled Inuit Leadership and Governance is part of a CIERA research project funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and its Community-University Research Alliance program.

Nunavut Arctic College

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ONE

Inuit Leadership and Governance

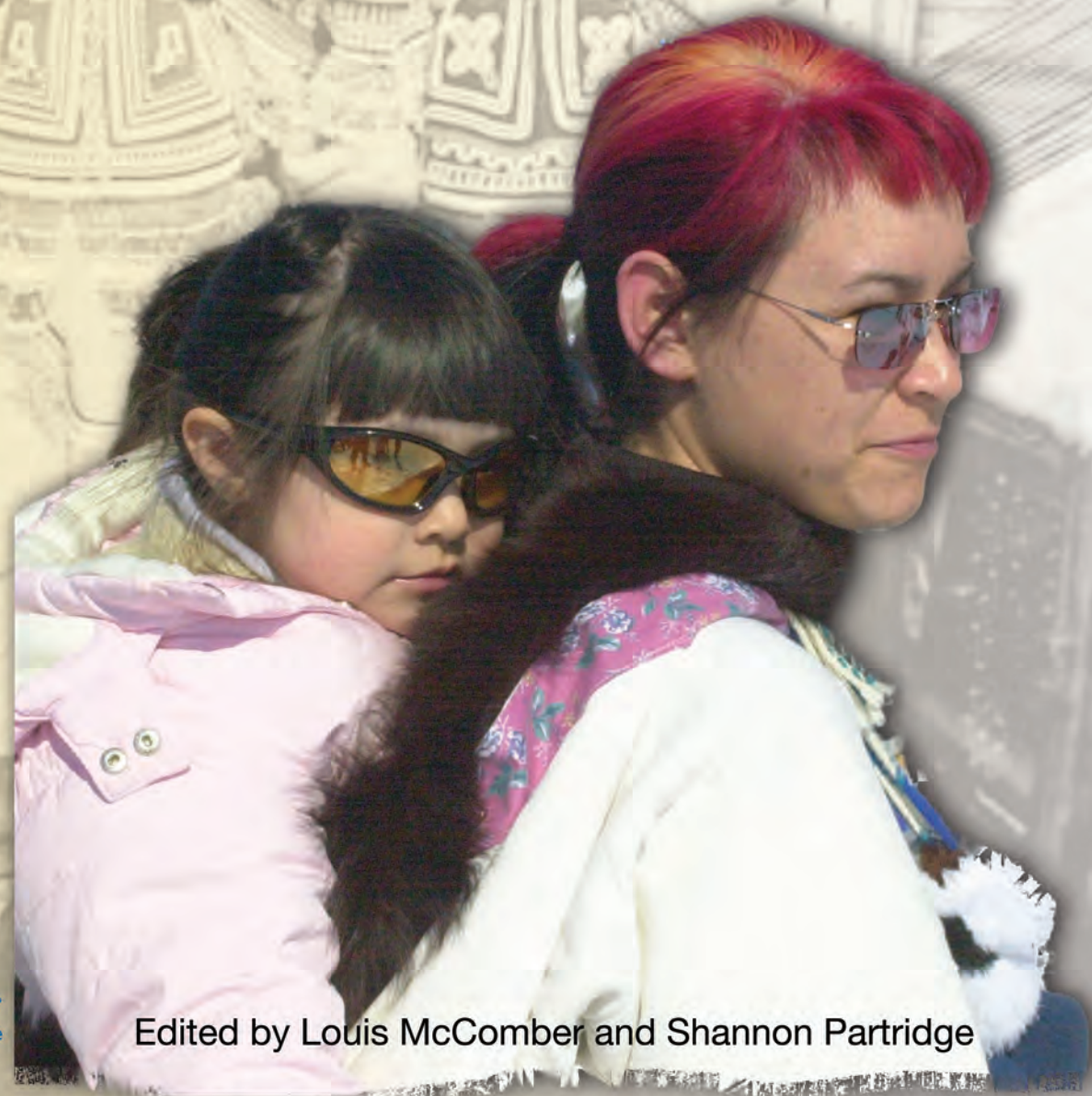
Arnait Nipingit

Voices of Inuit Women in Leadership and Governance

Nunavut Arctic College

Arnait Nipingit

Voices of Inuit Women in Leadership and Governance



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Foreword by the Honourable Eva Aariak

Premier of Nunavut, Minister Responsible
for the Status of Women

Edited by Louis McComber
and Shannon Partridge

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Nunavut
Arctic College

Inuit Leadership and Governance

Volume One

Second Edition

Inuit Leadership and Governance
Volume One (Second Edition)

Arnait Nipingit

Inuit Women in Leadership and Governance

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The Honourable Eva Aariak,
Premier of Nunavut, Minister Responsible
for the Status of Women

Foreword

In Inuit culture, our leaders earned respect not only because of their hard work, resourcefulness, and wisdom, but because they brought out the best in those around them. They made everyone feel valued for their contribution. Leadership was based on equality and balance, and women always played an integral role. The knowledge and strength of women throughout our history has helped Inuit not only to survive under often challenging conditions, but to thrive.

Women continue to be the backbone of our community today. They are grounded in their culture, with a solid understanding of where they come from and with a confidence rooted in Inuit values. The remarkable women featured in this book all work passionately for their communities. Their backgrounds are varied and their work extends far and wide: from political leadership, education, environmental stewardship, to advocacy. These women highlight the importance of leadership at every level in Nunavut. They remind us that leadership does not necessarily need to take place in the public eye to be valued. This book honours the women who stand centre stage, as well as those who work tirelessly behind the scenes.

As leaders, we need to honour our ways of knowing and doing and take our responsibilities for past and future generations seriously. We need women mentors and guides, women who practice and contribute to leadership. For us

Inuit women, it can be difficult to discuss our own successes; we are modest and do not always consider ourselves to be at the forefront of change. However, showcasing our own role models means illustrating to younger generations that Inuit women have strength, capacity, and resilience. It is my hope that initiatives like these will encourage and inspire women to work at all levels of leadership and to contribute to positive change in our territory and beyond.

The Honourable Eva Aariak,
Premier of Nunavut, Minister Responsible for the Status of Women
Iqaluit, August 19, 2010

Acknowledgements

The first edition of *Arnait Nipingit* was published especially for the Arnait Nipingit Leadership Summit, held in Iqaluit in September 2010. This book, the second edition, includes a completely new chapter featuring former Nunavut Commissioner Ann Mikitjuk Hanson, as well as additional translated material in Okalik Eegeesiak's chapter.

It was a great privilege to collaborate on this fascinating book with such remarkable people. We are grateful to all those who so readily agreed to contribute: Donna Adams, Nancy Anilniliak, Okalik Eegeesiak, Leena Evic, Ann Meekitjuk Hanson, Rhoda Innuksuk, Nancy Karetak-Lindell, Madeleine Redfern, Joan Scottie, Elisapee Sheutiapik, Manitok Thompson, and Sheila Watt-Cloutier. We learned a lot from each of these women about the courage it takes to speak up and take a stand about issues that matter. Their trust and self-confidence allowed us to record their moving testimonies for posterity.

We sincerely thank the Premier of Nunavut and Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, the Honourable Eva Aariak, who graciously agreed to write a foreword. As one of only two woman members of the current Nunavut Legislative Assembly, and as the first woman premier of Nunavut, she is surely an inspiration to all.

The project to publish a book about the important public contributions of Nunavut Inuit women originated with the Qulliit Nunavut Status of Women Council. It

was obvious to all that this book needed to be produced, especially after the appearance of Nunavut Arctic College's recent book series, "Life Stories of Northern Leaders", in which the life stories of five male Inuit public figures were published. Qulliit was especially interested in recording the voices of Inuit women leaders because they would be co-hosting the Arnait Nipingit (Women's Voices) Leadership Summit in Iqaluit, Nunavut, in September 2010. Thus, we are grateful to Donna Adams, President of Qulliit, and to Shylah Elliott, its executive director, who encouraged us to bring to fruition their idea for a book.

We also extend our gratitude to Rian van Bruggen, manager of the Nunavut Women's Secretariat, who supported the project and was helpful in finding the appropriate resources to realize it. Karliin Aariak deserves recognition for conducting many Inuktitut interviews in Iqaluit, as does Gloria Putumiraqtuq, a Nunavut Arctic College student who helped with the translations. Kowesa Etitiq made a great contribution in creating short biographies, bibliographies, and webliographies for each of the book's contributors. Francis Lévesque revised and completed the biographical information.

The final decision to proceed with this project was made in late May 2010, meaning that time and resources were limited. We had a mere two months to pin down and interview a dozen women living in different parts of Canada, then transcribe and translate the interviews, edit the texts in collaboration with each contributor, compile them into a manuscript, and have it printed and shipped in time for the Arnait Nipingit Leadership Summit. Unfortunately, the time constraints meant that many influential and inspiring women leaders who deserve a place in a book such as this were not able to make a contribution. The women who did participate are active not only in politics, but in the visual arts, media, religion, education, music, business, and as wise family and community leaders. We truly hope that

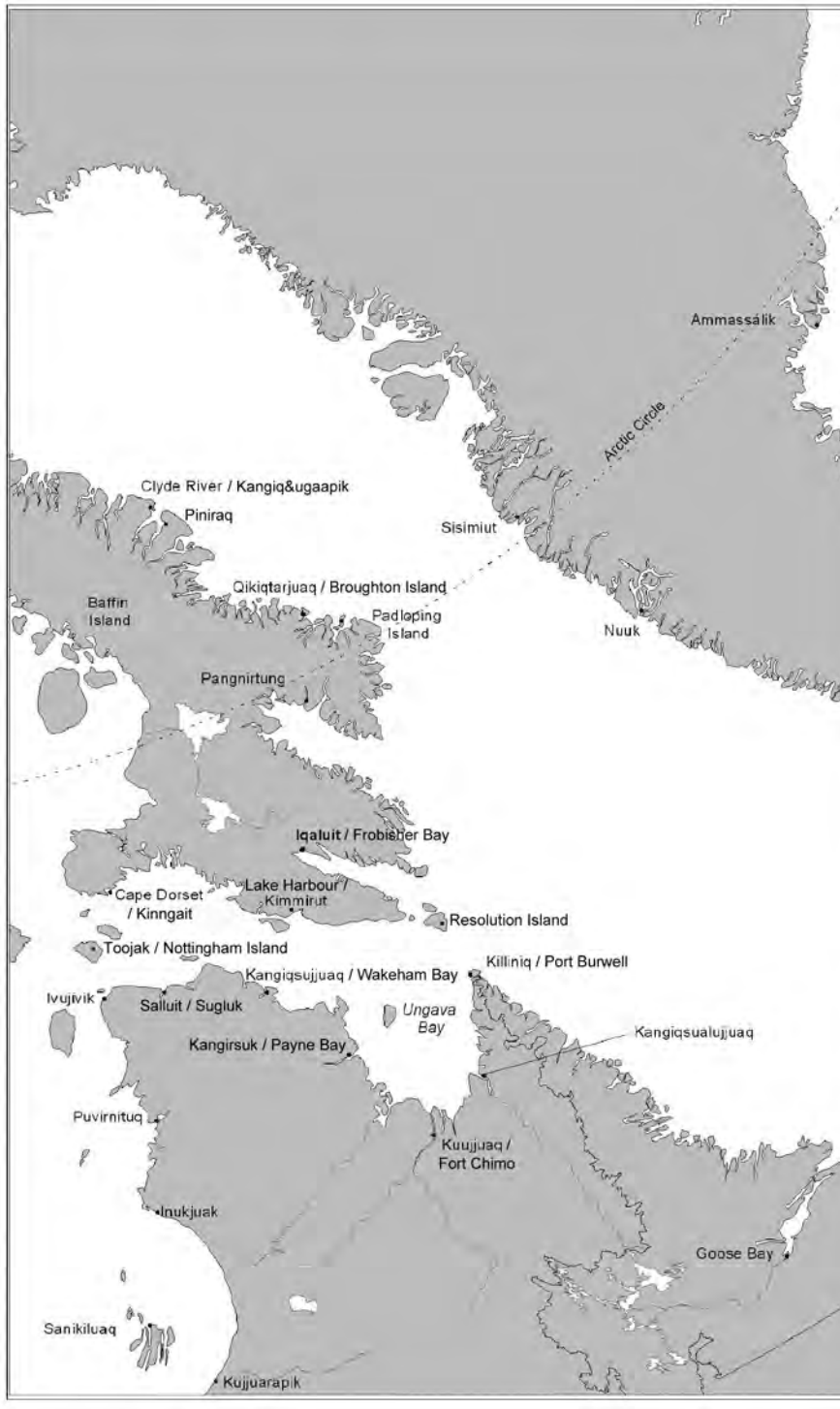
this book is just the beginning of a wider recognition and appreciation of the essential contributions Inuit women make to the public and social realms.

Arnait Nipingit is part of an ongoing research project at Laval University's CIERA (Centre for Aboriginal Research and Studies). Directed by anthropology professor Frédéric Laugrand, the research project is entitled "Inuit Leadership and Governance in Nunavut and Nunavik: Life Stories, Analytical Perspectives, and Training". It is funded by the Community University Research Alliance (CURA) program of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

Indeed, we express our sincere gratitude to Professor Frédéric Laugrand. From the very beginning, he trusted our ability to complete this project on schedule and with a level of excellence that, we certainly hope, will satisfy CIERA's academic standards. We are always and ever thankful to Lise Fortin, CIERA's administrative assistant, who takes such prompt and efficient care of all the administrative matters that truly make a project like this possible. Merci, Lise.

Louis McComber and Shannon L. Partridge, editors
Sutton, Quebec
January 2011

Map design: Mélanie Gagnon, CIÉRA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Nuuk
Pangnirtung
Iqaluit / Frobisher Bay
Lake Harbour / Kimmirut
Cape Dorset / Kinngait
Resolution Island
Toojak / Nottingham Island
Killiniq / Port Burwell
Kangiqsujjuaq / Wakeham Bay
Ivujivik
Salluit / Sugluk
Ungava Bay
Kangiqsualujjuaq
Kangirsuk / Payne Bay
Puvirnituq
Kuujjuaq / Fort Chimo
Inukjuak
Goose Bay
Sanikiluaq
Kujjuarapik

Front row, left to right: Samuel Napayok-Adams, Mahalia Adams, Tunaalaaq Adams

Back row, left to right: Husband Willie Adams Jr., Karlene Napayok, Donna Adams

Credit: Donna Adams

Balancing Traditional and Modern Values

Donna Adams

President of Qulliit Nunavut Status of Women Council

"Knowing what my mother stood for influenced me greatly; it opened the door for me to defend women's rights."

In the 1970s, many Inuit from the Kivalliq were born in Churchill, Manitoba, because it was the closest hospital serving our communities. That is where I was born. My family lived in Coral Harbour until I was about four years old, when we moved to Arviat. I went to school there up to grade 9, and for grades 10 and 11 I went to Rankin Inlet. I chose to do grade 12 in Churchill, Manitoba, which is where I graduated from high school. Not long after that, I took the recreation leaders program at Aurora College in Inuvik, Northwest Territories, and travelled back and forth to Arviat to do my winter and summer practicums.

In 1994, I settled in Rankin Inlet and started a family. I worked at various jobs: at the Inuit Cultural Institute, at the health centre, where I did clerical work and interpreting, and then for the Northwest Territories Department of Municipal and Community Affairs, as the senior recreation development officer for the Kivalliq region. My first job at an Inuit organization was as a program officer for the Nunavut Implementation Training Committee. I later

worked for Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. (NTI) as a manager for the Nunavut Harvesters Support Program and then as an executive assistant for Raymond Ningeocheak, NTI's Vice-President of Finance. In November 2009, I became the president of Qulliit, the Nunavut Status of Women Council. I had to give up my position at NTI in order to take on the presidency of Qulliit. I chose to do that, because I knew my position at Qulliit would be high profile and that it was complicated to be a politician working for a politician.

There weren't many non-Inuit people in Arviat when I was growing up, so the Inuit culture was very solid and the Inuktitut language very strong. With that kind of environment around me, I was able to grow up confident and aware of the richness of our culture. If I ever felt marginalized, it was not by the "white man" but by my fellow Inuit, because of the kinds of "tribal differences" that are still evident today in every community. My family came from Coral Harbour, and we experienced a lot of inter-community prejudice. As schoolchildren, though, we were friends with the non-Inuit in our age group and were able to see that our own culture seemed so much richer and more solid than theirs, especially when it came to the family.

I had good Inuit teachers at school, especially David Owingayak, Eric Anoee, and David Serkoak, who now teaches at the Nunavut Sivuniksavut program in Ottawa.[1] He was one of the first people I knew who was married to a non-Inuk. I especially remember one teacher in grade 5 who instilled in us how ingenious Inuit are to be able to live in the North. It was always a given that I would graduate from high school—I was the youngest sibling in my family

1. Nunavut Sivuniksavut (NS) is a post-secondary program based in Ottawa that prepares Inuit to further their education or begin their careers in the North.

and had seen most of my brothers and sisters go away for school and return home as graduates. I loved school; in fact I was probably hated by my classmates for asking so many questions and keeping us in class.

My parents were truly of a different generation. They came from Southampton Island, and their marriage was arranged by their parents. They lived their roles in the traditional way, with my mom serving my dad meals and tea. If he ever brought people over to visit, we had to serve them too. My dad has always been a generous and caring person, and he wanted people to feel comfortable in our home. My parents' generation didn't talk to their children like parents do today; we didn't talk about puberty or sex or careers or schoolwork. They scolded and disciplined, but otherwise everything was passed on by just doing and being together. They didn't make any particular efforts to talk about our culture or encourage it, and we were not the type to go camping on the land. They were both strict about us going to school, though—my mom had only gone up to grade 3 and my dad didn't go to school at all. I have never forgotten the time when my dad showed me the importance of standing up for yourself: one year in school, I had a non-Inuk teacher who was convinced he was going to change our ways for the better. He had given us a note to take home to our parents suggesting that we should go to bed at an earlier time for good health. I didn't really think anything of it, but when I showed it to my dad at lunch time, he made me dial my teacher's phone number so he could talk to the man. I think that was the first time I had ever heard my dad speaking—in fact he was yelling—English, telling my teacher that I was *his* child and not to tell him what to do with *his* children.

My mother, Annie Napayok, was very independent and worked for many years at the hotel in Arviat. She was, and still is, a talented seamstress as well. She was very active on boards and committees, and it was normal for

her to travel. That is how I learned that women have to get out and pursue their own interests; I could never have been a stay-at-home mom. Because of my mother, I grew up knowing that there were lots of things to do and lots of ways to do them. When I became an adult, she told me about how she had been involved in women's issues—in the 1980s, for example, she was involved in getting pay equity for women. Knowing what my mother stood for influenced me greatly; it opened the door for me to defend women's rights. Many other of my relatives are politicians and are natural leaders, and they also have had a significant influence on me.

I believe that my position as a leader enables me to speak on behalf of children, who cannot speak for themselves. They are all too often neglected and are not involved in our society in the way they should be. I am for families, and I am for marriage: for me a strong community means solid family roots and couples that are healthy enough to nurture children. Our community life has nothing to do with life in the South or in urban cultures anywhere. Here, there has been too much of a breakdown in our families; too many children are fatherless or motherless and are being raised by their grandparents. We need to come up with more support and resources to help families. If we are going to help women, we also need to help their boyfriends, husbands, and common-law partners. I don't believe in stirring up conflict, but I do want to find people who are interested in working with women to create solutions for the whole family. I am not out to change societal values by forcing women's rights, because I have learned that a lot of women are not interested in leadership—many of them are just too tired and are unable to take on more responsibility.

I have absolutely no tolerance for violence against women. Mental, psychological, and physical abuse are very present in our families and in our communities, and

they must be eradicated. It is simply not acceptable to physically hurt another human being. People always have a choice: we can do as much as we are able for families and men and women, but individuals have to choose to not practice violence or allow violence in their homes. The courts are too lenient; many offenders just get slapped on the wrist and treat it like a joke when they are brought to justice. That is an area I would like to start dealing with. I would like to see our justice committees built up in each community and better utilized; they have so much to offer to young offenders and first time offenders. It is also a shame that some men running for seats as politicians and leaders have previous convictions of assault against a woman. That should not be tolerated. It is embarrassing that they receive such unquestioning support and that these major weaknesses are willingly overlooked. We need better legislation, laws that would prevent men from running for political positions if they have been convicted with assaulting a woman.

Today's young Inuit politicians are not of the same generation as those who went to residential school. The older age group had parents who taught them traditional Inuit culture, and so they were raised knowing more of the old ways. People from my age group, the ones who were children in the 1970s, did not necessarily grow up with that. We were schooled closer to home and were not made to feel like lesser people, as they might have been. The political context has changed too; the negotiating days are over and we are willing to work together with the federal government. We still stand up for our rights, especially with the Land Claims Agreement to back us up, but we don't have to prove ourselves as forcefully anymore.[2] We

2. The Nunavut Land Claims Agreement between the federal government and the Inuit of the Nunavut region was signed in 1993. It defines the respective rights of the Inuit and the Crown over one-fifth of Canada's land mass. In the agreement, the Crown undertook the

are getting on with things, meeting face to face with other governments.

In my own approach to leadership, I try to come across naturally. I understand the issues that define other generations of Inuit; I understand what their era was like and how they were raised. I also respect that human beings should be free to do what they want without having to feel afraid or rejected or ridiculed. When I was a manager for the Nunavut Harvesters Support Program, I worked with every single Hunters and Trappers Organization in Nunavut—the HTOs are almost entirely composed of male elders. Usually, the smaller the community, the more resistance I encountered as a female leader. I had to make sure I travelled with a male purchasing officer, because I knew they would listen to him. Sometimes I felt discriminated against, but mostly I just wanted to get the work done. I don't like bumping my head against something that is not going to change overnight. I respected where that generation was coming from: in the past, if the man couldn't go hunting, the family wouldn't have any food to eat and wouldn't survive. I looked at it professionally and said, "Okay, that's the way things are. I'll work with it." I wasn't there to gain their favour or respect, and I didn't pretend to be any less than I was. I was the manager and they were accountable to me, even if they might have had more respect for a man in my position. I was honest and clear and direct, and I was there to do the work. If you are honest, people will respect that.

The resistance comes from the women's side too: it is hard to recruit them into leadership roles. I have learned that a lot of women are not interested in sitting on boards or committees or running for elections. They

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creation of a new territory, Nunavut, where Inuit form the majority of the population and could, hypothetically, exert their right to self-government.

are busy elsewhere: women are the backbone of society, the backbone of the family. Many of them are working full time and are also looking after their kids and all that that entails: health care, school, recreation, homework, feeding and clothing them. Sometimes the women of the family are also looking after elderly parents and nieces and nephews.

In my case, I was able to work and travel when my kids were very young because my husband supported me fully. Working women, as well as those who are in leadership, need a partner who believes in what they are doing. I learned first-hand that when women take a public position about an issue, it can have a negative impact on their family. When I was hamlet councillor, I spoke out against a person who was proposing a children's summer program that was based on a theme I thought inappropriate for our kids. There was backlash against that, so much so that my husband actually suggested I leave things alone. But those experiences develop our character and help us see what is important.

To young women thinking about leadership, I would say, "Get to know the heartbeat of the community—get involved." Leaders are there to represent the majority of the people, so it is important that they understand the real issues—what the people want and where they need help. I would also tell young women to be strong and confident and very sure of themselves before deciding to get involved in politics. You really have to want to help people, because it can be a very difficult road to follow; you will see a lot of people who need support with some painful social issues. It is also important to find a good balance between traditional and modern values, to be encouraging with the new generation and respectful of the past.

I would love to have the authority and the resources at my fingertips to truly help people. The onus is on my age group to do something to keep the Inuit language and

traditions strong. No one else can fight for who we are; we have to stand up and show commitment and devotion and model our values in the home. There is a lot of apathy in our communities, but we have to use our cultural tools or we will lose them. A project I would like to work on is creating cultural camps for healing and revitalization—it would be a good culturally relevant avenue for dealing with some of the harder social issues. I have a big vision and many ideas, but in reality our Qulliit Status of Women Council is small and has a limited budget; there is very little we can actually do. Then again, we can have millions of cultural programs, but the real effort has to be made in the home.

Annie Kilabuk, Miali Veevee, Miali Qappik, inside a *qarmaq*, sewing. August 1946

Credit: George Hunter / National Film Board of Canada / Library and Archives Canada / PA-166462

Nancy Anilniliak

Credit: Nancy Anilniliak

Doing What I Know Best

Nancy Anilniliak

Superintendent of Parks Canada's Nunavut Field Unit

"I am always ready for challenge. In the face of hardship, there are things that can discourage you, but you have to pursue your dream anyway. Anything is possible when you believe that an idea can work and that there are others who will support you."

My childhood years were spent living the nomadic life of the Cumberland Sound Inuit. I was born in *Panniqtuuq*, or Pangnirtung, and spent the first 11 years of my life living in camps. My family and I lived in two camps: Iqalulik and Iglutalik, which were both very small. Only four or five families lived in each camp, and of course each camp had a leader.

In the late 1960s, the government started to have more of a presence in the communities and most kids my age were sent to school. The federal day school had been operating in Pangnirtung for two or three years before I started attending, after my parents moved in to the community. I didn't speak English at the time, although I had been exposed to it before—I had been sent to Hamilton for medical treatment when I was six years old. While I was there, I forgot my Inuktitut and had to relearn it when I came home to be with my parents. When I was

11, I had to start speaking English again at school; I didn't find it too difficult. For most people, it was a big change to leave the camps for a more settled life, but I found the transition easy because I had attended a year of school when I was in Hamilton. I liked going to school because I liked learning.

When I was 14 years old, I went away to residential school in Churchill, Manitoba. I enjoyed being at the Churchill Vocational Centre; it was an eye opener to learn about all the different kinds of things we were taught there. There were lots of other kids who had been sent away from their homes for school, and we stuck together. Young people are adaptable, and I didn't find all these changes to be stressful.

Back in Pangnirtung, I took some adult education classes and, later, took my training as an adult educator at St. Francis Xavier University in Nova Scotia. I did some on-the-job learning and management training and then taught for eight or nine years at the Nunavut Arctic College learning centre in Pangnirtung. When I was ready for a different kind of challenge, I took a job with Parks Canada, which was called the Canadian Parks Service at the time. Parks Canada and the Public Service Commission offered an opportunity for aboriginal people to receive further training in management, and so for two years I received on-the-job training related to finance, administration, and human resources. After that, I became the Pangnirtung-based chief of finance and administration manager for two national parks: Auyuittuq, on Baffin Island, and Quttinirpaaq National Park Reserve, on Ellesmere Island.

Those management positions were just the beginning; since 1989 I have been park manager and implementation manager for various parks in Nunavut, with short breaks in between. My current job is that of Nunavut Field Unit Superintendent, which I have been doing for four and a half years. I am responsible for the four national parks

that we operate in the territory and am the first Inuk to hold that position. I am happy to have the opportunity to work in this capacity.

My early experiences with my parents guided me towards what I am doing today, as a senior manager. What I grew up with as a child fits with what I am doing now, which is respecting and protecting our environment. My parents taught me at a young age to have respect for animals and people and the world they inhabit. In my job, I am trying to practise the things that are important to me: I am trying to bring Inuit knowledge and scientific knowledge together. In fact, I believe they cannot be separated. In order to successfully manage our parks, we need to make sure that those two approaches work side by side. What I learned from my parents and my community about my culture, language, and environment complements what I am doing now—it is what I know best.

There is always a disconnect when you leave your parents. Like many, my parents were unilingual Inuktitut speakers, and I was schooled in English. I could still communicate with them in our language, but the big difference was the one between my parents' culture and the one I was introduced to. Their way of doing things and my new way of doing things were different. Nevertheless, I had lived their way of life as a child, and I understood why they told me to remember who I was and where I came from, no matter what I was doing. Having that understanding allowed us a compatibility. Without the solid foundation they built for me early on, I would certainly have struggled more.

It was a challenge for me to start my own family early on, while I was studying. Things were very different for my parents; that is something they never had to do. My own family had to make some sacrifices as I continued on with my education, although I always had their support. Eight years ago, I felt ready to leave my home community to fill

my current position in Iqaluit. It might have been better to do that sooner, but my family was well established in Pangnirtung and family ties are very strong. But with the support of my whole family, we made this move.

It is a challenge for a traditional Inuk man to be married to an Inuk woman working in a management role. In the traditional Inuit way of life, the man was the head of the family and men were leaders in the camp. Their role shifted significantly when we were introduced to a different way of living and the definition of leadership changed. Today, being an Inuk woman leader is also always a challenge, because her traditional role would have been to stay at home to raise the children and nurture the family.

I believe that the leadership trait is built into people. I am glad to have the opportunity to use my skills in a leadership role. I am the kind of person who likes to see things happen; I cannot just sit back and do nothing about the things I care about. I enjoy coaching other people to build on their strengths and helping them to move ahead as leaders—sharing what I know and capacity-building with others makes me happy. Likewise, a lot of people helped me along the way. When I was younger, some of them inspired me to continue my education; many of those role models have passed away. There are also leaders around today who inspire me to help others. Sheila Watt-Cloutier has done so much for the North—locally, regionally, and even internationally. She informs everyone who is willing to listen about the struggles that Inuit have to face in the North, and she makes sure that people around the world understand the impact their choices have on Northern Canada and the circumpolar region.

One issue that I take seriously as a manager is the respect and use of the Inuktitut language and culture in the workplace. The Inuit culture is an oral one, so there is very little written material. That means it is important that we document and pass on the stories and legends and that

we keep speaking the Inuktitut language to each other. One of the things that I have been working on is to integrate special cultural activities into the workplace during what we call *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* (IQ) days.[1] Other federal and government of Nunavut departments have started to do that as well. There will always be non-Inuit people working at Parks Canada and in other departments who have limited knowledge about Inuit culture, traditions, and language. IQ is a sensitivity training program that introduces our culture and language to these people through eight principles that we recognize and work with. We also match Parks Canada's guiding principles with those of IQ and try to find the commonalities. With the help of my staff, I have established an Inuktitut terminology committee, which is composed of Inuit and a couple of non-Inuit staff. They are to compile common words that relate to the workplace so that we can be consistent in their use and not have to re-invent terminology all the time. We are also trying to build a terminology guide for Inuktitut staff members, translators, and interpreters.

Over the last four years, my field unit has been working on building capacity at the community level. We are introducing Inuit knowledge projects where we work with local elders and youth so that they actually become involved in the research. In such a project, a principal interviewer gathers information about sea ice, for instance, or about current climatic conditions or polynyas or safety. Then we adapt and integrate that Inuit knowledge into our public safety policies or into the publications that we provide to visitors. That is one of the ways we are trying to integrate Inuit knowledge as much as possible into what we do. Sometimes we have to deal with conflicting

1. *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* refers to the knowledge and wisdom inherent in traditional Inuit culture that ought to be integrated into the different levels of public administration in Nunavut.

information—we are, after all, working within a structured organization that has many rules, regulations, and policies—but such conflicts will always exist.

I am always ready for a challenge. In the face of hardship, there are things that can discourage you, but you have to pursue your dream anyway. Anything is possible when you believe that an idea can work and that there are others who will support you. There is a way through every challenge; you just have to find the way and explore it and don't give up on it. If you want to pursue a certain career path, look for ways to get support from various people. My advice would be to find a mentor; everyone should have one. It is important to have a mentor with whom you can bounce around ideas and who will make sure you are on the right path. If you are having difficulties, a mentor might help you see that what you are doing is not the right approach. He or she can also help you keep your eyes open for opportunities. I have a mentor and have always had one, within Parks Canada or even outside of my organization.

One of the challenges that I have decided to tackle as a leader is Inuit hiring. An accomplishment I would like to see during my tenure at Parks Canada is that Inuit fill at least 65 to 70 percent of the hired staff positions in Nunavut—we are now at about 56 percent. Some specific parks sites already have 100 percent Inuit staff. Twenty years from now, I would like to see all the management positions at the field unit occupied by Inuit staff and all of Nunavut's national park sites run by Inuit park managers. That would make me very happy. There are a variety of things that help our staff to build capacity within themselves: we encourage internships, mentorship programs, and special assignments. We especially make use of assignment opportunities in middle management level positions to help our colleagues gain leadership skills and learn management responsibilities.

I also hope that 20 years from now, Inuktitut will be well underway as the language of work. We are a federal government department, so we will always have to deal with the two official languages of Canada; Nunavut, however, now has Inuktitut language legislation and we respect that highly. The use of Inuktitut as the working language is always encouraged here in the office and at the park sites. We are now encouraging a few of the non-Inuit staff to learn Inuktitut, and hopefully they will become fluent in the future.

My work is particularly rewarding to me because at Parks Canada we work closely with the communities and the people. That relationship is very important to me; as a leader for Inuit, I consider myself as a voice to bridge the gap between the people and Parks Canada. I believe that I am in my position not just because I am Inuk, but because I can help my people have a role in ensuring that our national parks are managed cooperatively and collaboratively.

Okalik Eegeesiak

Credit: Okalik Eegeesiak

We Can Change Our Expectations

Okalik Eegeesiak

President of the Qikiqtani Inuit Association
President of the Inuit Broadcasting Corporation

"We might all be activists to some extent, but some of us want things to move ahead a little faster."

I was born and raised in Iqaluit. My father, Chico Eegeesiak, was born outside of Kimmirut but grew up in Iqaluit. My mother, Simigaq, was raised outside of Pangnirtung. I am the eldest of ten siblings, of whom three were adopted out.

By the time I was born, students from the Baffin region were able to attend high school in Iqaluit, so I didn't have to leave home to study. Nevertheless, I wasn't able to complete grade 8 because I became pregnant with my daughter, Ami Eegeesiak. When I was pregnant with her, I started attending the Arctic College adult learning centre, where I eventually completed the office administration program. My first job was at the Hunters and Trappers Association, and since then I have worked at several jobs, including as executive secretary to a territorial minister of education and at the Baffin Divisional Board of Education.

I had never thought about politics until someone asked me if I would consider running as a candidate in the federal election of 1996. At the time I was working at NTI, travelling to different communities to consult with

Nunavut residents about issues in education.[1] As I spoke passionately about the things I cared about, people started to take notice of me. I agreed to run for office because I had become aware of some things in the system that I thought could be strengthened, and because I was also quite comfortable with leadership.

Nancy Karetak-Lindell won that electoral race, but I learned a lot from the experience. I did radio call-in shows and a televion call-in show and listened to what people had to say. I learned that voters want to be represented by someone who is strong, observant, and willing to listen. They want someone who speaks Inuktitut, and some people specifically want to see women running.

I also learned that when you are running for office, people watch your every move. After the campaign, when I returned to my job at NTI, the leaders seemed to be much more aware of who I was and what I was capable of. Some well-established leaders, including Jose Kusugak and James Eetoolook, suggested I ought to consider running for the position of president at Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami.[2] They knew I would enjoy the job and was capable of running the organization. I am still grateful today for those people who approached me and encouraged me.

I was very honoured to be elected to the position in 1997. It was a fun job, and I gained a lot of experience through working closely with both the board of directors and with the permanent staff. I also came to appreciate that the issues and concerns that Nunavummiut have are similar to those of Inuit in other regions. The thing that

1. NTI: Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated, the Inuit organization that manages the rights and benefits accorded to beneficiaries in the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement
2. Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami is the national organization representing Canadian Inuit. Its board members are nominated by the four main Canadian Inuit organizations. It was formerly known as Inuit Tapirisat of Canada.

struck me most when I was President is that people in the South need to learn more about the North, especially those who make decisions that affect our lives: federal adminstrators, government ministers, and the Prime Minister. Even though some things appear to have changed in the way the goverment deals with the North, a lot of things are still the same for Inuit. I considered it a priority to inform Canadians about the issues affecting the North, especially those that affect its people.

Language always has been an important issue for me, and being a grandparent lets me see what that means in a completely different way. I feel that my grandchildren don't know enough Inuktitut; in fact, they speak mostly English. Their father is non-Inuk, so even though he is a hunter and gets the children out on the land, they are learning from him mostly in English. It means their mother and I need to do more to keep our language alive for them. That is why I work for the protection, development, and practice of Inuit culture and language; I want to do my part. Although I feel that my family situation makes me a living contradiction, it mostly just makes me want to fight harder. People are absolutely right when they say that the fight for language and culture starts in the home and in the family.

I think the fight is necessary at other levels too. When I first began to work for the Baffin Division Board of Education, it was composed of members from each community, all fighting for more Inuktitut. Twenty-five years later, we are still fighting for more Inuktitut. Sometimes I think that nothing has changed, and at others I think we are stronger than before. It makes me wonder if there is a need to be a little more militant in advocating for the language.

One of the things we lack is Inuktitut programming on television. To preserve our language, I consider it a requirement that Inuktitut content be increased in the

media in Nunavut. The first thing that kids do when they walk into the house is turn on the television; if there were an Inuktitut channel available, parents could tune into it and the children would then have more exposure to the language of their parents and grandparents. We have very little choice now about what we can produce and watch in our own language. Inuit content used to be much more readily available, such as when the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network first started broadcasting—they showed almost 30 hours of Inuktitut programming a week, not just from Nunavut but from across Canada. The Inuit Broadcasting Corporation (IBC) now only produces about three hours of Inuktitut programming a week and that material is often shown when Inuit are at work or in school.[3]

I chair the IBC's board of directors, and we are always fighting for more resources so that we can continue producing the little programming we currently have. Our goal is to increase our broadcasting time with a project that we are calling "TV Nunavut", which would be something like Télé-Québec.[4] Before we can make that happen, though, we need a new building in Iqaluit. We can't do it with the equipment we have now and we can't do it at our present location. We are fundraising for a new building that will allow us the option of live broadcasting and where our staff could be trained and work with up-to-date technology.

It would also help if we had an Inuktitut radio station for the whole region, or at least in some of the bigger communities like Iqaluit, Rankin Inlet, and Cambridge

3. Inuit Broadcasting Corporation (IBC) productions are broadcasted by the Aboriginal Public Television Network. Okalik Eegeesiak is the current president of the Inuit Broadcasting Corporation.
4. Even if telecommunications are a federal responsibility in Canada, provinces are entitled to develop educational television channels in their own jurisdictions, such as Quebec and Ontario have done with Télé-Québec and TVOntario.

Bay. The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation is a public broadcaster that goes to air in English and Inuktitut, but if we had all-Inuktitut radio, children in every community would be more exposed to the language in the home.

The broadcasting media are tools that can help us preserve and develop what is important to us. I recently attended an Inuit Circumpolar Conference (ICC) held in Nuuk, Greenland, where Inuktitut television programs are shown all day long—even superhero shows are dubbed into Inuktitut.[5] And with some of the new Inuit films of the last year or two, we have begun to tell our own stories in high-definition technology (HD), which I think is going to have an impact on our lives. Good quality Inuit films and television programming will make people feel more empowered. Gaining access to HD will also change our relationship to government, as our financing expectations will necessarily evolve. That might mean some challenges: it is frustrating when we work on a relationship with a particular government and start to establish some programs, and then a new government is elected and cuts or revises what we had already secured. In some cases they choose to do that just because they do not want to support projects initiated by the previous government.

Our parents used to just resign themselves to the changes brought by southerners, because they didn't have adequate resources or experiences with Western culture to back up any kind of resistance. Now, my sisters and brothers and I urge our mother to express herself—to go to the hospital, for example, when something is wrong with her. Just recently I heard her say she didn't want to be a burden! We tell her that the hospital staff is there to look after people who aren't feeling well. Nowadays

5. The Inuit Circumpolar Conference was founded in 1977 at a first international gathering of Inuit in Barrow, Alaska. Even if the Russian Inuit did not attend this first conference, ICC later came to represent Inuit from Greenland, Canada, United States and Russia.

this mentality is changing: we might still have to remind the older generation that they have rights as Inuit, but I know what my rights are. When I talk about rights, I am talking about the right to programs and services that other Canadians enjoy: the right to be a people with our own culture and language and to do what we want, as Inuk individuals or as a collective of Inuit.

We might all be activists to some extent, but some of us want things to move ahead a little faster. I want to be one of the first people to organize a big demonstration about Inuit rights and issues, maybe around the implementation—or non-implementation—of the Land Claims Agreement. Suing through the courts is one way to promote our rights, but demonstrating publicly is also effective. Government is slow in acting, so maybe one day we will put our foot down.

The experience of women in politics is different from that of men. Statistics show that Inuit women are generally more educated than Inuit men, and more of them are employed. Having this exposure to the wage economy and to the education system means having a more holistic approach to our leadership. We bring our more varied backgrounds and experiences to the table. It is not that Inuit men's experiences are more limited, they are just different.

My own path to leadership began when the Inuit Circumpolar Council first met in Iqaluit in 1984, when I was working for the Baffin Divisional Board of Education. The BDBE managers were very supportive; they were *Qallunaat* men who saw that I had potential and who thought I should develop my leadership skills. They suggested I attend the ICC conference as an observer, which was the best advice I have ever had. I saw Mary Simon give a speech, and I thought, "I'm going to work with that lady one day." It was my first real exposure to an Inuk woman in a leadership position. Ten or fifteen years later, I did work with her.

Inuit women leaders are all around us. Their leadership starts in the home, with the mothers and the grandmothers, and of course many Inuit women and girls volunteer their time in the community. There are several women leaders whom I respect: my good friend Sheila Watt-Cloutier; Mary Simon; my aunt, Ann Meekitjuk Hanson; my mom; and Rosemarie Kuptana. I also respect the leadership of Meeka Kilabuk, who was one of the founders of Inuit Tapirisat Kanatami and who is still an activist in her own right. She is also a leading sealskin seamstress. I first met Lisa Ningiuk when she was a board member at BDBE and appreciate how she has always been vocal about Inuktitut and Inuit culture in the schools. And, of course, my mother's and father's pride in me have also been very inspirational in my own path to leadership.

As President of Qikiqtani Inuit Association, I consider it a privilege to go to the communities to hear from and work with the people I represent. There have been challenges for me as a leader there, though. Sometimes negative remarks are levelled at me because of where I am from—I am from Iqaluit, which is seen as a large centre whose people are unable to understand the issues in smaller communities. Another challenge is that there are higher expectations and more scrutiny of women. A lot of mothers are torn between leaving home to travel for work and being there for their children. I was young when I had my child but, fortunately, I had the support of my parents to continue schooling and then travelling for work. Many mothers make the hard choice to stay home, even when they want to be involved. I understand their choice a little bit more now that I am a grandmother: I don't want to travel often either, these days.

One of the things I wish for Nunavut in the future is a change in the attitude of those who come from the South to work here. In Nunavut, we seem to accommodate non-Inuktitut-speaking people. We speak English to them

in our stores and schools and in our workplaces. But at other times in history and in other regions of the North, if a person is not Inuk it is expected that he or she will make the effort to learn Inuktitut. Right now, it doesn't seem to matter what they are doing or who they work for; we don't really expect non-Inuit to learn our language. We like it when they want to, but we don't expect it and don't demand it. I think we can change our expectations.

Aasivak Evic, wife of Angmarlik and great-grandmother of Leena Evic, drying *kamiit* in front of her tent in Pangnirtung.

Mount Duval can be seen in the background. August 1946.

Credit: George Hunter / National Film Board of Canada / Library and Archives Canada / PA-166445

Leena Evic lighting the *qulliq* at the Pirurvik Centre during a workshop

Credit: Leena Evic

Reclaiming the Whole Woman

Leena Evic

Executive Director of the Pirurvik Centre

> *"I am passionate about my culture and language, and I stand on the truth and belief that as Inuit, we have an inherent right to express, learn, and pass on our traditional knowledge, medicine, and best practices."*

Please allow me to begin with something I wrote a few years ago: "As I sit here at Kajjaarvik, with the view of Frobisher Bay appearing and disappearing back and forth through blowing snow, I am overwhelmed by the realization of women's power and restful spirit.[1] And the realization expands out to all these women from the four corners of the earth, who are cradles of strength, healers of the dispirited community, creators of authentic designs, transformers of social change, innovators of the workforce, caregivers of those in grief, courage builders for the young, keepers of the sacred power."

My name is Leena Evic. My first and real Inuktitut name is Tatiggaq. Leena is my baptismal name. Our Inuit naming system was customized to our cultural practice, where we were named after a person who passed on at or around the time of our birth. Tatiggaq, my great-

1. In early 2004, Pirurvik opened the Kajjaarvik Bed and Breakfast in Iqaluit.

grandmother, passed on around the time of my birth, and therefore I was to carry on her name. Through that name, I was regarded by her family and descendents with the same level of respect and reverence they had for her—I was also pretty much expected to manifest her maturity and some of her characteristics.

I was born on the land before the settlements were fully established as communities, the way we know them now. My mother, Mary Evic, went into labour while the family was travelling by dog team, and so they made a temporary stop and put up a tent on a little island called Qijuttaliminiq. Inuit around Cumberland Sound used to have their spring and fall camps fairly close to their winter camps, so Qijuttaliminiq was not far from my family's winter camp, which was called Illungajut.

My father, Jaco Evic, was the third child of Evic and Qatsuuq. Evic was one of the brothers of Ishulutak, Keenainak, and Kudlualik. Their father was Turngaq and their mother was Aliguq. Qatsuuq's father was Angmarlik and her mother was Aasivak. Aasivak's parents were Ittuutaaluk and Aulaqiaq. Angmarlik's parents were Nuvujjuaq and Aasui. I have no information about the names of Turngaq and Aliguq's parents.

My mother was a wonderful storyteller, so I am fortunate to have learned much of my family history from her. Her parents were Naulaalik and Aittainnaq. Aittainnaq died while she was a patient at St. Luke's Hospital in Pangnirtung in late 1920s, when my mother was around eight years old. My mother was also a patient there when she lost her mother. She ended up staying with the nurses for the rest of her growing-up years, and was also supported by some relatives who lived full time in Pangnirtung. She left the hospital only when she married my father, when she was around 20 years old. The marriage had been arranged, as was the cultural custom at the time. She went to join my father's family at Illungajut. My mother's mother's

parents were Veevee and Imaqi. Veevee's parents were Aiju and Irralik. I only know Imaqi's mother's name, which was Tauki, but I do not know her father's name.

My name-sake, Tatiggaq, was Naulalik's mother. Naulalik's father was Uujuq. Tatiggaq's parents were Kananna and Ana. I do not know Uujuq's parents' names. Both Aittainnaq and Naulaalik's biological fathers were Scottish, as was Aasivak's father. The only one of all those ancestors still alive when I was born was Qatsuuq. The others I know of through my mother, father, and grandmother, Qatsuuq.

I have five siblings, all of whom were also born on the land—that fact speaks of how young our communities are and how short a time ago it was that we lived nomadically. My early years on the land grounded me in Inuit culture. I was raised with the Inuit traditional teaching and learning cycle, immersed in the sophisticated teachings and skills of my parents and elders. As a girl, I was expected to learn about the woman's role in the family and within the society and then perform it with a great sense of discipline and progress. This tradition was consistent across Inuit families back then.

Both of my parents were my greatest role models. I admired their discipline with regard to their place in the family and their overall integrity. My father was the leader of the two camps I grew up in after Illungajut, and I am indebted to him for his great love for his family and children—like all other men in our traditional culture, he would go out in the cold every day to ensure our survival. He taught my brothers well. We siblings loved our father and were often encouraged to regard him as *ataatakuluk*, meaning "beloved father." He was quiet by nature but very wise, and he was not afraid to gently express his inner feelings if it came down to that. I was very close to him, and he would often confide in me about delicate or personal matters. He practiced *makimaniq*, "well-being",

in all aspects of his life, and he corrected his own actions when they needed correcting. I learned much more about him after his death by reading through his journals, in which he had written throughout his life. He left them to me in his will, and it is my personal goal to publish them for our family so that his teachings will remain with us. I believe that was his wish, too.

My mother is still my greatest teacher, even though she passed on several years ago. Today, when we light the *qulliq*, we do it with respect for our ancestors; every time I light mine I remember her, because the *qulliq* always reminds me of a mother's gentle love. She truly enjoyed our traditional skills and practices and was also a fan of women's topics and issues. She influenced me greatly in that respect. She was also a very outspoken person, which I came short of myself. Sometimes when we camped in the summer we would be alone together for several days in a row, and yet when she told her stories to me she would laugh and tell them with such animation that it was as though she had a huge audience there with us. That was her style.

My mother also influenced my choice of career. When we would cross Cumberland Sound by boat, before we moved permanently into Pangnirtung, she would tell me that there was a whole world out there, out through "that place where there is no land," meaning past the mouth of Cumberland Sound. I would secretly feel inspired and tell myself that I would go there one day. I did go out into the world one day, and I have done so many times since. Another of the most influential role models I have had in my life is my sister Meeka, who is about 16 years my senior. She is beautifully skilled in sewing and designing and is also a very good teacher and counsellor. She is a retired adult educator and is completely unilingual in Inuktitut.

I received six years of public schooling and at age sixteen worked as a teacher's assistant in Pangnirtung.

When I was 18, I left home to attend the teacher education program in Fort Smith. I graduated when I was 20 years old and returned to Pangnirtung to teach elementary school. I found teaching extremely rewarding, and found myself taking on the coordinator's role in Inuktitut curriculum development everywhere I went to teach—it was my passion. I was transferred to Iqaluit in 1979, to a job as an Inuktitut instructor at the new Eastern Arctic Teacher Education Program, the first full-time program in the East.

I began to ponder how I could obtain a status equivalent to that of southern teachers and instructors, both in how I would be treated as a teacher as well as in financial terms. Inuit teachers' status within the profession was in the pioneering phase during those years, and enhancing our careers and credentials was pretty new to us. Coming from a culture with strong determination as one of its main traits, I pursued support from my colleagues to further my education. Good timing and the right people tend to come along when one knocks on the right door: my colleagues Mick Mallon and David Wilman took my inquiries to heart and found me the perfect opportunity to move up the career ladder. After making all the arrangements, I flew to Montreal where I attended McGill University for two years. When I graduated, in the mid 1980s, I was the first Inuk from the Eastern Arctic to have earned a Bachelor of Education degree. As if that was not enough, I decided to return to McGill to work towards my master's degree in educational leadership.

In 1990, after coming back from McGill the second time around, I became Joamie School's first principal. As challenging as it was to start a new school from scratch, I considered it a great opportunity to create an ideal community school, rich in resources and people skills. We had exceptional teachers, parental support, three full-time elders, a *qarmaq* as our cultural classroom, and our

students topped it all. In retrospect it might sound like it was an easy path, but there were hurdles to overcome. At Joamie School, I met one of the most difficult challenges I encountered during my educational career: breaking through barriers that were rooted in policies that originated outside our culture and language, including student discipline policies and permits to allow country food into our own school.[2] One of the most devastating events I saw took place because of such policies. The Joamie School *qarmaq* was torn down by the fire marshal because it did not meet his current fire regulations. We had mostly used the same materials that he recommended as fireproof, so for him to judge them unsafe made me wonder about double standards. At any rate, that decision was a one-way street for us, and it broke 200 hearts at Joamie School.

I left education in 1993 when I joined Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated, first as the president's executive assistant, then later as director of the social, cultural, and educational department. I enjoyed my job immensely for several years, as it led me to many interesting places and encounters as an advocate for Inuit language and culture. Then, after two rewarding years as a director of policy with the Nunavut government's Department of Justice, I decided it was time to plunge into the private sector to start up my long-time dream: a cultural centre that would be a unique, non-government place of learning dedicated to the Inuit language, culture, and well-being. It would deliver innovative programs and services focused on the kinds of skills and knowledge that could help people move into the future.

Like most creative ventures, Pirurvik Centre—from the Inuktitut word meaning "a place of growth"—began with a vision when, in 1993, I sat down to frame a mission

2. The term country food refers to the traditional Inuit diet of wild game and fish.

and draw a picture of what I hoped to build: it would be a place of personal growth and development; be creative, expressive, and inspiring; embody harmony, beauty, and serenity; be expansive in thought and operate at a high level; and maintain a soulful purpose that reflects the best of Inuit people. Over the next several years, I began to refine my vision. The place would be connected to the land, reflect Inuit culture both old and new, and yet be home to programs for Inuit and non-Inuit alike. It would include an on-the-land retreat camp, as well as a larger facility in the community, and would be built on a strong business model that would ensure sustainability and long term viability.

In the winter of 2003, a decade after my original dream, the time was right to begin the process of establishing Pirurvik. The first step was to begin recruiting a team and the second was to find a facility. Since that starting point, the concept of Pirurvik has evolved and matured. We have developed a solid reputation based on the strength of our employees, affiliates, and most importantly, our elder advisors; each of them brings a unique interest and depth of experience. Pirurvik has become a conduit through which this ancient wisdom can flow into contemporary society, as a river flows with its clean water and fresh fish into the sea.

In the last seven years, thousands of people have tapped into Inuit wisdom, healing, and strength through our programs. One of our recent innovations is called Reclaiming the Whole Woman. It is a revolutionary new program built around an essential fact of traditional Inuit life: prosperity, and at times survival itself, depended on women who were skilled in a wide variety of tasks and who were able to sustain themselves and those around them. The program builds on the strengths and resilience of Inuit women in creating a fabric of learning and support that is grounded in Inuit ways of thinking, doing, and

communicating. It will combine training in skills that are essential in today's workplace and traditional topics that are at the heart of the Inuit identity. It is, in essence, about realizing ourselves as whole Inuit women—our personal wellness and health, our work and careers, and our relationships and role in the family. It is about our creativity, dreams, and aspirations, and our rights to our Inuit cultural skills and language. It is about envisioning ourselves as strong Inuit women who can live with the richness of our past, present, and future. It is about being leaders.

Using a single approach, Reclaiming the Whole Woman will reach out to three generations of Inuit women Today's elders, who were born and raised in traditional camps, carry intact the legacy of Inuit knowledge and values from previous generations. Almost all are unilingual Inuktitut speakers who are familiar with the aspects of Inuit culture and language that are disappearing from daily life. These women will play a fundamental role in the program by acting as teachers, healers, and mentors and will be a source of inspiration. The next generation of women are middle-aged and will become elders in the next two decades. Most Inuit of this generation have strong childhood memories of the traditional Inuit lifestyle. As such, they are able to work directly with the elders of today and act as their intermediaries in transferring their knowledge to younger generations. The survival of many aspects of the Inuit way of life depends on the ability of this generation to ensure that they continue to be practiced. Finally, the younger generation of Inuit, who were raised in modern communities and educated in schools, have varying degrees of familiarity with the traditional Inuit way of life. Those who lack strong mentors in their lives often have few opportunities to experience and learn Inuit knowledge, skills, and values. Through the program and

their connections with their elders, these young women will develop their ability to bridge the old and the new.

Another Pirurvik project is *Ingalangaittukuurvik*: Restoring the Inuit Learning Cycle. It is a bold initiative aimed at reconstructing the Inuit learning cycle, which is a model of knowledge acquisition based on observation and mentorship. The Inuit learning cycle was at the heart of the Inuit way of life for centuries. During the twentieth century it was undermined, primarily through the introduction of institution-based education in the Arctic. This disruption has had profound consequences, leaving younger generations insecure in their connections to Inuit language and culture. As a result, some of the most advanced knowledge about Inuit society, our unique ways of thinking and living, and our relationship to the environment are now held only by the oldest members of our communities. As the pace of change in the Arctic accelerates, Inuit are looking for stability and well-being through the knowledge, language, and culture inherited from our ancestors. *Ingalangaittukuurvik* is a permanent multi-year program of higher learning, similar in its standards to a graduate degree. It will be grounded in Inuit ways of thinking, doing, and communicating. One generation of Inuit will be challenged to learn directly from another, and together they will develop a blend of the best of Inuit learning approaches with the strengths of Western scholarship.

Pirurvik also offers cultural orientation programs, which are separated into two different approaches: introductory orientations for visitors or newcomers, and cross cultural explorations that delve more thoroughly into cultural issues and life in Nunavut. They are delivered upon request and are customized for each group. Our other programs and projects include first and second language programs for Inuit students and non-Inuktitut speakers, the *Tusaalanga* online Inuktitut learning tool, terminology development,

and others. We do our own in-house productions and publications to supplement our language programs and have also teamed up with Microsoft to create Inuktitut versions of Windows XP, Windows Vista, and Office 2003 and 2007. Currently, we are working on Windows 7 and Windows Live.

In evaluating my accomplishments as an Inuk female leader, I can say that at the end of the day it is not about me. I am part of a process—it is my teachers and advisors from all walks of life who help me make informed decisions that work for the good of the bigger whole. I like to see the future in vibrant color, and I constantly look toward it even while fully living in the present moment. I might be the one creating the vision, but it is the people coming into it who complete the puzzle. I am passionate about my culture and language, and I stand on the truth and belief that as Inuit, we have an inherent right to express, learn, and pass on our traditional knowledge, medicine, and best practices.

In many cases, the true essence of our Inuit knowledge lies in the land, not inside four walls. When I am on the land, walking on the path that my ancestors walked so many years ago, I am overwhelmed by their level of knowledge and determination to survive and remain intact as their own society. I see the signs of their passage on the land, and they remind me of that determination. The feeling of the solid ground under my feet as I walk the tundra reminds me of how solid our ancestral knowledge is—it is all there, waiting, patiently enduring history.

I will always and forever be a student of Inuktitut language and cultural teachings. I find it so rewarding and holistic to receive these teachings from our elders at Pirurvik or when I am working with them on projects like Reclaiming the Whole Woman or *Ingalangaittukuurvik*. One of our future program goals is to create a program for men similar to the one we have for women, because our culture

can only be whole and rich when both the man and the woman are working together in all aspects of life. That is the balance we once had and depended on for survival, and there are many important reasons for us to reclaim it today. Leadership might be a topic to discuss and study, but in practice it becomes a way of life. Each of us practises it in a singular way, one that is attached to our unique personalities and personal development.

I would like to close with some beautiful prose that a colleague of mine contributed to one of my presentations at an international conference not long ago:

> "Inuit have always journeyed through the months of darkness and cold, not with fear but with skill and hope and wisdom. We are aware of the subtle signs that tell us to be confident—that the sun is returning, the days are lengthening, the frozen rivers are moving under the weight of ice and will, one day, flow freely. We know that there will be glorious days of sun, of travel to our favourite camping sites, of flowers on the tundra and abundant food from the land and sea. Our land tells us to be patient, to be strong in spirit, and to always believe that the sun will return. It is my dream that Inuit wisdom will once again flow out from beneath the ice and into our young people, strengthening them, allowing them to travel through the dark and the cold and emerge into the summer of their life."

Nakurmiik.

Nakurmiik, people of Nunavut! A grateful and emotional Ann Meekitjuk Hanson says thank you for her appointment to the post of Commissioner of Nunavut on April 21, 2005.

Credit: Office of the Commissioner of Nunavut

Inuit Women Are Natural Leaders

Ann Meekitjuk Hanson

> *"I have one particular piece of advice for young leaders today: the most important thing is to be caring. When you are a leader, you must care for the environment and care for all human beings. That was the number one lesson my generation learned from our people when we were growing up."*

I was born in 1946, in what my great aunts called the last days of the real Inuit way of life. It was the time just before Inuit started to move into bigger communities. My grandmother, Quvianatukuluk, delivered me in a tent on a tiny little island called Qakutuut, just outside Kimmirut.[1] It was not a permanent camp; it was where my father used to go hunting for beluga whales. Even if my arrival interrupted my father's whaling that time, my mother must have been delighted to have a beautiful little girl.

I have good memories of my earliest years. I also have some bad memories. In 1949, when I was only three years old, my father died. That was one of the first dark periods of my life. Without a husband, my mother, who was called Uqsiut, or Josie, could not provide for my brother and me, so she had to remarry right away. It was the only way we could survive the winter. A man from the Cape Dorset

1. Kimmirut was known as Lake Harbour by non-Inuit until its name was officially changed in 1996.

area came to pick her up and bring us home with him. That man was Paulassie Pootoogook, who later became one of the best-known sculptors from his region. We had lived with him for about a year when another personal tragedy struck.

I don't remember the event, but my stepfather Paulassie described it like this: we were living on the land, as we always had done, when a small plane flew in to our camp, landed on the sea ice, and told the family that my mother had to go away with them. She would have to get on this plane and leave with these people that we had never seen for a destination we didn't know. It was 1950 or '51. The people who came to take her had no interpreters, and nobody in our camp spoke any English. My mother got on that plane and she never came back. It was the last time I saw her. I learned many years later that she was taken to Hamilton, Ontario, to the tuberculosis sanatorium there.[2]

After that, I was brought up by many different families. It was like having foster parents, but the Inuit way: anybody who had enough food and space took me in, most often aunts and uncles. When I was about five years old I moved to Kimmirut. My uncle Anugaq, my mother's brother, was taking care of me at the time, and he moved in to the community to take a job working with the nurse. He would travel with her for many days at a time, taking her around to the outpost camps to check on people's health. They would travel by dog team in the winter and by freighter canoe in the summer.

We lived right in the community of Kimmirut, where there were about three families living. James Akavak and his family lived there, and there was a Hudson's Bay

2. The Hamilton institution that specialized in treating tuberculosis patients was called Mountain Sanatorium. Hundreds of Inuit were taken there for treatments; many of them never made it back home. The sanatorium is now known as the Chedoke Hospital of Hamilton Health Sciences.

Company post, as well as an Anglican church and a nurse. There weren't many people there for most of the year, but in December everybody would come in from the camps to celebrate Christmas at the church.

People also came in to the community in the summertime to be examined on board the supply and hospital ship, the *CD Howe*.[3] It was called *Matavik* in Inuktitut, which means "the place where you strip". We had to take our clothes off for the medical exams that took place on the ship so that the doctors and nurses could check over our whole bodies, including our teeth. For us kids, it was exciting to go on board and see the *Qallunaat*. They washed and we didn't, so they smelled good to us. Back in those days, in the early 1950s, the only time we washed was for the doctors. For them, we would wash our hair, torso, hands, and faces.

In the adults, on the other hand, the *CD Howe* inspired fear. Pure fear. If you had tuberculosis or any other sickness, they would keep you aboard and take you away. You hardly had time to say goodbye to your family, if they happened to be on board with you, and you didn't know where you were being taken. On top of that, you would have to sail around the Arctic for about three months, until the ship finished doing its rounds of the communities and left for the South. That ship is still talked about by the elders today.

I later asked Paulassie if my mother had had a medical check-up prior to being taken away on the plane, and he said that no nurses or doctors had ever examined her. The plane just came in and picked up her and eleven more Inuit from other outpost camps along the coast. None

3. Commissioned by the Canadian government to conduct its Eastern Arctic patrols, the *CCGS CD Howe* also served as a hospital ship from 1951 to 1969. The *CD Howe* effectively filled the gap left by the Hudson's Bay Company's cargo ship, *RMS Nascopie*, which sunk at Cape Dorset in 1947.

of the twelve ever came back. My uncle Anugaq used to receive a letter from her about once a year, whenever the *CD Howe* came back to the North in the summer. People returning from the sanatorium in Hamilton would carry her letters to him. One summer day in 1958, I was informed by a relative that my mother had died earlier that year, in the winter. I later learned that she had died in February and was buried in March of 1958. Over the years I have thought about how lonely she must have been, as I had been as well.

In the spring of 1990, I was reading a quarterly magazine published by Inuit Tapirisat of Canada[4] when I came across an article about Inuit who had died at the sanatorium in Hamilton. There, on a list, was my mother's name and her identity number, which I had long ago memorized: "Josie E7-118."[5] I had been wondering since 1958 where my mother was buried, and now I had the name and address of the cemetery. That same week, my husband Bob and some of our daughters and I made our way to Hamilton, Ontario, where we found the cemetery and finally mourned my mother.

After a short memorial service, which was attended by my family and the cemetery workers, I mentioned that it would be nice to have a bigger service for all the Inuit who had died and were buried there. There were so many people who died alone there, far away from their families in the many different communities up North. A few months later, after I had returned home to Iqaluit, I received a phone call from Mr. Chester Orzel, a retired cemetery

4. Now named Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami.
5. In the 1940s, "E- numbers" were created by the federal government to facilitate their administration of the North. Customarily, Inuit did not use surnames, and so the numbers were intended to indentify Inuit as they began to enter the educational, medical, and government benefits system. The "E" was reserved for Inuit inhabiting the Eastern Arctic and the "W" for those in the West.

manager from Hamilton. He told me that the hospital wanted to organize a memorial service for all the Inuit who were buried there, and he asked me if I would help them. I agreed and organized a group trip from Nunavut, while the Hamilton people organized all the logistics in Ontario.

There were about thirty-five or forty of us who travelled down to attend that memorial service. The city of Hamilton was very generous with our group, and even the mayor came to the memorial service. The Anglican minister Rev. Brian Burrows and his wife Rita were there to pray with us and comfort us—the Burrows had lived in the North for many years and were fully bilingual. The airlines First Air and Canadian North offered seats at half price to all of us who were travelling to the memorial from the North, which enabled people from all communities to go.

My passion for my own language and culture had developed earlier, as circumstances began to carry me away from my roots. In the mid-1950s, I moved from Kimmirut to Frobisher Bay.[6] My uncle's wife had been diagnosed with tuberculosis on that dreaded *CD Howe* ship and had been sent south. My uncle wanted to move to Frobisher Bay so that he would be able to correspond with her more frequently; there were airplanes flying in and out at least once or twice a month, which meant their letters would reach each other more quickly. So in 1957, we went by boat from Kimmirut to Frobisher Bay, a trip that took us over two weeks. My uncle got a job as a janitor at the American base, and we never went back to Kimmirut.

I started school after that move, when I was 12 years old. I went to class in Apex, which was the very first school in all of the Eastern Arctic.[7] It was exciting to be learning English and learning to read and write. I couldn't wait for the next day to come so I could go back and learn more.

6. Frobisher Bay was officially renamed Iqaluit in 1987.
7. Apex School was built in 1955.

We had to walk to Apex from Frobisher Bay, which was a distance of about 6 km. We didn't have a lunch break because there wasn't enough time to walk home and back at lunch hour. In the winter we had to be sure to walk in groups because there were wolves around! All the other Frobisher Bay kids had learned a bit of English because they had been attending school for a year or two already, but we Kimmirut kids had no English at all. The Frobisher Bay kids would translate for us and for the teacher, but they would tease us at the same time for not knowing anything. We didn't like that, so we really learned English fast!

In 1958 one of my aunts married a *Qallunaaq*, which was very rare at the time. It was hard going for her, because other Inuit didn't much like the idea of intermarriage then. Her husband worked for the department of transport, and when he was transferred to Baker Lake in 1961, my aunt asked me to go with her.[8] She had some health problems and hoped that I would go there with her to help look after her two kids. I moved to Baker Lake with them and attended grade 5 at the school there. My aunt's illness became worse, and on several occasions she had to travel to Churchill and Winnipeg, Manitoba, for medical care. One time, as she was preparing to go to the hospital in Winnipeg, she asked me to take her children to their father's parents, who lived in Toronto. We all left Baker Lake on the same plane, and as we were leaving my aunt told me, "This time I won't be back." I told her that was nonsense, and we parted ways in Winnipeg so I could go on by plane to take her kids to Toronto. It was a long trip, and when we got to Toronto I learned that she had died in the Winnipeg hospital. It was terrible news for all of us. And there I was, 15 years old, stranded at my aunt's in-laws' house in Toronto.

8. Ewan Cotterill has been the area administrator for Coppermine and later became assistant deputy minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development.

Mr and Mrs Cotterill, the grandparents of my aunt's kids, must have wondered what to do with me. They talked about it and decided to offer me the choice of staying on with them or going back to Frobisher Bay. They told me they thought I was bright and would have better chances to succeed in Toronto than in the North. I chose to stay with them and went to Don Mills Junior High School, then to Earl Haig High School and Shaw's business school.

In 1964 I returned to the North. In Toronto I had been speaking English, making *Qallunaat* bread, and living like a southern Canadian. My Inuktitut had gotten very rusty. When I got home people laughed at me for speaking funny Inuktitut, for sounding like a *Qallunaaq*. I tried to laugh it off, but it really hurt my feelings. Luckily, I had grown up living on the land in the traditional way, so it was easy for me to re-learn what I'd almost lost while living away.

In those days there were very few bilingual Inuit. My services as an interpreter were very much in demand, both by the government and by my people. Ralph Ritcey, a government administrator in Ottawa, got me a job with the federal government right away.[9] By then I was a fully trained stenographer who knew shorthand, typing, filing, and all that sort of thing. There were very few Inuit who were able to do that at the time. Soon after, Mr Bryan Pearson told me I was being given a new job as secretary for Gene Rheaume, the Northwest Territories' Member of Parliament.[10,11] Nobody even bothered to ask me if I wanted the job or not!

9. Ralph Ritcey was a federal civil servant who played a major role in the establishment of the Churchill Vocational School in Churchill, Manitoba. He became a Member of the Order of Canada in 2001.
10. Bryan Pearson was elected as the Eastern Arctic's Member of the Legislature Assembly of the Northwest Territories in 1970 and served a second term as MLA for 1975's newly formed riding, Baffin South.
11. Eugene "Gene" Rheaume was the Northwest Territories' Member of Parliament (Progressive Conservative Party) from 1963 to 1965.

In Mr Rheaume's office, I did everything: typing, translating, and interpreting. It was a very exciting time. We travelled all over the territory by plane during his next election campaign, and I got to meet Inuit from all over the Arctic. Mr Rheaume wasn't re-elected in the 1965 federal election, so I was out of a job and had to find my own way back to Frobisher Bay from Yellowknife, where I had been working with him. I had to hitch a ride with a military plane that was going back to Ottawa, and the trip took three days.

I got another job right away with the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation in Frobisher Bay as a stenographer and receptionist. One day, when all the radio announcers were out of the office, an RCMP officer came in and asked the manager to broadcast an urgent message. The manager said, "Ann, get into the studio and read this in English and in the Eskimo language." I read the announcement, which was an order for all people to tie up their dogs, and that was the beginning of my broadcasting career.

When I was still quite young, I acted in a movie. James Houston, the author of the novel *The White Dawn*, came to my house to ask if I would play a role in the film they were adapting from the book. I originally declined, because I had just had my fourth child and was busy looking after her. But Mr Houston and the film's director visited me several times to try and persuade me. I finally agreed, and we did the filming over a period of three months. That was my one and only acting experience.

It was really through the media that I was able to pursue my passion for the Inuit language, culture, and history. I discovered that the media is effective for reaching out to people. Whether you use television, radio, or print, you can reach them in such an immediate way; you get people's attention. That is why I made several Inuktitut documentaries for the Inuit Broadcasting Corporation that treated controversial issues.

The first video I co-wrote and directed myself was about young people wanting to commit suicide. I did other ones about alcohol abuse and spousal assault. I made the video about suicide because it was the first time that we were seeing young people wanting to kill themselves. We thought it was a very odd and very scary trend. Elders were telling us that historically, only the very elderly would ask their family members if they could commit suicide. It was unheard of for young people to do it.

When Inuit lived on the land, we lived in small groups consisting of about three to five families. That size of a group is easy to look after. Social order is easier to maintain, so there are fewer social problems. But when we moved into bigger communities and began living with so many other people, it caused a lot of confusion. I saw once-powerful hunters and leaders becoming poor. They were now in a wage-economy, where you work for an employer and get paid for it; hunting and gathering on the land were no longer valued as full-time work.

When we lived on the land, we always had one leader who pretty much looked after everybody. When we moved in to Frobisher Bay and other communities, we no longer knew who our leaders were. There were Hudson's Bay Company managers, RCMP officers, the clergy,and government agents. We weren't used to having so many leaders in one place. On top of that, they were all *Qallunaat*. The absence of Inuit leadership caused a lot of social problems. Suddenly, there was more gossiping, cheating, stealing, adultery, alcohol, and that sort of thing.

In the late sixties and early seventies, some community groups formed to deal with these things. We bilingual people were quite young at the time, but we knew we had to listen to our elders when they said, "Look, we need to do something about these social problems." The process was helped along by some well-intentioned *Qallunaat*, who wanted to pass on their knowledge about community

development. Maybe they sensed that we didn't yet know how to live in large communities.

That was when we started to talk about spousal assault. It wasn't a new subject, but it was one that had never been discussed in the open. My view is that when we are living together in a community, we can't just ignore what is happening behind closed doors—not if it is a safety issue. When I was a girl in Kimmirut, there was a man who regularly beat up his wife. People would whisper and gossip about him behind his back, but nobody helped that poor woman who was being beaten by her husband. One time we saw the man literally drag his wife along the ground by her braids. It was horrifying—it was like some kind of caveman violence.

It was very scary in those days, because women didn't have safe places to run to for help. As an adult, I decided I didn't want women to have to put up with this. My husband has never hit me, and I didn't want to see anybody else get hit either. I didn't want this to stay hidden. Up until then, people had been too embarrassed or scared to talk about domestic violence, but after our video was broadcast some groups started talking about creating women's shelters.

It was important to me to bring up delicate subjects like that, to get them out into the open and see how I could help my people. I have always been interested in helping and learning from others, and I have always been involved in my community, region, and country. Maybe that is because I come from a long line of leaders, from way back before there were *Qallunaat*. It is natural for Inuit women to lead. When we were living on the land, the men hunted and fed everybody while the women looked after the social order in the camp. Women took care of all aspects of daily life and living on the land together.

In the early 1970s I went to Antigonish, Nova Scotia, to be trained in community development at St. Francis

Xavier University. That helped me a lot in my work. Being bilingual and comfortable with both languages also helped me in my leadership. I am not prejudiced; I have never been racist and I can see both sides of an issue.

When I was a broadcaster at the CBC radio station in Iqaluit, I received a phone call from a listener who criticized me for promoting traditional Inuit culture. That came about because I had aired some throat singing that I had recorded. When I was a girl it was common, but by the 1970s Inuit women weren't throat singing anymore. One day, I borrowed a good tape recorder from work and told two of my aunts, "Let's throat sing. We haven't done it in such a long time." There was a lot of laughter that day! I recorded them and took the tape back to the studio and played it on the air. That one listener called in and told me, "How dare you play that; we don't do that anymore! Don't ever play that again!" I chose to continue playing the songs on the air, and now traditional throat singing is widely accepted and is even in great demand. If I had caved in and stopped broadcasting the songs, that part of our culture might very well have been wiped out.

Although they were controversial, I never received any negative feedback about the videos I made. I've received nothing but support, both from family and from mentors. I am always willing to learn any way I can: from my own age group, from young people, and from my elders. I especially appreciate it when elders help me with our language. They tell me how to pronounce words properly, and they teach me expressions that can really paint a clear picture if you say them right. I don't take their comments as insults. Their remarks teach me and help me to do my job better. Not too long ago, one of my aunts came to me and said, "I hear you talking on the radio, but sometimes you say this word wrong." She corrected me very wisely. I do the same thing with the younger generation of broadcasters,

so they can keep the correct usage of the language alive. They are very open to it.

It was a great honour to accept an appointment as Commissioner of Nunavut in 2005. I served for five years, until April 2010. I had been the deputy commissioner of the Northwest Territories in the late eighties and early nineties, which was a good preparation for my role. There were a lot of challenges to being Commissioner. You don't ever really get a break, everything happens in a rush, and even when on holiday you have to take calls, keep up with correspondence, and sign documents. On top of all that, I had a terrible fear of flying, and of course as Commissioner, I had to fly to every community. Part way through my mandate, the fear became intolerable and I decided to seek treatment for it. Homeopathic therapy helped me to overcome my phobia.

When I was Commissioner I was often asked what kind of vision I held for the future of Nunavut. When I look ahead, I see a territory populated by people much more educated than they were in my time. Today's young Nunavummiut are the third generation of people to receive formal education. When I was a young child, there were no schools in Nunavut. I started school when I was 12 years old and stopped at age 18, when I finished grade 8. My daughters are more academically educated than I am, and some of them have university degrees. The youngest is a teacher in one of our schools. The children of my generation were punished if we spoke our own language in class, but today our youth are taught in multiple languages: Inuktitut, English, and French!

I also see a future where we are working with *Qallunaat* who are willing to learn the Inuit ways, who are willing to understand our history and try our food. In the past, many of the *Qallunaat* in the North would not tolerate how Inuit lived. They were not sympathetic to the needs of Inuit, or they simply didn't try to understand them. Rather, they

thought we should change ourselves to become more like *Qallunaat*. A few of them were good and helpful people, but most of them came to Nunavut to make money. That was a great challenge for us Inuit. Now, much of that has changed. Our leaders of today and tomorrow will have a much easier time with other leaders from all over Canada and the world. Tolerance is a great thing.

I have one particular piece of advice for young leaders today: the most important thing is to be caring. When you are a leader, you must care for the environment and care for all human beings. Don't be selfish. Don't seek leadership to make a name for yourself or to build up your resumé. Do it because you care. That was the number one lesson my generation learned from our people when we were growing up.

Rhoda Innuksuk speaking at a Winnipeg rally in support of public services for aboriginal peoples. September 19, 2008.

Credit: Public Service Alliance of Canada

Every Child Needs a Safe Home

Rhoda Innuksuk

"Some people have the knowledge and discipline to be good leaders; you can tell that they are solid people by the way they carry themselves and the way they care for the things around them."

My mother delivered me by herself in a tent, on an island. My parents came from Baffin Island originally, back in the time before families had settled in communities. My father used to go walrus hunting near Igloolik, and our whole family would spend their summers on a little island called Qatsuk—and that is where I was born. My mother just woke up one day, in labour. She didn't have time to tell anyone, so she just positioned herself to give birth. She was prepared—she knew I would be arriving any day—but she didn't think she was going to have to deliver me by herself! I was one of several daughters, and she called me *panik*.[1]

At that time, these were not just outpost camps that were satellites of settled communities—Qatsuk was a hunting camp, one of the places we travelled to according to the season. Following game migration patterns, Inuit travelled all over their land to get the food they needed to survive for the winter. I remember moving around to different camps, with dog teams and all. We were total Inuit—total Eskimos. We Inuit were the original occupants

1. *Panik*: daughter.

of this land, and moving around was our way of life. Inuit were wealthy people, because they knew the land and they knew the animals. We were very different from what we turned out to be a short time later.

About 50 years ago, Inuit children began to be required to go to school. A federal school was built in Igloolik in the early 1960s, where there was already a Roman Catholic church, a Hudson's Bay Company post, and a small government building.[2] The building they put up was huge, and it is now the hamlet office. Only the children were brought into the community for school, and I remember very well the winter when my brother Jonatak brought me in to Igloolik and left me there. I didn't realize at the time that he was only 14 years old when he brought me in, because he was already a very capable young man. In the old days, children were educated in survival techniques as soon as they learned to walk. All that they needed to know was taught to them as they developed, and at a young age they would already be helping their mothers and fathers and helping out around the camp.

I had relatives and friends in Igloolik, and I knew the other children who had been brought in to school from small camps nearby. There was a boys' hostel and a girls' hostel, side by side, for all the kids who were brought in. The school was unilingual English, so we learned the language quickly. If you displace any child, he or she ends up speaking whatever language they are exposed to.

Later on, I went to the federal school in Churchill, Manitoba.[3] Hundreds and hundreds of Inuit went there. It is where we really discovered that different regions,

2. The first federal school was built in Igloolik in 1960. Father Hervé Bazin, a Roman Catholic Oblate missionary, arrived in the area in 1931, at Abvajar Island. He moved to Igloolik in 1937, when a new church was built. The first Hudson's Bay Company trading post was established there in 1939.
3. The Churchill Vocational Centre.

communities, and dialects existed in the North. Even though Inuktitut speaking wasn't popular there, we still got to hear the different dialects that Inuit spoke. Many of us came from pretty strict families, and so school was not a big adjustment—the rules there were made for safety and security. We had to get along, even though we were all from different backgrounds. Some children came from well-to-do and safe homes, and others didn't come from such great families or were orphans. The school was very good about including everyone equally.

We studied everything from English to math, home economics, and first aid. They taught us basic life skills, and that gave us time to think about what we might want to do with our lives. It helped to prepare us for the changes coming to the North. That was important because it was difficult for our parents to foresee a future without Inuit guiding us; they didn't know where we were heading. After a while, it was hard for our parents to guide us at all, because we had become a different breed. We were like a different tribe altogether, speaking a different language and thinking differently.

Some time later, I went to Algonquin College in Ottawa. I was an observer at the founding meeting of Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, which took place at Carleton University in 1971.[4] I went with Nick Arnatsiaq, who was working at the federal government's department of northern affairs.[5]

4. Inuit Tapirisat Canada was officially founded at Carleton University in Ottawa in 1971 following two significant meetings in Coppermine (1970) and Toronto (1971) that were sponsored by the former Indian Eskimo Association. A group of young Inuit leaders saw the importance of unifying Inuit groups scattered across the Canadian Arctic in order to assert their rights to their land and culture within the Canadian federation. ITC changed its name to Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami in 2001.
5. The federal department was then called Northern Affairs and National Resources. The Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development was created in 1966.

Although I was just a student, I took a week off to attend the meetings and observe all the Eskimos who came in for the occasion. That was the year that we decided we wanted to be known as "Inuit"—people arrived in Ottawa that week as Eskimos and left as Inuit.

Back when the Greenlander Knud Rasmussen visited my family's area to study the culture, he found our people to be very intellectual. [6] That would have been my grandmother's side of the family, and there were always a lot of open discussions in my family because of my grandfather. It would be very interesting to research more thoroughly where we came from and who we are. Although Igloolik is one of the communities whose history is well documented, that history has only been scratched on the surface here and there. I am glad that some of it has been documented, though. Inuit children growing up in the South will be able to find out about their ancestors who lived up there. That's what makes us Inuit: we are from the Arctic. When you live in southern Canada, you get to meet all kinds of non-Inuit who have lived in the North. Some of them are very interesting to me, because they were up there way before my time. It is interesting to hear from their perspective about the lifestyle and living conditions back then. Not all of them learned enough Inuktitut to get by, but some did. Some RCMP, government people, and traders picked up the language.

The Inuit were hit hard by the way the federal government dealt with Arctic sovereignty and by the way they brought an end to Inuit authority over their own land. The government began tagging and registering the Inuit at first, with the E-numbers, then they implemented hunting

6. Knud Rasmussen was a Greenlandic anthropologist and explorer who crossed the Arctic by dog team from 1921 to 1924. Rasmussen's report on his voyage to Igloolik is entitled *The Intellectual Culture of the Iglulik Eskimos: Report of the Fifth Thule Expedition*, 1921-24. Vol. 7, Copenhagen, Denmark

quotas.[7] Some of these rules didn't work well for the Inuit. Decisions were made by people who had never been to the Arctic, who had no idea of how many polar bears there really were to be hunted or what kind of problems the Inuit might encounter at the local level. An example of this kind of problem today is the Canadian Firearms Registry, which causes real problems for hunters. Following the registry's rules for using guns and purchasing ammunition is complicated for people in the North. A law about hunting or guns that is created in New York, San Francisco, or Ottawa is not suitable for northern people living their traditional way of life in their small communities.

Many things about our culture are unique. We have no girl-only or boy-only names; we have names that apply to everyone, simply because we're all human beings. In Inuit culture both boys and girls have the freedom of expression; they share a duty to watch out for one another and take guidance from elders or parents, and then as they learn, they help the younger ones learn how to handle things. Traditionally, we had a whole support system in place, and life was wonderful. There were also very rigid rules that were meant to ensure courtesy for others. Children, for example, were taught not to ask a lot of questions in front of someone, so as not to embarrass or make them uncomfortable in any way.

My own political career as a woman had a lot to do with my upbringing. We had to watch out for one another

7. E-numbers were part of an identification system used by the federal government from the 1940s to 1970. The system's goal was to clearly identify Inuit, in addition to their customary single given names, in the administration of government services. Every Inuk was required to have at hand his or her fiber disk upon which was engraved a series of identification numbers. Inuit from the Eastern Arctic had an "E" number and Inuvialuit from the western Arctic had a "W" number. In 1970, the Northwest Territories government launched the Surname Project, driven by the late Abraham Okpik, which replaced the numbers with a surname.

and be supportive of those around us. We learned to be observant in order to know what their needs were. My grandfather, when we used to have visitors, would say, "Go and see what they need." He laughed at me one time because I stuck my head in the visitors' tent for a few seconds, took a look around, and went back to my grandfather saying, "They need everything!" Of course what he really meant was, "Do they have enough food to eat?"

My grandfather was a leader, but I don't remember ever wanting to be one myself when I was young. Organizing a traditional family is a big responsibility: you have to know all your equipment, and you have to keep the men in shape. In our family we all had to take part in that to some degree, although there were solid people around who could take charge of things. It was all a matter of acquiring knowledge and passing it on when you had your own children.

It wasn't important back then whether a decision maker was a man or a woman. It was a matter of survival, a matter of who had the wisdom and knowledge to guide the group. Being a woman was never an issue in my family. Or if it ever was, it had to do with who was the best seamstress! The only differences between a man and a woman had to do with the roles they played: men were more interested in how to hunt and carry the meat, and women were more interested in how to carry a baby. The roles were clear and kept everything organized. I am not a feminist. I believe in the old law: it doesn't matter whether you are a man or a woman. With children, it doesn't matter whether they are boys or girls; they all need someone to care for them and guide them. In the Inuktitut language, things don't have a gender. There is just not the same split between the sexes as in other cultures. My family and I might live far away from the North now, but we have kept alive all these values.

Anybody, man or woman, can make a contribution to society through politics. It depends on what you are made of. I never wanted to be a big shot, and being a leader was the least of my struggles. I knew from the old stories that the best way to co-exist with all other human beings is just to make sure that there is peace and order in your surroundings. To have that kind of peace and order takes quite a bit of work. Nevertheless, there were things I wanted to change in our communities and that I still want to see changed. I wanted to make changes that would allow the communities to have more control in meeting their own needs. From the time when the governments and the RCMP began to impose their authority over the North and right up to now, Inuit have not been treated with respect. Their culture is not taken into consideration; they are dealt with as though they were people in the South, living in big cities.

These authorities go into small communities and do exactly what they do in large cities elsewhere, even if the culture and language are very different. For example, I cannot believe that an RCMP officer can go into an Inuit home, if there is a domestic problem, and give a restraining order to a man, even though they can't provide a place elsewhere to put him. They are exercising their authority without having the infrastructure to provide for the consequences. That is outrageous and totally unacceptable, and yet that is what is happening in the North. If the government wants to do things the way they do in southern Canada, then they must put suitable facilities in place. We really need to work together to improve these things. I never stopped dreaming that Inuit would be able to stand up to protect and promote their culture instead of surrendering.

I used to sit beside my grandfather when he had to lecture someone or deal with issues. To me it seemed long, as if we were sitting for hours and hours, and if I played

with my fingernails he would tell me to stop fidgeting. I had to sit up properly and pay attention. I heard a lot during these discussions; I learned about respect for wildlife, and I learned to never be cruel to animals or orphans or handicapped people. I learned about the importance of peace and order and never bragging and never trying to sound like you are better than the next person. These were the values held by my family. As a politician involved with the public, one should never forget the essential values. It doesn't help society much when a leader enjoys his power more than he enjoys having a positive impact on the people he represents. Wanting to be a big shot and getting caught up with power struggles is not what real leadership is about: it is about doing what you must do.

Some people have the knowledge and discipline to be good leaders; you can tell that they are solid people by the way they carry themselves and the way they care for the things around them. It is also a matter of tradition, of having enough knowledge of your own background and your own history to be able to tell what is important in your society. One thing is certain: no one will ever stumble morally if they are helping another person. The trick to being who you are and the way you are is to not care about what people think of you. If I am not doing something horrible, I never worry about what people will think of me. If you have a mission, don't let others bring you down.

In our family, we were not programmed to get rich; we were programmed to help the less fortunate. I understood early on that there were unresolved issues in life. When I realized that orphans were not able to receive the same kind of upbringing as I was, it gave me the desire to speak for them and all those who don't know any better or who are afraid to speak. That is not a path to get rich! When society itself gets too big, you retain and practise these values in your family. I transmit these values to my children, even here in Ottawa. They still have to behave

a certain way, the way we were taught by our ancestors. I have very well-behaved children; they are respectful of elders and of people in authority. If elders need their chairs pulled out or help getting served, my children are very good with that. All those things come from the way we were taught as children.

That is our job today: to protect and promote the Inuit culture and language. It is time to roll up our sleeves and guide our children and support them. We have to find ways to pass on to our children the knowledge that all Inuit must retain; simply relying on government services is a fast way to lose all our culture and language. Inuit have to have pride and control and say, "Okay, enough is enough. Inuit lived peacefully before, and we need that ability again now." We still need our children to know about their environment and survival. We need this to happen at a community level, more than at any other time, even more than when we were first going through the changes. This second or third generation of Inuit is suffering the consequences of what we had to go through. We need to think of how we can restore things and find ways to ensure that we don't lose all this knowledge that was there just a few years ago.

As a politician, you have to be extremely careful as to how you deal with the public. You are in a position where people think you are a big shot, yet it is still important to give them your time, to listen to them. People would want to tell me what they had been doing and what had happened to them, and I often felt bad for having to rush off on them. It was hard to not be able to give them enough time to listen and respond positively, the way we were taught. Because of my upbringing, in my public life I never wanted to be in the spotlight. I don't like getting all the recognition for making something happen. Throughout my political career, whenever something good was accomplished, I would put somebody else out in front.

In doing so, the spotlight was not on me, but on the people who were directly involved.

My main concern for the future generations of Inuit is that it seems next to impossible to pass on all this knowledge. Many children today are not well guided or supported because their parents either no longer have that knowledge or, if they do, they are in too much pain to pass it on. Many residential school survivors are still living with the pain caused by their experiences. My generation changed the culture—as part of a bigger change—but unfortunately it was not always for the better. Going away to school meant that those of us who knew the Eskimo way of life would no longer be able to pass on traditional knowledge to our children. Instead, our children now think that Inuit life has always been centered in little communities that have nothing except a Northern store, a Co-op store, and maybe a hotel that is not even meant for the local people. Maybe it is time that we turn back to the children and give them the kind of life that they need to have peace and order within themselves. They need to have a safe home and be cared for. If we don't achieve that, the future will be very bleak.

We need to organize ourselves and ask, "How much of our culture do we want to preserve?" With the death of my mother, I now have many nieces who will never learn how to prepare seal skins and caribou skins and make the clothing that my mother was so capable of making. That shouldn't be the end of it! My mother left all kinds of sewing patterns, and they are all waiting for someone to use them, to practise what she left behind for all of us.

At the same time, it is far better to go to school and study than to sit at home in your bedroom. With education, the sky is the limit! It hurts me to see teenagers and kids just sitting around listening to music that is not even relevant to their lives. They don't seem to have anywhere to go or anything to do. These children no

longer have life skills, like making a tent or hunting. We should be re-introducing these things to them; we should be spending time with them, passing on that knowledge. Just because we are not like our parents or grandparents doesn't mean that children are now ready to be without the guidance of elders.

If I could have things my way, I would preserve the good that I learned from my own culture, scrap the negative stuff, and find the balance that is required in order to have a reasonably healthy family. You have to have that balance there somewhere. Here in Ottawa, for example, I am in my normal southern environment with a garden growing and a lawn, but the things that my grandfather taught me live on with me.[8] I treasure the things I heard and understood as a young person. I carry those values within me because they are like universal laws: physical survival, how to be kind to one another, how to teach people to be independent, and how to share things.

8. Rhoda Innuksuk resided in Ottawa most of her adult life.

Nancy Karetak-Lindell picking berries on the tundra with granddaughter Addy-Belle Akpaliapik Lindell

Credit: Nancy Karetak-Lindell

Instilling Hope

Nancy Karetak-Lindell

If you look at any community in Nunavut, the volunteers are usually women—at the church and on the health, education, and special events committees. They are working side by side, like the chapters in this book, to create a solid base in their families and in their communities.

I was born and raised in Arviat when it was still called Eskimo Point. When I was growing up, people who were still living out on the land were just starting to move into the community—my father used a dog team to do his patrols with the RCMP! At the age of 14, I went away to Yellowknife for high school, which was a big step—in those days, there weren't even regularly scheduled flights from Arviat to Yellowknife.

Residential school was a life changing experience, though not as harsh for me as it was for some others. It was hard to be away from my family for ten months out of the year, and I missed out on a lot of parental guidance, but that was what we had to do back then. I am the fourth child out of ten; there were 20 years between the oldest and the youngest siblings. My father taught us that it was important to work hard at being a family, and because many of us were not at home growing up at the same time, we all had to make an effort to get to know each other as adults.

I went to Ottawa for grades 11, 12, and 13 because my uncle, Tagak Curley, had just become president of Inuit Tapirisat Canada and had invited me to live with his family and go to school there.[1] A year later, he moved back up North and I boarded with a family. After graduating I began to study political science at Trent University, but by then I had been away from home for seven years and just couldn't do it anymore. I returned to Arviat, where I worked as a clerk-secretary and volunteered in the community. My volunteerism there started me on the path to leadership, and it was a privilege to be elected as a Member of Parliament for Nunavut in 1997, just before it became a new territory.

If you look at any community in Nunavut, the volunteers are usually women—at the church and on the health and education, and special events committees. They are working side by side, like the chapters in this book, to create a solid base in their families and in their communities. They know that a strong foundation gives other people the resources to improve their lives. I am one of those women—for me, my work was never about myself; it was about the people I served and how I could help them get ahead in life. Sometimes that was just a matter of encouraging them to finish school or to think of their family first and be a good parent.

I see women's leadership as simply an extension of what they do in their own homes, with their own families. I think that the nurturing and organizational skills that women are familiar with from the home enable them to take that next step and use that same drive to help their community as leaders. You might say they have the special quality of worrying about their country or riding or organization the same way they worry about their children! The mother seems to be a unique force in the home: when

1. Tagak Curley is currently a member of the Nunavut Cabinet as the Minister of Health and Social Services.

I look at young families who have lost a father, in many cases the mother has been able to maintain the family life in a nurturing and organized way. Inversely, when I see families where the mother has passed away, I see the dads struggle a bit more to maintain the home life. There are great single dads out there, though.

As much as we like to think we live in a country where there is gender equality, women politicians still face some challenges. I felt that to be the case even in the House of Commons, the top political arena in our country where women are pretty well represented. A particularly subtle difference is that at Parliament, political visibility and advancement require a lot of travel, and if you are a mother of a family you usually don't want to be on the road all the time. It is not that women at Parliament are not ambitious—you have to be if you want to work in that arena. I turned down a lot of opportunities because I was a single parent, and travelling and additional meetings would have taken me away from my family more than my regular duties already required. In the end, I knew it was the right time for me to go; I didn't have the energy it would have required to continue to do the work. I did not feel it was fair to my constituents to serve them with anything less than 100 percent of my capacity.

For many years I chaired or vice-chaired the House of Commons' Standing Committee for Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, but there were some years when I declined the position. I was already serving the largest geographical riding in Canada; between that and single-parenting my family, accepting the additional responsibility would have meant spreading myself even more thinly than I already was. I did become parliamentary secretary for a little while, but they really had to work hard to convince me! I was probably one of the few MPs who turned down more opportunities than I took, and after a while people stopped asking. I was very interested in many of the issues

that were current, but I just couldn't give them more of my time.

I had to learn to allow a lot of other people to fill in some of the home roles for me; after my husband passed away, I knew I couldn't be a "supermom". The work schedule of an MP is far from nine-to-five—many times I wouldn't get home before seven at night—and so in order to make sure the kids were fed and at the rink for their hockey practices, it was necessary for me to have someone staying at the house with them. You really cannot do this kind of work without a stay-at-home adult handling those responsibilities. It was very difficult for me to make the decision to bring in that kind of support, because I was used to doing things for myself and for my family. For the sake of my children, though, I knew I had to.

A family makes a lot of sacrifices when the woman of the house becomes a public leader. When I first became a Member of Parliament, my husband and small children stayed in Nunavut while I went to work in Ottawa. I would try to get home for weekends, but we realized right away that it was not a realistic plan. I knew then that we would have to move the family to Ottawa, which was a challenge in itself, because our boys' first language was Inuktitut; the younger two hadn't yet made the full transition to English in school. That was a very difficult decision for me and my family. There is a lot of pressure on women to stay out of the public eye and out of politics in order to take care of the home front, and so I was especially lucky that my husband offered to be the stay-at-home parent. My four sons are adults now, and I hope that they would support their spouses if they were interested in pursuing something like this.

Overall, I had tremendous support from all directions: my siblings, my parents and mother-in-law, and my constituents. Most especially, my husband and sons stood behind me. Their support enabled me to handle the few negative remarks I might have received over the years. In fact, the very first lesson to learn when you get into

an elected position is that you are never going to please everyone—you learn to let unhelpful criticism slide off you. At any rate, you always find out what your constituents really think about your work at election time.

I have never liked to use the word "politician" to describe myself; rather, I have always looked at my work as a way to help develop my community. That is the way I grew up: my mother was a lay person with the church and my father was in the RCMP, so we were used to helping people. My father always told us, "Help the people around you if you're in a position to help them. You, too, might need the help of other people some day." During the years I represented Nunavummiut, I learned a lot about people and the capacity they have to endure things. It made me want to help people even more. Being able to help people get through hardship and on to something else means making sure that they can be contributors to society instead of burdens to the community.

In Nunavut, there is some kind of systemic barrier that keeps women from being elected or appointed into top positions, even though there is evidence that they are generally more educated and therefore more employable. I personally think that women might also be more resilient in the face of tragedy and challenge. Since many of us women are already taking care of so much in the community, the idea seems to be to leave the elected positions for the men, because that is where they can make their contribution. There are many elected men whose wives are equally or more capable; it is as though women, both collectively and individually, make a sacrifice to keep things peaceful and comfortable for everybody.

Nunavut communities are small, and family relations are central to Inuit life. That makes it very difficult for a young woman to run for a position against a male relative, whether it is for a seat at the legislature or for a local board like the Hunters and Trappers Organization. In our communities, it is very hard to rise against that fear of ruffling the feathers of

one's family and then having to live with the consequences. When the gender parity plebiscite was held, in 1997, I was not yet in an elected position.[2] On the one hand, I believe that people should be allowed to vote for the candidate of their choice based solely on ability. When I was elected as an MP, I wouldn't have wanted somebody next to me to say, "You're here only because yours is a special position for women." On the other hand, if a woman represented each riding along with a man, I could see that social issues would get probably more attention than they do now. Women would naturally bring their care for all aspects of the family into the political arena.

Today, many of us are actively striving to get more women into the legislature, on the hamlet councils, and involved on the education and housing boards. The hamlet councils, especially, are mainly composed of men. When I ran for the job of Kivalliq Inuit Association president about 15 years ago, I lost the election by 64 votes. When I ran again during the next elections, it was for the job of secretary-treasurer, and I won by a landslide. I realized that people were more comfortable with the idea of a woman as secretary-treasurer, which sounds like a conventional women's job, than they were with a woman president.

One of the key roles of a leader is to instil hope in people, because without hope we are lost. We elect people because we are hopeful that they will improve life in our communities, regions, and territories. When I knew it was time for me to step back and make room for somebody else who had more energy and availability than I did, maybe it paved the way for Leona Aglukkaq to win a seat and

2. The gender parity plebiscite was held in what was to become Nunavut in 1999 to decide on a new mode of representation in our Canadian/British parliamentary traditions. In each electoral riding, voters would choose one man and one woman—from separate lists of male and female candidates—to represent them at the Legislative Assembly. The proposal, put forward by the Nunavut Implementation Commission, was defeated by 57 percent of the voters.

become a cabinet minister.[3] Young people are our future, and we need to give them opportunities and encouragement to become involved in their communities.

I felt it was time to serve and guide my community in a different way, so I took over a year to rest and just be back in my community. I was offered government positions and appointments to different organizations, but I knew that whatever I did next would have to involve young people and mentoring. A job opening came to my attention that seemed to be tailor-made for me: the Walter and Duncan Gordon Foundation was looking for somebody to spearhead a program to nurture the leadership of young northerners in their respective fields. I was delighted to be offered the job—the Gordon Foundation is a supremely reputable organization. At the foundation's Jane Glassco Arctic Fellowship program, we have selected 14 young people to receive grants that will support their policy development initiatives for a two-year period. They are young innovators and leaders from all over northern Canada, and it is a pleasure to interact with them and see them beginning to dialogue across cultural and geographical boundaries.

When I was first asked if I would consider running for Parliament, I laughed out loud. I had never thought of taking that kind of step, but the people around me had obviously seen something in me that I didn't see in myself. They were persistent and suggested I consult with my family about it before saying "no". I talked to Jon, my husband, who pointed out that it would be rather like an extension of what I had already been doing in my life, except I would have staff and a budget to do it. The lesson for me was that it took someone else to see my potential for a leadership role. That is something we see often with Inuit—we tend to underestimate ourselves. Now, with the Jane Glassco fellowship, I have a chance to help others see their potential.

3. Leona Aglukkaq is the current Minister of Health in the federal Conservative government.

It has been an interesting challenge to return to the professional world outside of Parliament. I often joke with my colleagues at the Gordon Foundation that I had gotten really used to my executive assistant! I used to be a clerk-typist, so I don't have any objection to doing administrative tasks, but executive assistants handle those things for MPs so that the members have time for their main duties. I think that women have an appreciation of the value of that kind of support, because most of us know exactly what it takes to do it.

Many people positively influenced my life. My mother was quite progressive. She was on some of the first settlement councils in Arviat, which were among the first elected positions that Inuit could fill—there certainly weren't many women doing that at the time. My father also had an important role in the shaping of my career: he never once said to me that I couldn't do something because I was a girl. He believed that each one of his children was capable of doing what he or she wanted to do, whether daughter or son. When I became an adult, I saw that not every home was like that. I grew up around people who were natural leaders, who moved into action when they thought there was something to be done. I learned as a child that you can't complain about everything without making some effort to change it. I also had many other mentors in my life and career, such as school teachers and colleagues at the House of Commons. I learned a lot from working with people like Jane Stewart, who was the Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs, and Prime Minister Chrétien, and there are countless other people in my life who pushed me out of my comfort zone and into growth.

When I look ahead toward Nunavut's future, I hope to see young women who believe in themselves, who believe that they can achieve whatever they want. Right now, there are too many teenage girls losing themselves in serious relationships when they should be trying to graduate

from school. Many girls, some as young as 14, are having babies. That is very troubling to me; it pains me to think that any of my six granddaughters could end up in that position. We need to change that trend and instil in them the belief that they are worthy of achieving great things and that being in a romantic relationship so young is not what defines them—that there is time for that later. I wish for young women to live with vigour and passion and life goals, even if it is about something as basic as finishing high school. Having a passion for what they are doing also helps combat low self-esteem, which, I feel, is part of what keeps women in abusive relationships.

One of the main lessons that I hope I have communicated as a parent and as an MP is that we must learn to understand where people are coming from and then respect them and treat them with courtesy. Sometimes it takes personal tragedy to make you look for that in other people. I have been very fortunate in my life—it is true that I lost my husband at the age of 40, but I have had a rewarding political career, wonderful children who do me proud, and I have healthy grandchildren. My father always told us that if we do good for people, good would come back to us, and along with the difficult times, goodness has certainly come back to me.

I didn't work in politics in order to get a building named after me somewhere. I took my job seriously, whether it was talking a kid into staying in school or encouraging the communities to take on more responsibility or to take some risks in pursuing something for their people. I wanted my constituents to know that elected leaders can embrace integrity and accountability and that some of us really care about them. When people feel cared about, they are more careful about their own attitudes. Two years have passed since my last term as MP, and people, especially young people, still come up to me and tell me what they are doing in their lives—for me, that is the reward for my service.

Madeleine Redfern

Credit: Madeleine Redfern

Supporting Civil Development

Madeleine Redfern

"Some might say the colonization continues, in many ways, forty or fifty years later—a lot of the statements made by bureaucrats or anthropologists back then could easily fit with observations of what is happening today in Nunavut."

I was born and spent my early years in Frobisher Bay, which is now called Iqaluit. When my parents split up I left with my father and followed him as he moved and worked around the country. I went to school in Yellowknife, Saskatoon, Vancouver, Ottawa, and for part of my high school education I also was in England. You learn to become quite adaptable when you move around as often as that.

When I was living here in Iqaluit as a little girl, I spent most of my time with my grandmother. She was from Kimmirut and was unilingual, so I learned some Inuktitut from her when she lived with me, my brother, and my mother. My brother is David Alexander and my sister is Ooleepeeka Shoo. I had another half-brother, Johnny-Lee Alexander, whom we lost to suicide in 1999.

During my high school years my dad was a stock broker. Previously, he had owned a newspaper and had been a newspaper editor and a writer. I didn't have any particular desire to follow in his footsteps; I was drawn to whatever

I was exposed to in the popular culture or in people that I met. At one point I wanted to be an archaeologist, and at another I wanted to work with computers. Some people plan their lives out from childhood—they know right from an early age that they want to be policemen or firefighters or housewives. I didn't have that kind of mindset. When opportunities became available to volunteer or to further my education, I assessed them and, depending on the circumstances at the time, I took some and left some.

When you are a child, the question of identity and how you fit into the world is not usually something you think about consciously. For me, cultural identity was only really an issue when I was living outside of the North, where in some places, such as Saskatoon, I might have been the only ethnic child in the classroom. People used to think I was Chinese, whom I discovered are the subjects of a lot of teasing and negative stereotyping. Even more distressing was when I would correct them and tell them I was Inuk, from the Arctic, and see a reversal in the person's attitude towards me. At first, most people wouldn't even know who the Inuit were; they would just be excited to be meeting an Eskimo. It bothered me that they were more ready to like an Eskimo than a Chinese person. I hadn't changed in any way: I still looked the same, talked the same, and felt the same. I was disturbed by that level of societal and individual discrimination. If I had been of Asian descent, I would have accepted who I was and been proud to come from that culture. I found it rather shallow that people could feel one way about a particular culture and completely differently about another. As a child, I understood that human nature is varied and interesting and I accepted who I was. I learned to not put much stock in other people's perceptions, especially those that were uninformed or racist.

Having my daughter was very much a personal turning point for me. When she was born, I sought to have a

closer connection with my Inuit family and with the Inuit community; it was important to me that she know it was part of her culture and identity. I was living in Ottawa at the time, where there were only about 500 Inuit living in a larger population of about 800,000. I began to see that in terms of services and community support, there was a tendency for urban Inuit to get lost within the larger aboriginal population. I felt that it was essential that Inuit have access to programs and services that were unique to their needs, and so I began to volunteer with the Inuit organizations.

In 1996 I was elected to the board of directors of Tungasuvvingat Inuit, which is the Inuit community centre in Ottawa. When you begin to look at implementing programs and policies that will serve your community's needs, you have to get involved politically. Most of the funding for those programs comes from different levels of government, and I discovered that there is a real political dimension to lobbying and negotiating for those funds and developing the programs. When Health Canada—the federal health department—began to talk about implementing a Head Start program in Ottawa, they envisioned it as a program for all aboriginal peoples in the city.[1] We took on the responsibility of informing the federal government and the First Nations groups that Ottawa Inuit needed their own Head Start. We have a different culture and language, and it is extremely difficult to deliver an Inuit-oriented curriculum, in Inuktitut, within the context of a larger aboriginal population.

My political involvement in the Inuit community developed as I became the Inuit representative on several

1. Aboriginal Head Start (AHS) in Urban and Northern Communities is an early childhood development program for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis children and their families. It is funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC). There are some 125 AHS initiatives in Canada administered by not-for-profit organizations.

boards and committees, including the Inuit Head Start committee, Kagita Mikam—the aboriginal employment and training organization for the Ottawa area, and the Inuit Non-Profit Housing Corporation.

Most of the Tungasuvvingat Inuit programs and policies were locally based, and we had a lot of work to do in raising awareness at the land claims organizations about discrimination against beneficiaries living in Ottawa. Those organizations were often not willing to engage with some of the issues that were having an impact on urban Inuit—issues such as discrimination in accessing housing and childrearing practices. Things like children not having standardized bedtimes or meals caused alarm and provoked judgment and suspicion among the non-Inuit population and institutions.

We also advocated for Inuit post-secondary students in Ottawa who were being deprived of funding because of policy loopholes. Paul Okalik, the former premier of Nunavut, encountered this. After his first year of law school, he was denied further funding from the territorial government because he was no longer a resident—he needed to have been a territorial resident in the last twelve-month period. It takes more than one year to get a law degree, so for him to be considered no longer eligible for funding for his second and third years was nonsensical. Back then, the government of Nunavut and Inuit organizations interpreted their policies so narrowly that people who were training to be pilots, lawyers, and educators were being barred from funding after attending their first year of schooling down South.

In the end, the Tungasuvvingat Inuit community centre negotiated with the federal government and the First Nations to receive a portion of funds for employment and training for southern Inuit in Ontario. So if people were able to complete their degrees, it was thanks to the support of the Indians of Ontario and the federal government.

Thankfully, there are now provisions in our territorial policies that allow students to maintain their northern residency status while they are attending school. While bringing such matters to the attention of the territorial governments and the Inuit leadership, I learned first-hand that the national and Inuit land claims organizations are representative bodies that are not always responsive to the needs of all Inuit.

In fact, I had very mixed feelings about the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement. I read through it before it was ratified and saw that while there were some benefits to be had by signing it, there were some elements worthy of concern. I found the wording of some of the provisions to be vague, and I noticed that there was no provision that dealt with recourse for Nunavut in the event that the government did not fulfill its obligations to Inuit. I was also concerned by the extinguishment of the aboriginal title—I had become familiar with First Nations history and knew the federal government's record of not implementing treaty rights. Plus, there wasn't anything in the land claim that expressly dealt with cultural and social rights. That meant there was nothing in the agreement about the big issues that Inuit face: housing, health care, child care, language, and women's and children's rights. People were led to understand that their new territorial government would have the ability to develop its own laws, which would sufficiently take care of things like rights to education, health care, and housing, but my understanding was that the agreement is pretty much only a land claim that focuses on land rights and resources.

I expressed these concerns to anybody who would listen, but I saw that while the federal government funded a group to travel around Nunavut to advocate for the ratification of the land claim, the Inuit who had objections to it received no funding whatsoever. We were not able to travel around to the communities and provide a different

perspective. I was not interested in imposing my particular point of view; I just thought that people were entitled to hear different perspectives. I believed that receiving more accurate information would allow them to make an informed decision when they went to vote.

Instead, much misinformation was disseminated about what the agreement contained and what it would achieve for Inuit. People were being told that it meant the creation of an Inuit homeland, and if they didn't support this agreement, they would never get one. In reality, the agreement provides for a public government, not an Inuit government. There was also a mistaken belief that we could negotiate some of the social and cultural rights at a later date. The problem is that once you have signed an extinguishment of your rights to the land, which is what the federal government required, you have nothing much of value left to negotiate with later on. It was disappointing to see that people were not being adequately informed about what they would be giving up and what they would be getting in return.

I realized back then that the explanations from some of the Inuit land claims negotiators were a bit shallow, that they themselves didn't have a clear grasp of political negotiations. To this day, I still hear some Inuit leaders saying, "We can still negotiate that." But we ratified the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement, and we no longer have any leverage to negotiate: we have nothing that the federal government wants now, other than political posturing and good will.

During the negotiations, people allowed themselves to believe that a new Nunavut public government would enact laws at the territorial level to advance the cultural and social rights that Inuit want. Even before I studied for my law degree, I understood that, ideally, you need to have rights entrenched in federal laws like the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Without having them specified in

the law, governments are not often inclined to provide for those rights and the reciprocal obligations. Now, some 11 years after the creation of Nunavut, we have an Education Act that is worse than its predecessor from the Northwest Territories, which at least provided for aboriginal schooling.

Other Nunavut laws are not in full compliance with the land claim or they manifestly lack respect for traditional Inuit practices and priorities. The Wildlife Act, for example, doesn't take into consideration the traditional practice of feeding fish and seal meat to dogs. The Act deems it illegal to give country food to dogs, except to dog teams that are at least five kilometres outside the community. This means that any Inuit who give country food to dogs in the community can be charged and prosecuted in the courts. It would make more sense for the Hunters and Trappers Organizations to regulate such practices in the communities and among their members. Some Inuit said that they would not obey such bad laws, but my view is that they should not have been enacted in the first place.

I moved back to Iqaluit when I was hired to be the executive director of Nunavut Tourism, before the creation of Nunavut in 1999. I returned for a variety of reasons, but primarily it was to allow my daughter to have a closer relationship with my family living in the North and with the Inuit community in Nunavut. I wanted her to have more exposure to the language and to life on the land. I also saw an opportunity to contribute to the development of this territory—I had gained a lot of skills and experience through my work with the Inuit community in Ottawa and thought I had something to offer. As I settled into my new job, I was surprised to learn that it had been easier to develop programs and services for the Inuit community in Ottawa than it was to organize Inuit-specific programs in our new territory, with all its funding and resources. In the minority urban setting in the South, most Inuit set aside their familial, community, and regional differences;

they were just so happy to be with other Inuit that most conflicts were set aside for the greater good. In Nunavut, I discovered a lot of factionalism and personal discrimination about where one came from or what family one belonged to. It was a challenge to get Inuit to set aside those differences.

I also found that non-Inuit in Ottawa were less hostile about Inuit-specific programming than they were in Iqaluit. In Nunavut, the non-Inuit community would cry "discrimination!" and complain that our public government shouldn't be about ethnicity. In general, they were quite unsupportive of any Inuit-specific initiatives. There were more Inuit-specific programs and services in Ottawa than there were in most of our Northern communities—in Ottawa we had an Inuit Head Start program, Inuit non-profit housing, an Inuit community centre, an after-school drop-in centre, a pre- and post-natal program, and an Inuit family resource centre.

When the Nunavut government and the University of Victoria announced the launch of the Akitsiraq law program, it was like a dream come true.[2] I would never have expected to be able to get a law degree without having to leave my home community. I was chosen as one of 15 candidates to study with this small group of professors for four years. It was a privilege to be able to remain in the North and stay in tune with what was happening politically in my own community and within the territory.

The University of Victoria had already determined the schedule of first year and core courses that were mandatory for a law degree. I was one of a few vocal students who pushed for the program to focus on Nunavut issues; I

2. The Akitsiraq law program, realized through a partnership between the University of Victoria, Nunavut Arctic College, and the Akitsiraq Law School Society, graduated students with a Bachelor of Law (LL.B) in Iqaluit, Nunavut. The program accepted its first cohort of students in 2001. Eighty-seven percent of them graduated.

argued that it would be shameful to graduate us from this law school without a course on the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement. In the end we were able to have a Nunavut perspective wherever possible, whether it was on property law, criminal law, or civil law. We received a legal education of the highest standards anywhere, and the Northern and Inuit contexts made it even richer.

One particularly valuable component of the Akitsiraq law school model, with its small number of students, was that it allowed us to have a lot of discussion amongst ourselves and with our professors. We talked about how laws and rights are only as good as their enforcement: in civil law, when someone gets hurt they have the right to sue another. But the reality in Nunavut is that there are few civil law lawyers—for example, there is literally no one in Nunavut who deals with medical malpractice. That is one of the challenges we have in Nunavut: technically these rights exist, but many people do not enjoy full access to them.

We also looked at certain Inuit historical practices that are no longer acceptable to most contemporary Inuit—arranged marriage, for example, is a practice that goes against the freedom and choice of the individual. Traditionally, you had no choice but to accept whom your parents or grandparents said you were going to marry. Today, you wouldn't be able to impose that. The same thing applies to old practices such as who should support widows or the use of physical violence to "keep a wife in line".

We discussed imported legal concepts based on Western values and Christainity and how they differ from Inuit notions of social justice. In Nunavut, we operate with a culturally foreign legal model, but it is not realistic to completely dispense with the Canadian legal system and impose an Inuit one. Almost all of us law students agreed that it would not be reasonable, nor even possible, to do

so. The subject is complex and complicated and not easily resolvable.

Surprisingly, some people were unsupportive of the law school. Many of them, both Inuit and non-Inuit, expected it to fail or that the students themselves would fail. There were criticisms that the program must have been "dumbed down" for us, which implies the belief that somehow Inuit are not intelligent or capable enough to measure up to the southern standard of education. As the program continued, a lot of those negative voices began to quiet down, but five years later there doesn't seem to be much support for a follow-up program for a new group of students.

Unfortunately, I think our legal education is being under-utilized by Nunavut institutions. It would have been nice for the sponsors of the students to take a close look at how to make use of this small group of educated Inuit with a special skill set. They could have found us positions that would maximize the return on their investment in our education. In reality, a number of the graduates were asked to work under people who were much less educated. I was fortunate: after I graduated I was offered a prestigious position at the Supreme Court of Canada, where I clerked with Madame Justice Louise Charron. I think that speaks volumes about the standard of education that we received.

There is a terrible paradox that has haunted a lot of the graduates. When the program began, there were huge expectations that the students would graduate and go on to take top leadership positions that would allow them to somehow change Nunavut for the better. But at the same time, they faced enormous criticism and lack of support from their sponsors and from the communities. Many of the graduates chose to not speak out about the criticisms and lack of support they received afterwards, because there had already been very little sympathy for them. It is a

true loss for Nunavut, because they are ready to make a contribution. They just need the support to do it.

Today, I am the executive director of the Qikiqtani Truth Commission. It is as if my life path led me to this work, and I enjoy it thoroughly. Our mandate has been to conduct a historical inquiry into government policies and their consequences for Inuit. The commissioner, a retired judge and Labrador Inuk named Jim Igloliorte, and our team tried to ensure that we didn't make any presumptions about what we would find or what Inuit would say. When we conducted our hearings we let people speak about whatever they wished regarding the period between 1950 and 1980. We heard from them about what their lives were like when they were living on the land, why and how they moved into the settlements, and what experiences they had with health care and education.

The testimony at the hearings was mixed. Not all people had grievances against the government; some explained that they moved voluntarily into the settlements for employment or to be with their children, who were being placed in school. But other people recounted being coerced to move to the settlements—they were told they wouldn't get health care if they got injured or sick or that they would be arrested if their children weren't sent to school. In some cases, government administrators flew in to camps and physically removed people and relocated them into communities.

Clearly, the policies of that period were paternalistic—the government acted as a colonizing agent when it decided to create permanent settlements and deliver universal social programs like health care and education and other social services to Inuit. Some might say the colonization continues, in many ways, forty or fifty years later—a lot of the statements made by bureaucrats or anthropologists back then could easily fit with observations of what is happening today in Nunavut.

The findings of our inquiry indicate that there is no single, universal experience. There are some commonalities, but government interventions were varied and inconsistent. Sometimes the infrastructure and resources were inadequate; at other times it was the supervision and support of certain government officials that was inadequate. Interestingly, the commission's review is showing that women seemed to have an easier time adapting to settlement life than men. Boys and men found it harder to make the shift because their traditional hunting and harvesting roles were active, and community life is so sedentary. Physical activity was not an integral part of the school system then, and neither is it today. I think this is to the detriment of children's learning even today, especially for boys.

In recent years I have stepped forward as a candidate for elected positions in various organizations and levels of government. I have run in municipal and territorial elections and recently ran for the vice-presidency of the Canadian Inuit Circumpolar Council. So far, I have been unsuccessful. I have also made several applications for appointments to the boards of institutes of public government, such as the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board, the Nunavut Impact Review Board, and the Kakivak Association, which is an economic development organization. None of those applications were successful, which troubles me, because I know I am qualified for many of the positions. The challenge of Nunavut politics is that it often isn't about your level of education, your previous experience, or what contributions you can make to a particular organization; it often ends up being a matter of personality or which community or region your family comes from. Sometimes it is also about your gender or your age—in Nunavut, we still have a hard time getting women or younger people elected or appointed to boards of directors.

A distressing thing that I have observed and that I would like to redress is the lowering of education standards in the schools. There are kids in grade 10 who literally cannot read or write; they are being pushed from one grade on to another just to get them through to grade 12, where they can inflate the graduation statistics. Too many of these kids are not receiving an adequate standard of education, and that sets them up for personal failure and frustrations. They believe they are leaving high school with a grade 12 education, and when they apply for post-secondary education they realize they have something much less. This is the case for non-Inuit students who go down South to further their studies as well. That gap in the system also means that high school graduates do not have the skills to do some of the jobs that they are being hired for in Nunavut. That kind of education myth can lead to a lot of ongoing personal disappointment for graduates: they are not going to be getting the training they need to be able to write letters, reports, and memos, because they are supposed to know those things already.

The socio-economic and health indicators of our population show that 11 years past the creation of the territory and about 16 years after the signing of the Land Claims Agreement, most of our people are worse off. We have higher rates of violent and serious crime, more suicides, high levels of cancer, there is more overcrowding in our housing, and the rates of respiratory illnesses in our children are the highest in the world. A minority of Inuit holding well-paying jobs in the government or Inuit organizations might be better off today, but the majority is experiencing a higher level of suffering than before.

If I had to identify one priority for our people and for our government, it would be to revamp our approach to education and skills acquisition so that there can be more development and participation in civil society. We need to focus on supporting our population in getting

the education and skills that will help them do the work at hand and engage in the democratic process. The way I understand democracy, it is only really achieved when government supports the civil development of the people, so that they can understand what their rights are and demand and exercise them. Then, they can truly participate in the making of policy and programs and evaluate their effectiveness.

We have so much opportunity, with this territory and its legislative assembly. We can develop laws and make decisions that will determine where and how its resources are used and how its people are served. Our people and our youth need the support of leaders who share that vision, who are not afraid of letting people get a level of knowledge that will allow them to be involved in all levels of the processes. And, of course, we also need leaders who do not forget about the most vulnerable people in our society.

Nivisinaaq (Shoofly) with a man, most probably the anglican Minister Kidlapik, Southampton Island, Hudson Bay, Nunavut. 1926

Nivisinaaq, on the left, was an influential woman from the Northwest coast of the Hudson Bay in the early twentieth century. She was a close companion of the American whaler George Comer and became the wife of Angutimmarik, also known as Scotch Tom, in her later days. Shoofly was the adoptive mother of Joe Curley Qayayuak and Pameolik.

Credit: L.T. Burwash / Canada. Dept. of Indian Affairs and Northern Development collection / Library and Archives Canada / PA-099585

A successful hunt!

Credit: Joan Scottie

That Is Where My Spirit Lives

Joan Scottie

> *"I didn't know that activism would become a major element of my life. I was simply following my heart, searching for answers and for what I thought was the right thing to do. When you are in front of something questionable, you just take action."*

I was born near Qamanirjuaq Lake, at a place called Kovonoqiaq. It was a hunting camp south of Baker Lake where my family lived for several years. Later, we moved to Ferguson Lake, where I grew up. My father had four wives, so our family's camps were big. We were very much a caribou people—we would set up a hunting camp exactly where our ancestors hunted, where the caribou migrate through in the spring. We would hunt and dry the meat and then return to Ferguson Lake, our base camp. After the fall freeze-up, we would set up a winter camp at Qamanirjuaq Lake.

When I was very young, before we moved to Ferguson Lake, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police gave my father a very small cabin in exchange for a dog team; he moved that cabin to his first camp at Qamanirjuaq Lake. Up until about ten years ago, we used to travel back to our traditional camp on the Victoria Day long weekend every year. I also went back to Ferguson Lake for a few summers as a guide in the tourism business. There is a

big mining exploration camp there now, where they have found nickel.[1]

Fish was also an important part of our diet. Rabbits and ptarmigans were sometimes very scarce, so when the caribou didn't come, fish would be our only source of food—because we are inland people, we don't hunt seals or sea mammals. Otherwise, we lived much the same as our coastal Inuit neighbours. To heat the *illu,* we used caribou fat as fuel for our *qulliit*, but caribou don't have fat on them all the time; they are fat only in September or in early spring. That meant that sometimes we had to decide if we would rather eat the fat and be in the dark or not eat it and have light and warmth! In the springtime, we dried the meat we caught and fed our dogs, and we also cached a lot of meat in preparation for winter. We had to be on the go all the time, preparing for winter survival.

There were some years, in the early 1950s, when the caribou didn't come at all. There were winter food shortages and a lot of starvation in some camps in our region.[2] It was a difficult time. Wintertime was when we had to trust the most, but when the spring came again, we

1. Ferguson Lake is located 240 km west of Rankin Inlet and 160 km south-southwest of Baker Lake. Starfield Resources plans to exploit mines for copper, nickel, cobalt, palladium, and platinum, and is studying the case for exploiting rhodium found in the area.
2. After resisting relocation for almost a decade, Ennadai Lake Inuit were relocated in the summer of 1957 to Henik Lake. At this new location they suffered from severe starvation. Farley Mowat told this soul-harrowing story in his book, *Desperate People*. During the same period, the Gary Lake Inuit also suffered from starvation and were eventually relocated to Whale Cove. The plight of the Kivalliq Inuit became a public issue in Canada and abroad when Farley Mowat published *People of the Deer* in 1952 and when Richard Harrington's dramatic photographs were published in magazines all over the world.
   See: *Tammarniit (mistakes): Inuit relocation in the Eastern Arctic, 1939-63*, Frank J. Tester, Peter Keith Kulchyski

knew we'd survived another winter and that the caribou would be coming through again.

My father's first name was Basil; that name was given to him as a young man, when he was adopted by a Royal Northwest Mounted Police inspector.[3] My father had lost his mother at a very early age and was taken in by the inspector for several years. My father was originally from Cape Fullerton, a coastal place just outside of Chesterfield Inlet, where the RNMP had a detachment.[4] When he was 16 years old, he left to be on his own and moved inland. He became an inland Inuk!

I didn't go to school when I was a younger child, as many other Inuit of my age did. A government patrol airplane used to come to the Inuit hunting camps once or twice a year to record births and deaths, and they would want us children to move into the community and go to school. But my father was a very strong-minded person, and he was able to say, "No." He didn't want us growing up away from our families; he didn't want to be separated from us.

In the end, tuberculosis sent most Inuit to Baker Lake. One year, in the early 1960s, my mother had a bad backache and couldn't get up or walk because of it. Just before Christmas, the patrol plane came to our camp as usual and that was when my mother was told to go to Baker Lake to get some medical attention. Me and my younger sister and brother went with her, and once there, the government grabbed us and told us we had to go to

3. The Northwest Mounted Police was created in 1873 to maintain order and assert Canadian sovereignty in the newly acquired Northwest Territories. In 1904, their name was changed to Royal Northwest Mounted Police, and in 1920 they became the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP).
4. The Northwest Mounted Police station in Cape Fullerton was established in 1903 to assert Canadian sovereignty in the area and to collect duty fees from Scottish and American whalers trading in the Wager Bay and Roes Welcome Sound area.

Standing: John Nukik, Joseph, Emily, Marion
Sitting: Mom with Susan, Me & my doll,
Mary Atangat with Hugh, Credit: Joan Scottie

Kovonoqiaq
Left to right: Mary Atangat, my father Basil, Emily with Hugh, Joe, Bessie, Joan Scottie's mother with Susan, Joan Scottie, and half-sister Marion. Missing: John Nukik. William & Nicholas were not born yet. Early 1950s. Credit: Joan Scottie

Joan Scottie: "We have come a long way—from a hunting family to community Inuit with permed hair, baseball caps, and jeans."

Left to right: John Nukik, Joseph Scottie, Susan Toolooktook, Joan Scottie, Hugh Ikoe, Nicholas Nungnik.
Missing: William Scottie

Credit: Joan Scottie

school. I was around 11 or 12 years old. We couldn't get back to our camp, so we had to settle there. They built an *illu* for us at the time, and then about ten years later we were provided with a matchbox house.

The year after we were brought to Baker Lake, my mother was diagnosed with tuberculosis and was sent away to a sanitarium in the South. We children were placed in homes; they were like hostels where Inuit kids used to stay when their families were out on the land. I only attended school for a little while because the principal offered me a job making hot cocoa in the morning and three hot lunches a week. He told me I would make $75 a month. I took the job! If my English isn't great today, I don't blame myself, because I sure didn't spend a lot of time in a classroom. I was around 13 or 14 years old and was pretty much on my own, looking after my younger sister and brother. With my mother away in a sanitarium and my father still living out on the land, I didn't have any guardian to tell me it would be best if I stayed in school instead. I cried so much during that time. Almost every day I went to the settlement administrator, who worked for the federal government, and said, "I want to go back! I want to go back to Ferguson Lake!" Of course, I was underage, and they didn't listen to me. I think that must have been the lowest time of my life.

When my mother came back about three years later, I felt I was all grown up. A government charter plane used to go back and forth between Baker Lake and Churchill, and one day I just got on the plane. Like my dad, I must have been pretty strong-minded! My mother had always told me that I was, even as a small child. In fact, during the times when there was starvation in our camp and when a normal child would have been depressed and lacking energy, my mother said I was always optimistic. I must have gotten that, too, from my father. Although that strong-mindedness was always there, it got stronger as I struggled with life.

When I got on that plane, I wanted to go to Churchill and look for a job. I was 16 years old and had no idea what I was going to do there. I got work as a babysitter for a few months and in September began attending the residential vocational school, which had just started up a year or so earlier.[5] There were 200 students there from all the Inuit communities in Northern Quebec and in the Kivalliq and Baffin regions. It was a difficult time for me, because I had only received a little bit of schooling. I started off there at what was probably a grade 3 level or less, but I caught up with the others. I also had a hard time with restrictions like going to bed at 8:30. I got most of my education there, though, and I suppose the experience was good for us; it's where I really learned how the world is supposed to operate.

I left Churchill to return to Baker Lake in 1968 and found a job with the federal government, at the community administration office. My father was still living out on the land—he didn't like community life—and my mother was in Baker Lake, but by then my sister and brother were attending school in Churchill. I was in my early twenties, and although I had a good job working in the settlement office distributing welfare and being a translator, I knew something was missing. Even though I had started school late as a child, I loved reading and learning and wanted to further my education. So, in the early 1970s, I went back to school and took some adult education classes. Later, I went to college in Brandon, Manitoba, and in the early 1980s,

5. Most contributors to this book attended the Churchill Vocational Centre in Churchill, Manitoba, and were enthusiastic about their studies at the school. Mr. Ralph Ritcey, a Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources superintendent of vocational education, was instrumental in the creation of the school, which operated from 1964 to 1974. By most accounts, the educational approach at the Churchill Vocational Centre was more respectful of the cultural backgrounds of its Inuit students than were other religious or previously religious residential schools of the time.

I returned to school yet again in Fort Smith. I wanted to understand how society works; I wanted to read about and understand the rest of Canada and the world.

In the early 1970s, the settlement councils were created; it was the first time that Inuit participated in local nominations and elections. Even though I was pretty young, I was elected to the Baker Lake settlement council for its first three years and sat on various community committees. Then, in the late 1970s, the Inuit hunters of Baker Lake became concerned and angry about all the industrial exploration activities taking place where they hunted. They went to court to get an injunction against the issuing of federal exploration permits on their traditional hunting grounds.[6] I worked with some consultants from Winnipeg to interview 50 hunters and fishermen from our community about where the important hunting grounds and fishing places were and which of them should be protected. I learned a lot from that experience.

Later, I worked for the federal Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND) as a sub-district manager enforcing the caribou protection measures that were the result of those interviews.[7] The hunters had asked that the major migration routes be protected during the caribou calving or post-calving water crossings. So, from DIAND's sub-district office in Baker Lake, I flew all over

6. The court case *Baker Lake vs. Canada* was pivotal in defining aboriginal rights to their ancestral land. Federal Court Justice Patrick Mahoney, for the first time in Canadian history, set criteria for the establishment of an aboriginal title to a given territory. His judgment confirmed the existence of such a title to the land but declined the hunters' request for an injunction to stop mining exploration in the area. In a landmark judgment on November 15, 1979, the court decided that exploration was not disturbing the caribou herd in most of the area, except at caribou water crossings, and lifted the injunction on mining exploration in the Kivalliq region.
7. DIAND is now known as Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC)

the Keewatin to enforce regulations in the mining industry. I did land-use inspections and made sure, for example, that when industry was flying around doing diamond drilling, they didn't fly below 1,500 feet. I enjoyed that work, because I understood the hunters' concerns. If I am concerned about the environment today, it is not just from my heart, it is because I learned something from those 50 hunters I interviewed.

Sometimes it was a challenge to be a woman involved in this kind of thing. Back then, women were not allowed to be members of the Hunters and Trappers Organization (HTO). At that time, government people were telling us how to do things, and they apparently didn't consider that women could be hunters. Eventually, in Baker Lake, we were able to get elected to the HTO. When I was growing up, my family, especially my grandmother, believed in the traditional Inuit roles, where the woman was below the man. Women wouldn't make decisions on their own, for example. In spite of that, my father taught me to hunt to survive. I was a tomboy, and I didn't like doing women's stuff, such as sewing and staying in the *illu*; I was more interested in going out on the land. My grandmother used to scold me, "You're a girl; you shouldn't be doing those things!" But strong-minded as I was, I often went hunting with my father, by boat or dog team. Nor was it part of the traditional way of life to be outspoken, but when I believe an issue is important—not just for myself but for my fellow Inuit—I think somebody has to speak up about it.

Inuit women leaders have to earn the respect of the people. They have to show they support their families and communities and they have to prove they are able to do things. Once they have gained that respect, they are encouraged to represent the people. The strength of Inuit women leaders comes from this kind of support. I didn't pursue leadership, it is just something that came to me because I followed my heart. Along the way I earned

some respect, and now people approach me to represent them on issues. I have been able to get elected to regional organizations, such as the Keewatin Inuit Association.[8]

In my case, I earned a lot of respect through my advocacy work. One day in the mid-1980s, I read in a newspaper about a proposition for an open pit uranium mine just 50 kilometres from Baker Lake. It caught my attention, as I thought, "Isn't uranium supposed to be dangerous and cause cancer?" The project was in the early stages, with the mine being scheduled to open in a few years.[9] A public meeting was planned for somebody from the company to come in to discuss it with residents. I wrote a one-page notice, in Inuktitut, and took it to the radio station where it was announced several times. In it, I told people we needed to find out more about this uranium and speak up about it. We needed to know if it was going to hurt our environment: our land, animals, and water. This got people's attention, and a committee was formed in the community. Some friends of mine in other communities shared and supported my concerns and the committee

8. Now named the Kivalliq Inuit Association
9. In the late 1980s, Urangesellschaft Canada Ltd intended to exploit a uranium mine at Kiggavik, in the Thelon Basin. Joan Scottie contributed to the creation of the Baker Lake Concerned Citizens' Committee (CCC), which opposed uranium mining around Baker Lake. A plebiscite on the issue was held in March 1990 and was won by those opposing Urangesellschaft's project. All mining companies exploring claims for uranium in the Thelon basin consequently abandoned their activities. Exploring for uranium around Baker Lake began again after 2006, when the price of uranium reached US $64 a pound. The main companies involved are Canada's Cameco and France's Areva. Once again, Joan Scottie is at the forefront of a rising debate in Baker Lake around the mining issue. This time, however, Inuit organizations are supporting the mining projects, which are expected to put significant revenues into their coffers.
   See: http://www.nunatsiaqonline.ca/archives/30905/news/nunavut/30905_04.html

grew to represent the whole Keewatin. Even today, I really appreciate the support that people from elsewhere offer us, from Baffin Island and from the rest of Canada.

Although I was the founder of the Baker Lake Concerned Citizens' Committee, I didn't plan a public role for myself. At the time, I was working seasonally in the tourism business, guiding people up and down the Thelon River. I didn't know that activism would become a major element of my life. I was simply following my heart, searching for answers and for what I thought was the right thing to do. When you are in front of something questionable, you just take action. You raise the issues and pursue the best options for the community. I didn't know my involvement would go on for this long: twenty-five years later, here we are, still pursuing the uranium mine question. And it is not getting easier, it is getting harder.

Our concern then was that the approval of this uranium mine would make it politically impossible to stop the approval of other uranium mines. The proposed mine was only 50 miles away and we were downwind and downstream from it, so we were also concerned about the health implications. Some 20 years later, despite major political changes, our concerns have not been resolved. Even though we now have our own territory and are beneficiaries to a very large area of land, many people are thinking only about the financial benefits. The message from the mining industry's public relations people is that the mines will bring us a lot of benefits through royalties and jobs. With the technological advancements of the last 20 years, you would think it would be much easier for us to get our concerns across, but in fact it is much harder now: people seem more preoccupied with get-rich-quick schemes.

Business people will profit from the mines, but ordinary people won't benefit in the long term. There is currently a lot of mineral exploitation going on in our region, and even with one mine now in operation, ordinary people haven't

really seen benefits. The jobs are not free: workers have to be educated; they have to have qualifications. They have to give up a lot of their lives too, since they have to be able to work twelve-hour shifts and be away from their families for two weeks at a time. It's all good for business people, who get nice contracts. A lot of aboriginal organizations also have direct commercial interests in the mines because they receive a part of the royalties. That's why they are supportive of just about any kind of mine. It's scary the way everything is being approved so readily.

The government thinks that mines are the answers to all our poverty problems. But we have to take a very careful step back and take a look at all this. We want our birthright organizations to have a good look at all options and carefully select which mining projects to endorse. A mine doesn't last forever: after maybe 20 years of production, what happens to the region after it closes?

With a uranium mine, the after-effects are pretty scary. The mining industry is telling us that with today's technology, the material is safe to mine. Right now, exploration for uranium is concentrated in the Thelon Basin area, a very beautiful caribou migration and calving ground where there are old traditional camps. The industry people come to us and hold meetings and take us down to Saskatchewan to tour uranium mines and see how safe it is. Even our aboriginal organizations are bringing in experts who tell us that it won't harm us and won't harm the environment. We hear that all the time, but we are still ignorant about uranium and its nuclear by-products. When we look at the rest of Canada and how they react to uranium mining in their jurisdictions, like in Ottawa, British Columbia, and Nova Scotia, we wonder what they are afraid of that we don't know about. People need more information.

Like the rest of the world, everything is changing in Baker Lake. The traditional people, the people who knew

how to respect the environment and the wildlife, are passing away. People are coming in off the land, and so now we are mostly community dwellers. The younger generation hears our government and our aboriginal organizations telling us that life in a community is the best way to live. Today, the younger generation is speaking more English than people of my age, who are still communicating mostly in Inuktitut. I have a daughter and two grandchildren—a fourteen-year-old girl and a ten-year-old boy. Even my grandchildren speak only in English, with a little bit of Inuktitut. My mother and my granddaughter can barely communicate, which is too bad. This problem has gotten out of hand. There is a lot of talk about protecting our language, but language, culture, and tradition are one. You have to respect your traditional cultural values and beliefs, because once you lose sight of what your elders respected, you lose the language.

If I have a message for young people, it is that I wish for us Nunavut Inuit to preserve our language. We should also strive to maintain our culture and heritage and respect for our ancestors, who survived because they respected the environment and wildlife. We should all continue to learn more about our heritage: what part of Nunavut did one's ancestors come from? Where were their seasonal hunting grounds? What areas of the land were important to them and what are we doing politically to protect those places? This is important to me, because that little corner out there on the land, in Ferguson Lake or in Kovonoqiaq, that is where my spirit lives.

From left to right: Natsiq Kango, Mary Ekho Wilman, Simon Nattaq, Jimmy Kilabuk, Mat Knicklebein, Mayor Elisapee Sheutiapik, Romeyn Stevenson, Mary Akpalialuk, David Ell

Credit: City of Iqaluit

Mayor Sheutiapik in her office

Credit: Ed Maruyama

The Art of Connecting People

Elisapee Sheutiapik

"Last year, an elderly man came up to me at the airport and shook my hand and said, in Inuktitut, 'My wife and I are very proud of you. You've proven that women can lead!' I answered him with a question: 'Back before I was born, when the men went hunting, who did they leave in charge of the camps?' It is only because we have become Westernized that we have forgotten that women helped to lead our communities."

My biological mother had tuberculosis and was shipped South for treatment, where she had to stay for quite a while. When I was born, I was flown back to Iqaluit to be adopted by my grandparents, as had been previously arranged. My mother tells me that they had tagged me with an identification slip so the RCMP would know who to take me to.

My parents were originally from the Kimmirut area, where they had lived in traditional camps. They were some of the first settlers in Iqaluit, which is where I grew up and went to school. In his younger days, my father was a ranger with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, patrolling from community to community by dog team. He was a community leader, at least unofficially. Later, he worked for many years in the garage at the Department of Transport, keeping it clean, changing tires, and things like that, until his retirement. My mother was of that generation of stay-at-home moms, so her job was to look after the family. It was great for me, knowing that she would be home for us after school every day. Things are different today, with both mothers and fathers working outside the home. After

school I would often be taken to women's gatherings at the elders' facility, where my biological mother would be playing cards or knitting with her friends.

My parents barely spoke English, and they certainly couldn't write it—I learned English from my siblings in my preschool years. That meant it was a challenge to do my school homework, even though my parents tried really hard to help me. Usually they would just refer me to my sisters. They were modern Inuit in the sense that they had settled in a community and had television and running water, but they still experienced a real cultural disconnect. As my fifteen-year-old son Iola would say, they were old school! I was the youngest child in my adoptive family, and I was always the modern one. I had a very different upbringing compared to my other siblings. They had lived nomadically and had to learn to adapt to community life. Even I have seen big changes while growing up: back then, we were 1,500 people in Iqaluit. Today, we are 7,000.

My siblings and I had a very strict upbringing. My mother just had to know everything that was going on: if a friend called from school, my mother would start right in with, "Who's that? What were you talking about? If they have that much to say, they can come here and tell it to you in person." I knew that what really bothered her was not being able to hear what was being said on the other end of the line. Telephone was new and very big to us then, something like an X-Box would be to today's children. We were only allowed to play outside if we stayed within my mother's line of sight, and she usually wouldn't let me go for long walks in the summer with other girls.

A couple of years before she died, I had an "ah-ha!" moment about her strictness when she asked me to think about those moments in my childhood when I was frustrated by her "no" answers. She asked me to look at where I am today, compared to the other girls I had envied

in those days. I understood at that moment that she had been trying to lead me down the right path, to not let me get sidetracked, as some kids are. It was amazing to have that insight and appreciation of what was behind her manner back then. As a parent today, I have the same values that I grew up with. My son says I am the strictest mother ever! I tell him it is a mom's prerogative, and that when he is a young adult, I will sit down with him and make him understand why. Hopefully there won't be too many young and sidetracked people that I will need to compare him to. But the education principle is what is important for him to realize.

My coffee shop, the Grind and Brew, used to be downtown, and we used to put picnic tables outside for people to enjoy the short summer weather. On the day Nunavut was created I began my catering business. I hardly saw the events come and go, because I was so busy catering for the celebrations! From that day on, the changes in Nunavut were almost instantaneous: overnight, you could no longer tell who was a tourist and who was here to live and work. The growth was unbelievable. Between 1999 and 2008, Iqaluit just about doubled in population, and a whole service industry sprang up.

No matter how big things get in Iqaluit, I want to be involved in making it a great community. There are many different interest groups in town, all gathering together for different activities, and I just want everyone to be involved. At the coffee shop I was really in contact with everyday people; I heard about the disconnect they felt with the administration of their town. People encouraged me to run as mayor, to be their voice and a familiar face in a place of power. I chose to run because I wanted to give back to my community some of the pride I felt about Iqaluit.

Before I decided to get involved, seven years ago, I had never been interested in being an elected leader. There was always a bit of a stigma to leadership in our

communities. Even today, I don't call myself a politician, even if technically that is what I am. I want to dissociate myself from the tinge of self-interest that goes along with politicians. I am doing this to make our community a better place to live.

Leadership comes to me naturally, I believe, because I am comfortable talking to anybody. A lot of that comes from how I grew up, with all kinds of people coming to our home. My father showed me that I could do whatever I had to do. He might not have worked in a government office, but he was a real connector; he was always listening to people, wanting to hear about what they were up to, what they needed. Of course, I am a Sheutiapik, which means "the one with big ears", and I always joke that my name means that I have to be a great listener.

As a mayor in the North, I wear many different hats. I am a member of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, and I also attend the meetings of different national agencies for the Nunavut Association of Municipalities.[1] In my first term as mayor, we decided that the mayor's office needed to be more visible to the general population—people didn't know enough about what was going on at the City Hall. I am often invited to say words of welcome to groups that come to Iqaluit as well, and we decided we wouldn't say "no" to any invitation—if I can't attend, the deputy mayor will; if he or she can't, then a councillor will go. We might be invited to speak or we might just be observers, but at some point there will be a coffee break, and often the best networking happens during those pauses. We want to hear what is going on in our community and connect with people. That is our biggest job.

I can't know everything about what is going on, but I certainly try to be on top of who needs what and who is

1. Elisapee Sheutiapik is the current president of the Nunavut Association of Municipalities.

doing what in the community. Because of my personality, people feel comfortable telling me about what is going on. A couple of years ago, an eighteen-year-old local girl came and talked to me about a beautiful place out towards Apex Hill where there should be a green space set up, with a picnic table and a garbage bin. As the mayor, I tried to get people on the job of looking into that. On another occasion, some people asked me to look at the possibility of getting a facility for homeless people, where they could have some daytime activities. When people come to me with things like this, I don't say, "I'm sorry, that's not in my municipal mandate." I phone around to find out who handles those kinds of matters and see what we can do. Connecting people is a huge part of what I do.

I am always trying to find a balance between my duties as an elected official and being a mother to my child. My son was only nine years old when I became mayor. I realize that in order to have the freedom to do whatever he wants, he will need a good education. For today's generation, the sky is the limit—if they are willing to work hard for it. My son is involved in sports, playing and refereeing hockey.[2] I have taken him to federal election debates; he might get a little bit bored and he may not always understand, but he is going to appreciate those opportunities some day. If I can, and his school schedule permits, I take him on some of my work trips as well. I took him to Geneva, where the United Nations' International Polar Year was winding down.[3] He went to a press conference with me there and

2. At the time of her interview, Elisapee Sheutiapik's son, Iola, had just been accepted to the Ontario Hockey Academy in Cornwall, Ontario.
3. The 2007-2009 International Polar Year was the fourth event organized by the world's nations to study the North and South poles. The first International Polar Year was held in 1882-1883 and brought Franz Boas, the author of *The Central Eskimo*, to Cumberland Sound and Baffin Island.

saw that what I am doing is not just local. He saw that it was important for me, an Inuk, to show people that global issues, such as climate change and the European seal ban, have an impact on the Inuit way of life and on our health.

When you are in politics, it is really important to have very strong support from your family. My son has always been involved in my political campaigns, because I want him to see what life is all about and also because he is what keeps me strong. In fact, he was always the first person I talked to about running in any of the elections that I participated in. Because of my career, he has had to be responsible from a young age, but that has benefited him. I have tried to teach him to treat people the way he wants to be treated. At the very least, I hope that the things I do today will improve his future and his generation's future.

My advice to anyone considering a leadership position is to practise forward thinking. Our elders were forward thinkers, in the sense that when they hunted they tried to leave some for the next generation. Today's leaders do the same thing but in a modern way. We try to be visionary and plan properly so that our dreams will become reality. This means working efficiently with different levels of government and taking care of our assets. That goes for material things, like buildings in a municipality: if you maintain it properly, you will get more use out of it.

Young people today are prepared for leadership in a way that I never was. Some grade 4 students came here and sat in the city council chamber and asked me questions about elections, because they were going to have their own mock elections in their classroom! Nine-year-olds greet me in the streets, with "Hi, Miss Mayor." When I was nine, I didn't know who the mayor was! I always try to encourage young adults to run for city council, because they are already so aware; they have been involved with student councils and know the assembly processes. A lot

of women and young people in this community are also involved in community organizations. Volunteering is a preparation for leadership. I always tell them, "If I can do it, you can do it." It is just a matter of stepping up to the plate and getting ready to take action in a different capacity.

Women have a special contribution to make to politics. In the midst of conflict, women are willing to make good compromises if it can bring everybody to a decision. They are also ready to talk publicly about conflict. For men, I have observed that it is often more about who is going to win; if there is a decision to be made, they will often just keep trying to change the minds of whoever is opposing them. That is tricky if the opponents are men who are also thinking their minds will not be changed! In my first term as mayor, there were three women on the city council, and in my second term there were none. I am an observer of body language, and I saw with my own eyes this kind of behaviour at council meetings. The decision-making process might take longer with women, but it is much calmer.

I believe that women also have different priorities in politics. Women leaders realize that we have to balance our budgets, but they are also the first ones to say, "Who can we partner with?" Theirs is more of a "we" approach. Here in Iqaluit, for example, we have a new transition home for women in need of shelter. When it was time to develop programs for them, I suggested that the home's board of directors go to the Tukisigiarvik Society, to partner with them.[4] Even if it wasn't an obvious solution to some people, I didn't see why they should bother to reinvent the wheel. I try to work with other organizations

4. Tukisigiarvik Society manages a drop-in centre in Iqaluit that provides a breakfast program, free country food, and land skills training to the community.

rather than just be a municipal band-aid. We need to be responsible and creative in working together for a healthy community. I think women have a better understanding than men of the basics of life and society, such as health, education, and domestic life.

With the fast growth in the North, there have been many challenges for its people. There is more alcohol and drug abuse and suicide. Our houses are overcrowded, which can lead to anger and violence. At the municipal level, we keep saying, "We've all been impacted by violence, but what can we do about it?" In June 2007, our city council approved a zero-tolerance of violence policy: we wanted to vow, collectively, that we would not be physically, mentally, or emotionally abusive to family or friends or other members of the council. We took the policy seriously, to the point where if I ever saw that a councillor was acting aggressively toward somebody, we would remove him or her, if they didn't remove themselves first. We wanted to send the message to the community that violence is not acceptable, period.

When some people who advocate for the status of women suggested to our council that Iqaluit should name a street to commemorate victims of domestic violence, it totally fit with our mandate. That has turned into the Angel Street project, which has really become my passion. My inspiration was Lucy Idlout's song, *Irene*.[5] Lucy wrote that song about domestic violence despite the taboo that surrounds talking about it. I grew up as part of a generation that saw a lot of women with black eyes. When I was a kid, if I ever pointed out a woman's black eye to my mom, she would poke me with an elbow, as if to say, "Shhhh, don't say anything." It was very visible, yet we were not

5. Lucie Idlout is a Canadian rock singer from Iqaluit, Nunavut. The songs *Irene* and *Angel Street* can be heard at http://radio3.cbc.ca/#/bands/Lucie-Idlout.

supposed to talk about it. We decided to name the road that runs in front of the women's shelter "Angel Street," and we used the occasion to promote education about domestic violence. I had t-shirts made with "Angel Street" on them and the profits are used to fund the shelter.

Amazingly, some other communities from across Canada have decided to name their own Angel Streets. Usually women's shelters are discreetly located, so towns don't necessarily re-name the street where the actual shelter is; the name can be given to a green space or any other street. Whatever form it takes, the essential message of Angel Street is that domestic violence must stop. It affects every corner of Canada, all races, and both sexes. Very few people want to talk about being proactive in stopping violence—we acknowledge it, yes, but let's work to prevent it. The concept is really connecting together municipalities, justice workers, and the public from all over Canada.

If Angel Street is my pet project, my mayoral nightmare is dealing with people who don't pay their property taxes. The tax base in Iqaluit is small; we have about 700 taxpayers now, and by law, we have to advertise who is delinquent in their payments. Sometimes people fall behind because they were laid off or got sick, but others just choose not to pay. During one of my terms, we had to take a stand and send a clear message. We tried to be very cooperative, but we had to sell one home and really push the other delinquent taxpayers to set up payment plans. That was my most challenging moment as mayor, fearing that those delinquent families would become homeless. At the same time, we were hearing from the community that it wasn't fair for some taxpayers to be left to their delinquency while the others respected the law.

A few years ago, I decided to run for a seat in the Legislative Assembly of Nunavut. It was an experience I am still getting over. My leadership style is not confrontational,

but during that campaign, I had to be sharp and vocal. My team would put up my campaign posters around town one day, and the next day they would be gone. We were criticized for the way we hung the posters, to the point where we had to place them with measuring tapes to guide us. Just about every place we wanted to advertise my candidacy, we were reminded that we couldn't put up posters on government-owned property. That meant we couldn't even put posters up at the Nunavut Arctic College student residence or at the post office, where everybody in Iqaluit passes through each day. At the coffee shop, we used to let all the candidates put up their campaign flyers, because we wanted to get people talking about who they were so they could make an informed choice on Election Day.

During the campaign period, I found that many people were uneducated about the electoral process—some of them didn't know that it was the members of the Legislative Assembly who elect the premier after the general elections, rather than the voters themselves. Many voters called to say they supported me and that I shouldn't cave in to intimidation, but many other people were worried about the political consequences of supporting me. Some people might have just thrown in the towel and walked away from all that, but I believe that I am here to be a voice for change and that someone has to speak out. My conclusion is that there has to be a fair, consistent process for territorial elections. At the city council, if I make a mistake, I am the first to admit it and consider it a lesson learned. It is important to move on and make sure that the same mistakes don't happen again. I would like to see that approach implemented at the Nunavut legislature.

Last year, an elderly man came up to me at the airport and shook my hand and said, in Inuktitut, "My wife and I are very proud of you. You've proven that women can lead!" I answered him with a question: "Back before I was born, when the men went hunting, who did they leave in

charge of the camps?" It is only because we have become Westernized that we have forgotten that women helped to lead our communities.

When women step forward to take a leadership role at the next highest level, it is just an extension of the leadership they take in their own homes. Some of us have businesses too, so we are responsible and we know how to run an organization. If a woman has those qualities, she can get elected. It is just a matter of encouraging her to take that next step. In order to encourage them, we need to remind women that the skills they use at home are the same ones they are going to need to run a committee or a board of directors or a council. In Inuit families, the man often signs over the paycheque to the woman, who manages the budget and buys the groceries. That is the way it was in our household. Language doesn't need to be a deterrent to leadership; my mom didn't need to know a lot of English to be able to manage that responsibility.

A lot of women are in high leadership positions in Nunavut now, and it would be great to have even more women in the legislature. At the same time a balance in representation is important, both between the different cultures and the genders. I know that women are busy running their organizations and managing their personal lives, but I still encourage women and young people to run for city council. It might be intimidating for them at first, but I think they can handle it.

Through all I have done, personally and professionally, my parents and my son have been my inspiration. My parents brought me up in a healthy environment where I was encouraged to be open-minded about new things; they knew that our society would be changing a lot and they wanted me to be ready for it. My son also helps me stay open to change. Seeing him reminds me that while I might think I am modern—and I think I am, compared to my parents—there is another generation coming along

after me. My family has taught me to take parenting very seriously, and I try to be a good parent to my city too.

Kivalliq women in gala dress, Fullerton, Nunavut. 1903-1904

Credit: A.P. Low / Library and Archives Canada / PA-053606

Manitok Thompson at the swearing-in ceremony in Iqaluit on April 1, 1999, on the occasion of the inauguration of Nunavut.

On the left, the late Honourable Helen Maksagak, who was then the Commissioner for the Northwest Territories and Nunavut. Standing in the back is John Quirke, Clerk of the Assembly.

Credit: Manitok Thompson

Don't Just Think About It, Do It!

Manitok Thompson

> *"I'm Inuk. Generations of Inuit survived with only bones and stones, with nobody to help them. I will survive this; I am not going to fail. I am not going to go to the bars, and I am not going to get myself involved in anything destructive. My only mission is to make sure that I am the voice of the people who put me here and put my whole being into the job."*

When I was a child, my family lived about five miles outside of Coral Harbour, between the town and a federal Ministry of Transportation station, or MOT. Our big black house is still standing there. The place was called Snafu, which was the name of the United States Navy ship that brought in barrels of oil for the DEW line in the 1940s.[1] Snafu was a very isolated little place, with only five families living there in my time. Mine was the last family to move into Coral Harbour after the social housing was built there; originally, the settlement had developed around a Hudson's Bay post. Angutimmarik, my dad's grandfather and my great-grandfather, moved there from

1. Distant Early Warning System. From 1954 to 1957, during the cold war, a radar detection system was built across the Canadian Arctic, above the Arctic Circle. The project was an airspace defense initiative of the United States government in partnership with the Canadian government.

the Igloolik-Repulse Bay area, making my dad an original Coral Harbour resident.[2]

I had two older sisters and two younger sisters. Leonie, the oldest, has a hotel called Leonie's Place in Coral Harbour and is also a teacher. My brother Louie was next; he is a contractor. Rosemary is a teacher, too, and lives in Rankin Inlet. My sister Cathy was the president of Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. at the same time that I was a government cabinet minister. Other members of the family are Mona, Tommy, Avaalaq, and Gabriel.

My father, Mikkitok Bruce, worked at the MOT station until he retired. Thirty or 40 white people lived there and took care of the weather station, the airport, and the DEW line. He also worked at the airport as second cook, janitor, and caretaker. He got the house in Snafu through his work; it was an old warehouse onto which he added a match-box house for an extra room. My mother disciplined us and scolded us, but my dad always had the last word; he was the disciplinarian in the house. They were both very strict and ran the house with "tough love".

My mother was not originally from Coral Harbour; she was brought there by my dad and Joe Curley, my dad's uncle by adoption and my mum's cousin. She was brought from Wager Bay, an abandoned trading post in the

2. Angutimmarik, also known as Scotch Tom, worked for many years as right-hand man to the Scottish whaling captain John Murray. After the whalers left, Angutimmarik shared the rest of his life with Nivisinaaq, who had been a widow since 1905. Angutimmarik died on Southampton Island in the 1940s, approximately ten years after the death of Nivisinaaq. He was the adoptive father of Joe Curley (Kayakjuaq).
See: www.inuitwhalers.ca

Ukkusiksalik National Park, located near Repulse Bay.[3,4] She didn't have any relatives in Coral Harbour, and it seems she didn't want to live in a populous place, so my dad moved us to Snafu where he would also be closer to his job at the MOT. I think they also wanted to live in a place where they could concentrate on their children and on teaching us their values. My mother held Sunday school for us every Sunday—just for me, Cathy, and Mona. Leonie and Louie were in Churchill and Rosemary stayed in town most of the time. My mother was non-denominational, because there was no church when she was growing up in Wager Bay. She learned how to read, including a little in English, when her family looked after a priest for one or two years. She has nearly memorized the whole Bible.

My mother gave us a lot of chores to do because she couldn't work much herself. Her health was poor and she was often cold and wrapped up in a blanket. I often joke that it was like a nunnery in Snafu when I was growing up, because we were always working and praying and singing. In the Inuit culture of my mum's day, boys were favoured. When I was running for a seat in the Legislative Assembly and Cathy was running for the presidency of Nunavut Tunngavik Inc., my mum used to say, "Girls are not supposed to do that! I didn't realize I had girls who wanted to take over the world! In my day, girls were looked down upon. Every time I gave birth to a girl, I cried! And now you girls want to become leaders!" We girls certainly never thought of becoming leaders at the time. We were

3. The American whaler George G. Cleveland set up a whaling station at the mouth of Wager Bay in 1900. A Royal Northwest Mounted Police station was established in 1910. In 1915, Cleveland came back to open a trading post and later became the manager of the Hudson's Bay post there.
4. The Ukkusiksalik National Park was established in 2003 and covers 25,000 square kilometres around Wager Bay, an inlet of Roes Welcome Sound.

Manitok teaching in Pangnirtung in 1976
Credit: Manitok Thompson

Manitok Thompson and her brother Louie standing on the first Eastern Arctic legally hunted whale in 1996, in Repulse Bay
Credit Manitok Thompson

just girls! Boys were more valued in Inuit society. I was actually very shy, so much that I couldn't even buy Juicy Fruit gum from the Hudson's Bay Company store by myself!

I can still hear my mother's voice. She also used to tell us, "Nobody else is going to help you, because you're girls. Nobody will care about you, nobody is going to help you, and nobody will uplift you. So you have to encourage and help yourselves. Nobody is out there thinking, 'Oh, I'm going to help that girl to become a leader in the community.' " Her philosophy was that you have to help yourself if you want to get ahead in your social environment. She also used to tell us, "Don't be late for school unless it's because you didn't wash and comb your hair; you can be late because of that." In other words, she taught us that we must not be seen by the *Qallunaat* as though we didn't look after ourselves. She always told us we were never lesser people than *Qallunaat* and that everybody is equal before God.

We used to walk into town for the school week, and in late fall we skated. There were lakes nearly the whole way, so we walked a bit, then put on our skates, then walked again, then skated. Sometimes we went in by dog team. I stayed with my favourite aunt, Julie Turaaluk Paniyuk, my dad's sister. Cathy stayed with her favourite aunt, Hattie Alaralak. My dad made these arrangements. We would go to town, stay the week at our aunts', and then on Friday we would return home again to spend the weekend with Mum and Dad at Snafu.

I remember the first day of school for me and Cathy. The teachers used to change everybody's Inuit names to English ones, and when the teacher asked us what our names were, I didn't understand what she was saying. When I began school I didn't speak any English at all—we made up silly words and pretended to speak English for fun, but we didn't know what we were saying. Cathy's Inuktitut name is Qatani, and when the teacher heard it,

she said to my sister, "Oh, that's Catherine! Okay, we'll call you Cathy." And I thought, "How are we going to tell the teacher my sister's not Catherine? That's my name!" My name is Manitok Catherine. But we didn't know enough English to tell her that, so my sister became Cathy. When the teacher asked me my name, I said, "Manitok." She seemed to smile at me, and she must have liked it, because she didn't change it.

I have another memory of the teacher reading us the story of the three little pigs. As she was reading this story about the pigs and the wolf, we whispered to each other, "Is there really such an animal? These people must have weird imaginations!" We wondered where these strange animals were, and we wondered, too, if the trees they lived near could be real.

My mum had trained us since we were young to just ignore criticism and negative gossip. She taught us that being a pretty little thing wasn't a goal in life. In fact, my mum was always very political. I remember her debating issues with her friends Sateana, who was my dad's cousin, and Jackie Napayok. I remember especially the debate on whether the community should become a hamlet. The community council came around to talk with people in their homes and asked each household if they wanted the community to run its own affairs. The person who came to our house was Sateana, and my mother told him she was worried that the community finances would not be looked after properly. She was concerned that the hamlet office would go into deficit because the council might not yet know how to budget properly. We hardly ever got visitors out at Snafu, but we girls were always debating amongst ourselves. My mum got tired of that, because we argued all the time about everything and anything. Looking at the positive side of it, arguing gave us many valuable skills!

Today, if I want to debate something, I make sure I know everything about it. A lot of times, men won't bother

to do that. They won't take time to research the details, or they just say, "Yes, okay, that's right," even if they don't know what they are talking about. But I knew that if I was going to accomplish anything, I would have to work hard. I went to a teacher education program and university without finishing high school—I jumped a step—but I had the highest marks. There were two awards given for top marks in my program at the University of Saskatchewan, and I received both of them. I won them because I had studied very hard to catch up to the grade 12 graduates in my class. I was the first teacher to graduate in the Kivalliq region, and I really felt proud of myself when I got off the plane in Coral Harbour, in the summer of 1977, to rent my own house and start my teaching career.

The real beginning of my public life came later, when I was teaching northern studies at the high school in Rankin Inlet. There didn't seem to be many Inuit role models, and I wanted to get the kids excited about their culture and about who they were. They were very interested about their ancestors, so I had them interview their families to find out about who their grandfathers and grandmothers really were and what advice they had for young people. We would put their statements on the wall, things like, "Finish high school: don't quit", "Don't make fun of handicapped people", "Help poor people", and little things like that. I started to get interested in what people had to say. Eventually, my very good friend and uncle, Mike Panika, told me I should run for a position as a hamlet councillor.

I ran at the next municipal election and got elected. That was when John Amagoalik was travelling around Nunavut with the Nunavut Implementation Commission to ask the communities what kind of government they wanted. [5] I noticed that a lot of people didn't know what

5. The Nunavut Implementation Commission chaired by John Amagoalik organized extensive community consultations in 1994-1995 to debate

types of governments there were in the world. They didn't know about socialism, communism, democracy, or political parties. Nobody really knew political systems at all, and yet John Amagoalik and his group were coming to ask detailed organizational questions.

Because I was a teacher, the hamlet council asked me to go on the local radio and inform the community about government matters. I already had a lot of the materials anyway, since I was teaching about political systems at school. I went on the community radio station and talked about how the federal government is set up, how many parties there are, and how they operate. A lot of people started to get very interested, even if they couldn't understand some things right away. Some people couldn't see why, for example, if you disagree with an idea held by your party, you still have to say you agree just because your party agrees. I would explain, "Well, it's sort of like hockey. It's like when you're a Montreal Canadiens fan or you're a Philadelphia fan, and no matter what, you just agree with your team because you are loyal to that team and believe in them."

Eventually, John Amagoalik and his group asked all the mayors to select two people from each community to go to Iqaluit to talk about the new government. I was selected from Rankin Inlet, along with Joe Kaludjak, who was the deputy mayor. Before going, we had a big public meeting to discuss where we wanted the new capital to be. I did most of the presentation, and I did it in both Inuktitut and English. Then we went to Iqaluit, where I had my first

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the design of the future government. One of the important issues brought forward by the Commission was the location of the capital city of the planned Nunavut Territory.

See Jackie Price, *Tukisivallialiqtakka*: *The things I have now begun to understand: Inuit governance, Nunavut and the Kitchen Consultation Model.* http://web.uvic.ca/igov/research/pdfs/Jackie%20Price%20-%20Thesis.pdf

experience of being on television as I spoke up for Rankin Inlet. I had briefed myself quite a bit from my high school resources, so I was familiar with a lot of the issues that were being talked about. When I came back to Rankin Inlet, people started approaching me to run for a seat as Member of the Northwest Territories (NWT) Legislative Assembly. I had never thought about it before.

John Todd, a good friend of mine, was already the Member of the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly for Rankin Inlet, where I lived, so somebody suggested I should run for the Chesterfield Inlet, Repulse Bay, and Coral Harbour riding. I just said I would think about it, but then in 1995, the incumbent resigned. They were going to run a by-election to replace the member for the last three-week session of the legislature before the general elections were due. Some people wanted to nominate me, and I decided I would try it. I thought, "Okay, it's only for three weeks." And I got in! Five men ran too, but I got in. I went to Yellowknife and became a Member of the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories.

Already sitting at that NWT Assembly were Nellie Cournoyer, John Todd, Dennis Patterson, Ed Picco, Kevin O'Brien, and Kelvin Ng, who had also gotten in through a by-election.[6] As a regular member, I sat beside Dennis Patterson, who mentored me. I only had three weeks to say what I wanted to say, so I asked people in my riding what they wanted me to talk about. In Repulse Bay, they wanted

6. "Manitok Thompson was first elected to the Northwest Territories' Legislature for the riding of Aivilik in a by-election on May 8, 1995, and re-elected in October of the same year. While holding the cabinet portfolios of Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs and Minister Responsible for the Women's Directorate she was a member of the Standing Committee on Finance, the Standing Committee on Agencies, Boards and Commissions and the Special Committee on Housing."
From: http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/women/002026-842-e.html

a bowhead whale hunt and a gymnasium for the school, so my first member's statement was about that. Repulse Bay went on to have the first federal government-approved bowhead whale hunt as well as a full-size school gym. In fact, bowhead whale hunts take place every year now. I worked on other issues too: the people in Chesterfield Inlet needed policemen and a school gym, and in Coral Harbour, they wanted a bridge over a river and some falls a few miles out of town. They also wanted the harbour to be dug deeper for boats coming in. All the issues I brought up in that first session were eventually resolved.

The women in Coral Harbour also wanted a little tanning house to cure their sealskins. John Todd was the Minister of Economic Development, and he said he would spend $50,000 to do a feasibility study. I knew how this would work: propose a feasibility study, then do the study, and then finally they might give us the money for construction. I knew the whole process could take a long time. I told the minister that I didn't want a feasibility study done, that we had already studied the matter. I told him to give us the $50,000 and that we would buy a house for $25,000 right away, and then we would hire one person at $25,000 a year to run the building. He said, "Okay." And that was just my first three-week session!

I ran again in October, in the general election. When I got elected that second time, I became a cabinet minister.[7] I hadn't been thinking at all about that possibility, even though during my first session, the Clerk of the Legislature, David Hamilton, had told me that he knew I would become a minister one day. I was new, and I was just excited about

7. In 1995 voters in the Eastern Arctic elected as members of the legislative assembly: Manitok Thompson (Aivilik), Mark Evaloarjuk (Amittuq), Tommy Enuaraq (Baffin Central), Goo Arlooktoo (Baffin South), Ed Picco (Iqaluit), John Todd (Keewatin Central), Kelvin Ng (Kitikmeot), Kevin O'Brien (Kivallivik), and Levi Barnabas (Quttiktuq).

getting into politics. I thought, "Wow, I love to strategize and politics is it!" There was a Nunavut caucus and a Northwest Territories caucus; each had to elect four cabinet ministers, and I decided to run for a ministerial position. When I got elected, I was in shock! I called my Uncle Mike in the hamlet garage where he worked as a mechanic. I was crying. I said, "I'm a minister now! Of the Northwest Territories government!" Then I called my brother, Louie, then my mum and dad. I think my mum was more worried about the hard times I might encounter in politics, where someone will always have some criticism about anything you do. She seemed more worried about the people who might not be satisfied, and my dad seemed more worried about his little *nutaraq*[8], but I knew they both were proud.

I went into my office, closed the door, and for about 20 minutes I just thought to myself, "What have you done, Manitok? How did this happen? What did you get yourself into?" I thought, "You're just the simple little Manitok from Snafu who didn't even speak English. You were a girl from a culture that looked down upon girls. Nobody in your community would ever have thought you would be a leader. And now you're the leader of the community, and on top of that, you have one of the top jobs in the territory." Coming from my background, it amazed me that I would be leading a mostly *Qallunaq* staff. I used to be so scared of white people when I was small. I was in total shock for a few minutes. I wondered if I would survive. Then I thought, "I'm Inuk. Generations of Inuit survived with only bones and stones, with nobody to help them. I will survive this; I am not going to fail. I am not going to go to the bars, and I am not going to get myself involved in anything destructive. My only mission is to make sure that I am the voice of the people who put me here and put my whole being into the job."

8. Child

My husband has been very supportive of me. I could not have done this without Tom. All these developments meant taking the mother out of our house. He took over that role right away: he made sure the boys went to school and did homework and went to hockey, and he cooked for them and helped clean the house. He even played guitar to relax me and put me to sleep when I finally made it home after my meetings upon meetings. Any woman can do any job with a supportive husband or partner.

In that next four-year mandate, we really had to move on with the transition toward Nunavut. We cabinet ministers were told by Premier Don Morin and Finance Minister John Todd that we had to make sure the government departments didn't carry a deficit at the time of the changeover, in April 1999. We were told that if we did go into deficit, we would be removed from our portfolio. We worked hard to make sure the Government of Nunavut would start with a zero balance. Actually, at our first Nunavut cabinet meeting, we realized that the Office of the Interim Commissioner had gone into deficit by four million dollars. We had to start the new administration with that debt.

In the Northwest Territories Nunavut Caucus, we were really excited about getting our own territory. I felt that it was important that the federal government no longer see us as just part of one big territory. When I was Minister of the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs in Yellowknife, the mayors, band councils, and band chiefs from the Western Arctic could access me easily. They could come to see me in Yellowknife, or else we, as ministers, would travel to their nearby communities, such as Inuvik, Tuktoyaktuk, Fort McPherson, and Fort Simpson. But I hardly saw any mayors from Nunavut come to Yellowknife, because they were so far away. Nunavut was out of the way. The two regions had completely different issues: before the division, in Nunavut we only had one hospital, in Iqaluit.

In the Western Arctic, they had five hospitals. I had felt for years that Yellowknife had only been paying attention to the people in the Western Arctic.

I was a minister in a government that was ending and then a minister in a government that was just beginning. Coming from well-oiled machinery that had been running for 30 years made it a challenge to move on to a government that was just being built. I had to tell some of my staff what a briefing book should look like, how to hire staff, and how to find office spaces. I was given the Department of Public Works (DPW) when I became a minister in the new Nunavut government, and when I called the DPW headquarters and asked for their briefing book I was shocked to learn that it was only five pages long. In the Northwest Territories government, my briefing books had been around five hundred pages long! I had only one deputy minister, one assistant deputy minister, and a secretary—we were the entire headquarters staff of Nunavut's Public Works department. The regional offices did all of the other headquarters jobs while this transition was taking place.

There were challenging issues like decentralization and gender parity to deal with, but it was very exciting to see our government in our own Inuit territory dealing with our own issues and land claims. The federal government could no longer look at us as being from the same territory that had band councils. A lot of times they had referred to all of us as First Nations, whether we were Dene or Inuit. The Department of Indian and Northern Affairs was like that for many years. It's never been called the Department of Inuit Affairs!

One thing that I really admired with the First Nations chiefs and the Dene mayors was that they were so in tune with politics. They were very aggressive in trying to get their issues across. I found the Inuit mayors to be very Inuit! We are friendly, accommodating, and we trust the

bureaucracy too much. Generally speaking, Inuit don't like to hurt other peoples' feelings or be bitter or controversial. We try to live in harmony. Mind you, the younger generation are more educated about different issues and are more aggressive. I loved meeting with the Western Arctic mayors, just because of their assertive behaviour, and I used to wish that Nunavut mayors would be able to operate in the same manner. It may take a while to get to the same level as a government that's been in existence for a few decades, but we will get there. We've done a pretty good job at starting up the machine.

Looking back, I think my biggest accomplishment in life was my graduation as a teacher. It gave me an edge. When I graduated in 1977, I told my dad I was going to rent a big house and that he would not have to pay for anything anymore. My parents were in social housing, and my dad was still working. I brought them into a suspended basement government house and paid for everything. Instead of getting married, I wanted to take care of my parents so they wouldn't have to worry anymore. But then I fell in love and married my best friend, Tom, all the way from Kingston, Ontario. He was also a teacher in Coral Harbour.

Politically, I think one of my accomplishments was fairly representing the people. I heard from a lot of elders that they thought my member's statements and minister's statements were right on. Most of my statements had to do with Inuit pride and independence: we are independent people; we don't need people from another culture telling us what to do all the time. We can make our own decisions. I used to tell my high school students, both Inuit kids and non-Inuit kids, that our brains are all the same size. We have to believe that we can do anything if we study hard and work at it and don't give up, whatever it may be. When I was a little girl, if somebody scolded me or said harsh words to me, I would have shrunk and cried. When I was a minister, I received a lot of that and survived.

I took a lot of criticism from the Nunavut Status of Women Council and feminist groups when I opposed gender parity. I see feminists as the same type of people as those who protest against the seal hunt. When I became Minister of the Status of Women, my first question was, "Where do my sons belong in your policies? Do they have a place there?" And I know they don't. Feminists talk about men as the abusers and women as the victims—the men go to jail, and the women go to the shelters. There is something that needs to be done for women who are abused, I agree with that. I wouldn't tolerate violence against anybody. But I believe that we need a council on the status of the family. If the men need help, help them. If the women need help, help them. Kids, too, deserve help, and the family as a whole. A lot of the mothers who are on the Status of Women Council just want good, healthy families, so why are we dividing the two? We have to start thinking in terms of the family unit. Inuit women have taken leadership roles in a lot of the political jobs within the community, and some of the more successful stories within the communities are those of women. In a lot of cases, there are more services for women now than for men because of Pauktuutit and the Qulliit Nunavut Status of Women Council. That has always been something I believe in, that we have to look at the family as a whole rather than dividing men and women.

When the debate on gender parity came up, it became a big issue across Nunavut. The Nunavut Status of Women Council was really upset with me; probably all the women's groups in Canada were mad at me! There was interest in the matter from all over the world. But my belief is that when you elect somebody, you elect them because you think they know how to get the job done. You have probably seen them involved in the community, and that's what you base your vote on. When you run in a consensus style government such as Nunavut's, you get elected on

your merit, for who you are, and not as a party member. In the party system you can get many votes from people who simply vote for the party and not necessarily for the candidate. I always felt the votes I got each time were because of what I could do for the public and because I would not embarrass the people I represented. When it comes to voting in a consensus government, people are not primarily pressured to vote for a party but more for the skills of the candidates.

One advantage of women's leadership is that we can speak more spontaneously than men. We just let it out, straight from the heart. Men do too much thinking before they speak; by the time they say something, the woman has already said it and done something about it! That is where the big difference is. It seems that women can do many jobs at the same time; maybe it comes from carrying a baby on their back or on their hip and cooking or sewing or cleaning at the same time. I think we're better multi-taskers.

For anybody who wants to get into politics, whether man or woman, you have to get involved in volunteering. When you volunteer a lot in the community, the community starts to respect you. They know you are there to do the work, even if you don't get paid for it. That's what will get you somewhere. I did a lot of volunteering. In Rankin Inlet, I was one of the main people who started the Pakalluk Time festival, which they still have now. I did other volunteer work for the community, including for the Queen's visit. Some years later, somebody said to me, "You know, usually recreation people around here get paid!" I didn't know that, and it didn't matter. You gain respect by loving and caring for people in your community, even if it doesn't pay. They need to know you do it because you care. I always remember what my Uncle Ollie Ittinuar told me: "Don't just think about it, do something about it."

Manitok Thompson with her sisters

From left to right: Mona Niaqukittuq, Cathy Qatanni, Manitok Thompson, Rosemary Angugasak and Leonie Nappaq

Sheila Watt-Cloutier

Credit: Sheila Watt-Cloutier

Pioneering Change

Sheila Watt-Cloutier

"At first I didn't want to go into politics, but I reached a point where I didn't want to be standing on the outside—if you want to change systems, you have got to change them from the inside. You have got to secure that political power base."

My name is Sheila, but in my homeland, Nunavik, I have always been called "Siila". I am from a place called Old Fort Chimo, which was across the river from New Chimo, now called Kuujjuaq. I was born into a family of two single women: I grew up with my grandmother and my mother, both of whom had been left behind by the white men who fathered their children.

My grandfather was William Watt, a Scotsman who worked for the Hudson's Bay Company. For many years we heard about how he had moved on to another posting and left behind my grandmother and their three children. After he left, she had to give her middle daughter, Panina, to another family to be raised—alone, she couldn't feed them all. We always thought that it was a story of abandonment, but decades later, when my mother died, we found a letter that my grandfather had written that totally changed our perception of what happened.

We learned from the letter that he had, in fact, asked her to come with him when he left. In his formal Scottish style, he wrote, "I wish you had come. It's not so bad

here; you would have made it." Apparently she answered him that she would not go with him; she felt that as an Inuk woman, she would never be able to live in his world. She told him, "If you remarry, don't marry an Inuk or an Indian woman, because it will break my heart. Marry one of your own, if you must." Many years later, he returned to one of our communities with a white wife and a son. Learning the truth about that story shifted a lot of energy of many of us, her grandchildren.

My grandmother's family was originally from Cape Dorset, before her family moved to Wakeham Bay, in Nunavik, and then down to Kuujjuaq. My great-grandfather, David Qisawatsiaq, who my grandson is named after, was a great hunter. When he lost the use of his legs, he became a carver. Ours was one of the rare families to not live in an outpost camp at the time; my grandmother didn't have a man to hunt for her, so she worked as a cleaning lady at the Hudson's Bay Company. My mother grew up working alongside my grandmother, washing dishes in return for food and supplies as early as the age of ten.

Those two women taught me many things; they were certainly the most influential women in my life. They weren't just survivors, they thrived, and growing up, I saw that women can do anything. The women in my family were not afraid of anything, especially my mother. I learned from them to go through life without fear. They were even able to hunt, and they only accepted help from others when it was necessary. I learned how to love country food from my grandmother, too.

As a child, my mother attended a mission school in Old Chimo; in those years it was rare for Inuit children to go to school. The teacher, Umikutaaq ("long beard"), taught her and the others how to read and write English, and because of her ability with the language, my mother became an interpreter at a young age. She had three children: my

brother Charlie, whose father was a Newfoundlander, my late sister, Bridget, whose father was an Irishman, and me. My father was an RCMP officer. Later, both my grandmother and mother adopted my other brother Elijah from Quartaq, whose father was a *Qallunaq* from southern Canada. My mother and grandmother raised us together. When my two brothers became young men, they became the hunters of the house—before that, my uncle, Johnny Watt, had been the provider, even when he was just a young man. My mother worked as an interpreter, travelling to nursing stations in communities all over Nunavik. One summer, she sailed with the medical ship the *CD Howe* up to the High Arctic.

When I was ten years old, I was sent to Nova Scotia to attend school. It was a challenging experience. I was there with Lizzie Saunders, my friend from home, and we cried non-stop for two weeks because of our homesickness. We were told that our letters home would be screened and censored, which was very inhibiting. Later on in my life, there were times when I had to get past that old fear of expressing my real views about things. It was the kind of experience that affects you for a long time, but it taught me to be courageous and to overcome trauma. That didn't happen overnight, but I did learn how to work through some of those first limiting beliefs about myself.

After two years in Nova Scotia, Lizzie and I attended the Churchill Vocational Centre in Churchill, Manitoba. It was a blessing to be with two hundred fellow Inuit students from all over Nunavik and Nunavut, and the three years I spent there were good. It is true that the CVC was part of the federal government's plan to culturally deprogram and reprogram Inuit children of the Arctic, but that particular school was run by good people. From where he worked in Ottawa, Superintendent Ralph Ritcey set the tone for how Inuit children in Churchill would be treated, and for the most part we were treated well.

The students ranged in age from 12 to 17 years old, and even though we were young, we felt safe there. We could relate to the structure and the routine, because traditional Inuit culture is actually quite disciplined. I see now that the whole program was oriented towards improving ourselves: our confidence, our stature, and how we spoke and acted and portrayed ourselves. That kind of teaching was also familiar to us, because our hunting culture is not just about pursuing animals; hunting is a way to develop character, patience, and courage. I don't always see that kind of connection between the curriculum and Inuit culture in today's education system.

There was not much political discussion at the school. We were not really encouraged to speak our own language, much less discuss the politics of what our people were living in the North. Nevertheless, many of today's Inuit leaders went to Churchill. I think that we were taught a lot of good things there that kept us vibrant and healthy. There were sports and dance and special events—I was even voted Snow Queen one year.

After Churchill, when I was 16 or 17, I went to high school in Ottawa for three years. I was very clear in my intention to be Nunavik's first doctor. I had a great deal of difficulty with math and science, though, and was told by my guidance counsellor that I was aiming too high and that I should become a nurse's assistant. I remember leaving that meeting and thinking, "No—if I'm not going to be a doctor, then I'm not going to do any of those jobs either." In those days, the government didn't seem to think being a doctor was a reasonable goal for me to reach for. You would think that they would have offered tutoring and extra help to get me through.

When I finished high school, I went to work as an interpreter for the doctors at the hospital in Nunavik, where I also helped deliver babies and gave x-rays and injections. I was practically a nurse's assistant, which was

strikingly similar to what my mother had done during the years she was interpreting and helping out at the nursing stations. After a number of years of working with doctors and nurses, Doctor Normand Tremblay, a physician at the Kuujjuaq hospital, decided it was not too late for me to go and become a doctor myself. He proposed a tailor-made program of study for me through Laval University, in Quebec City, which would prepare me to practise medicine in about four years. They would set up this program in exchange for my agreement to return to practise in the North. While they were working on that for me, I fell in love and got married. My path, obviously, was headed in a different direction.

I got married in Kuujjuaq and had two children. My husband and I lived a while in the South and then returned to Kuujjuaq, where I began my studies through McGill University to become a student counsellor. I went on to work for over ten years at the Kativik School Board in the student services department. After leaving Kativik School Board, I became the Inuk advisor to the independent Nunavik Educational Task Force, a committee that was looking at creating change in the school system.

I had a vision of what Nunavik students needed to be learning, academically, in order to succeed at the post-secondary level, and the task force asked some tough questions about why we were so far from that ideal. The school board was reluctant to be reviewed and resisted having me, a former employee, be involved in the review. That was an emotionally difficult time for me. They insisted that I could not be objective in my views about the school board's curriculum. The reality was that my experiences meant I knew first-hand where the system's weaknesses were—I had worked closely with high school students as a student counsellor in Kuujjuaq and was later the coordinator for student services for post-secondary students in Montreal.

In 1992, I decided to run for the position of corporate secretary at Makivik.[1] Before that, I had never thought of running for any kind of elections, even though my brother, Charlie, and my uncle had been involved in the political realm since I was quite young. I had never particularly wanted that for myself—I had never really bought into politics in the first place. By that point in my life, though, I had begun to believe that a political power base would give me something to work with, and so I told myself that it was time to try this path.

I tried and lost and ran again three years later. My platform was based on the issues I believed in, especially my desire to model, as a woman, a different kind of life for youth. In 1995, I was elected as corporate secretary. That summer, I attended the Inuit Circumpolar Council conference in Nome, Alaska, as a member of the Nunavik delegation. I went with no intention other than being a good delegate, but to my surprise, I left as the president of ICC Canada. I had been quite vocal at the discussions that took place there about social conditions, the environment, and education, and people wanted that kind of voice to represent them. Even though I was a newcomer to politics, they insisted and voted me in.

After one term each as president of the Canadian and then the regional ICC, I went on to fulfil two three-year mandates as ICC Canada president and eventually became international chair of the whole council, representing Canada, Alaska, the USA, Greenland, and Siberia, Russia. It was during my earlier tenure as president, though, that I realized I was really drawn to the international aspect of advocacy. I had a busy life and hadn't been looking to do that kind of work, but destiny always finds a way to

1. Makivik is the Nunavik Inuit political organization. It was responsible for the implementation of the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement in Nunavik.

come into your life. As international chair, I hit the ground running and never looked back.

A lot of work had already been done to raise awareness about the environmental dangers to Inuit from the world's use of persistent organic pollutants, or POPs, and now the global community was coming together to negotiate a treaty to ban these chemicals at their source. I took the issue to heart: by simply eating our precious country food, the mother's milk of Inuit women and our bodies were becoming increasingly laden with these toxins. As we were being poisoned from afar, I knew we had to change how the world was looking at these issues.

We had a strong team, and we got involved in all the global negotiations that led to the Stockholm Convention.[2] It was tough, but we got the government of Canada to come alongside with us. At first, they couldn't see us as an ally—in fact, the head of the Canadian delegation used a skunk analogy at the time to describe the situation, expressing that they would rather have had us "in the tent with them, spraying outward rather than inward". Eventually, they realized that we were an asset and could help them do their jobs better. They saw that it wasn't all about federal priorities—it was about Inuit women and their babies being fed mother's milk that was contaminated by a cocktail of toxins coming from industry around the world.

The first Conference of the Parties for the POPs treaty began in Montreal and got off to a good start when I received a standing ovation for the speech I gave. The next day, when I addressed the United Nations Assembly, there was spontaneous applause while I spoke about the issues. I think that is when the Canadian environment minister, Christine Stewart, realized that this was not just about

2. The text of the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutents (POPs) was adopted on May 22, 2001.

toxins and scientific reports but about real human beings. People were starting to understand that for us Inuit, it was very much a health issue.

Another turning point came when the next negotiating sessions were taking place in Nairobi, Kenya. During a reception there, I offered to Klaus Toepfer, the executive director of the United Nations Environment Program, an Inuit carving of a mother and child. It was carved by a woman from Kuujjuarapik, and I gave it to him as a gift to remind him of what our work was all about. Klaus Toepfer turned around and gave it to John Buccini, the Canadian who chaired all our sessions over the three or four years that we were in negotiations. Klaus handed it to him and said, "Keep this in front of you, while you chair, until this is all over." John Buccini placed that sculpture on the table in front of him in every country where he presided. He said that whenever he would get tired or unfocused during the sessions, which involved about 150 countries, he would just look at it and it would give him strength. He knew that we had to keep sending the message that this was all about mothers and children.

It was also a challenge to manage the balance between what we were saying internationally and what we wanted people to understand at home. The POPs situation was indeed alarming, but it was important that our people not give up their country food, nor stop nursing their babies. It was important that people not give up hunting, which is an integral part of their culture. We needed to communicate to people at home that science had proven that the benefits of nursing and eating country food outweighed the risks, as long as people followed certain guidelines. At the same time, we needed governments and organizations around the world to feel the urgency of the situation. If these levels of toxins had been found in chicken or beef or lobster, those foods would have been taken right off the shelves in southern grocery stores. Our political strategy was to sound

the alarm loudly so that the long work of negotiating could unfold as quickly as possible. I knew the complexity of the situation; I knew that it had taken decades of work to get to the point where, today, we are seeing a drop in certain POPs in the Arctic. I knew that we could not wait until we were forced to choose between our cultural heritage and our health. We could not wait until that day.

The 11 years I spent in elected positions with international mandates were busy ones with big challenges. During those years I had little control over how much rest I could get, and the rigor of the work took a toll on my health. Four years after leaving politics, I am only now starting to catch my breath! Many men politicians will say that their careers cost them their marriages and their family lives. I had been single for almost 20 years, so at least I didn't have someone at home saying, "So you're leaving again?" It was hard to be away from my grandson, whom I have co-parented, but that is why I put so much energy into what I was doing: it was for his future and for the future of his generation. All of my passion went into that work.

I also experienced some significant personal losses during those years. I'm certainly not alone in that; Inuit know a lot about loss. My only sister died just six days after I got back from the Nairobi sessions, and my aunt died just as I was heading to Johannesburg for the final negotiations. My mother died just after another big event. I also lost a niece and a nephew. Loss gives you a sense of perspective; it shapes and makes you. I don't want to intellectualize loss, and you certainly must grieve when you need to, but learning to continue and be strong in the face of those curveballs is part of the larger picture. My young niece recently lost her boyfriend in a drowning accident, and I told her that these things can either break you down, or, once you start the grieving process, they can bring you clarity about what you are meant to be doing in life. Learning that was a really big piece for me.

Once the POPs treaty was signed, I was able to turn my attention to climate change. That was a much bigger problem to tackle, because powerful countries like the United States would not budge on their environmental policies if it would mean the loss of a single American job. We worked hard on the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment, which was designed to present hard science, indigenous knowledge, and policy recommendations. Over 300 scientists from 15 countries were involved with the ACIA. A key element was that indigenous knowledge was not just an add-on; it was incorporated as much as possible into every one of the chapters. Scientists learned from Inuit and other northern indigenous peoples as much as the other way around. It was also a groundbreaking piece of work because the science was to be accompanied by policy recommendations.

The foreign affairs departments of all eight countries of the Arctic Council approved a work plan to produce the assessment, but halfway through the process the Americans changed their minds—they knew it was going to be a strong assessment. I flew back and forth to the secretariat in Iceland to try to help the process, and I also testified at the US Senate's Commerce, Science, and Transportation committee hearings. I told Senator John McCain that this document needed to be released as initially planned and signed by the foreign affairs ministers of all eight Arctic countries. I told him, quite frankly, that the US State Department seemed to be interfering with a process that had already been approved. Senator McCain was our biggest ally at the time, and he and two other senators agreed to write a letter to Secretary of State Colin Powell, recommending that the process continue. It was a tough time, with intimidation coming from certain elements at the State Department, but eventually the ACIA came out strong and the world saw the compelling science that was corroborated by traditional knowledge.

All those challenges prepared me for my later work in pioneering the connection of climate change to human rights. I remember our board members at ICC saying, "We Inuit are being hit the hardest by climate change. We're being poisoned by toxins, and climate change will affect our way of life. What recourse do we have?" One board member once asked if we could sue, but litigation would have implied that we were just doing it for money—plus, it would cost a fortune to launch a lawsuit. We chose the moral high ground and opted to explore other avenues. The timing was serendipitous, and we discovered that legal teams from Earth Justice in San Francisco and the Center for International Environmental Law in Washington DC were already linking these issues together. We met with them in Washington and agreed to work together on the process of making climate change a human rights issue.

It was obvious to us that pursuing this was the way to go. For us Inuit, the foundation of our culture is built on the ice and snow. When those are affected by climate, it becomes an issue of safety and security, and our right to our own culture is compromised. We needed the world to understand that it isn't just a matter of ice and polar bears; this is about the way of life of a people. We needed them to see that by the time my grandson is a man, he might lose everything that I had as my foundation.

In December 2005, I and 62 Inuit hunters and women of Canada and Alaska submitted a legal petition to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights to seek redress for the violations of our rights due to the emission of greenhouse gases in the United States. After a year of delays, the commission confirmed they would not hear our petition—it is possible that their hands were tied while the government administration of the time was in power. The petition was ahead of its time, and it seemed clear that they did not know how to deal with it. In fact, it was not an easy sell, even to some of my own

colleagues and fellow leaders. At moments like those, the universe is testing us about what we really believe. The hard times we encountered during that time were not wasted, though: we changed the global discourse on this issue. As we speak, there are many policies being written that take into consideration the connection that we pioneered. Even the United Nations now recognizes that for the world's indigenous peoples, including the Inuit, climate change is a human rights issue.

In 2007 I learned that I had been jointly nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize, along with former US Vice-President Al Gore, for my work in connecting climate change and human rights. I found out about the announcement when Patricia Bell, one of CBC Iqaluit's radio journalists, called me at 7:00 in the morning and said "Have you been listening to the news?" I said, "No, I'm sleeping!" Right up until the winners were announced some months later, the phone calls and demands for speaking engagements didn't stop. It was an incredible time. It was around then that my health challenges began, and it was an enormous task to manage the media whirlwind and preserve my emotional and physical strength at the same time.

I was, and am, very humbled by the recognition of the international community. I am an introvert doing an extrovert's work, so it is not always easy to be so public. For me, it is not about me getting the recognition, it is about people getting the message. The real award is to see the resonance of the truth, everywhere around the world, that all people are connected and that the Arctic has great significance for the rest of the planet. I later heard that the organization Inuit Tapirisat Kanatami and the United Nations Permanent Forum for Indigenous Peoples had written letters of support on my behalf to the Nobel committee. When I read in newspapers that the committee actually felt that such letters were not helpful to the nominee's chances for winning, I thought, "If only

the committee knew that those letters of support had more meaning for me than the Nobel Peace Prize itself." If you don't have that kind of support and resonance with your own people, none of it has meaning. Hearing that they had written those letters truly touched me and helped me to carry on.

I am ecstatic about today's Inuit women leaders; I fully support the idea of women filling important political positions. That is not in any way an anti-men statement, it is just that I think women have a different style of leading. I am not suggesting that all men end up lost in the institutional and political world, but I do think those are lonely places for men. I think they talk less to each other to resolve differences and, in general, they are more reluctant to look inwards. I think sometimes there is pressure on them to sacrifice their values for their mandates. Most Inuit men I have worked with are giving and caring; in fact, I would not be here today if I had not had their support and kindness. I would go into any situation on the ice with them and trust them with my life. But there have been many times, in my experience as a woman, when I couldn't allow myself that kind of trust in the boardroom.

Bringing about change, whether you are a man or a woman, can be especially hard for us in Nunavut and other regions. That is because a lot of our institutions have been imported; we try to hook our cultural ways and language into them as add-ons rather than trying to build from a new foundation. The way to change these foundations is to get people inside the system who want to make real changes in how things are run. It is like that in the education system: we have taken on somebody else's version of institutional learning and are trying to add on culture and language classes, rather than starting with a model that makes sense to us culturally. And because we don't have hundred-year-old institutional traditions, we have a golden opportunity today to create something new.

More and more women are finding the conviction and courage to take a risk and become elected leaders. We now have seen two Inuit women members of Parliament, and the premier of Nunavut is a woman—I would love to see more women members of the Legislative Assembly around her. It would be wonderful to see more women come into the political arena at all levels and be able to operate with a solid power base. I think this is a turning point for the Inuit world; women just have to swallow their fear and take that step. At first I didn't want to go into politics, but I reached a point where I didn't want to be standing on the outside—if you want to change systems, you have got to change them from the inside. You have got to secure that political power base. As hard as it is, people need to be willing to put themselves out there. I think there is a lot of potential in the young women of our territory; if we can encourage more and more of them to get into these positions, they will become the agents for change that we need.

Biography

Donna Adams

Donna Adams was born in Churchill, Manitoba and was schooled in Arviat, Rankin Inlet, and Churchill. She graduated from Aurora College in Yellowknife with a diploma from the recreation leaders program. After returning to Rankin Inlet, Donna held a variety of positions in the fields of recreation, health, culture, and professional training. She was a manager for the Nunavut Harvesters Support Program for Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. (NTI) and was executive assistant for Raymond Ningeocheak, NTI's vice-president of finance. In 2003, she was elected as a hamlet councillor for Rankin Inlet; she ran again in 2007 but was not re-elected. She finished third in Rankin Inlet's 2008 mayoral elections.

In November 2009, Donna became the president of the Qulliit Nunavut Status of Women Council, whose mission is to work for the equality of all women in Nunavut through advocacy, research, and public education. After accepting this appointment, she resigned from NTI in order to avoid what might be perceived as a conflict of interest. In 2010, she was appointed chair of the task force to review Nunavut's Liquor Act. The task force will travel to all communities seeking feedback from organizations and individuals about the Act.

Donna Adams

Additional Resources

Internet

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  News release about Donna's appointment as president of Qulliit.
- http://www.cbc.ca/canada/north/story/2010/02/12/qulliit-council.html
  Article about Donna's resignation from NTI after becoming president of Qulliit
- http://www.nunatsiaqonline.ca/stories/article/98678_paranoid_chill_still_afflicts_nunavut_womens_council/
  Article about the challenges faced by the president of Qulliit.
- http://www.nnsl.com/northern-news-services/stories/papers/may3_10bz.html
  Article about the task force to review Nunavut's Liquor Act.

Biography

Nancy Anilniliak

Nancy Anilniliak was born in Pangirtung, Nunavut. Pangirtung is home to one of the crown jewels of Canada's national park system, Auyuituq National Park. In 2006, she became the field superintendent of all Nunavut parks, making her the first Inuk ever to hold that job. This achievement is significant, as it makes her the federal steward of a national park system. Her work requires that she collaborate closely with her counterparts at the national and territorial levels as well as work with Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. on the matter of on-going land claim obligations. Nancy was instrumental in developing management plans for Nunavut's national parks, a feat that required extensive consultations with Inuit and with territorial, federal, and Inuit birthright organizations. Nancy is a proud mother who enjoys spending time out on the land fishing and camping with her family.

Nancy Anilniliak

Additional Resources

Internet

- http://www.nunatsiaqonline.ca/archives/50722/features/50722_01.html

  Newspaper article about Nunavut's territorial and national parks that describes Nancy as the first ever Inuk Field Superintendent of Nunavut's parks.

- http://www.encyclopediecanadienne.ca/index.cfm?PgNm=TCE&Params=A1ARTA0009755

  Short article about Ukkusiksalik National Park written by Nancy Anilniliak.

- http://footprintmag.blogspot.com/2008_06_01_archive.html

  Short blog entry about Inuit involvement in park planning.

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Note: Nancy has participated in several research projects over the years. Many authors have thanked her in their publications for her help with their research or with the projects she was involved in.

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Dick, Lyle
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Struzik, Ed
2005 *Ten Rivers: Adventure Stories from the Arctic*. Toronto, CanWest Books.

Biography

Okalik Eegeesiak

In the 1990s, Okalik Eegeesiak was the manager of the Canada Employment Centre in Iqaluit. She also served as the Canadian vice-president for the Inuit Circumpolar Conference (now Inuit Circumpolar Council). During the same period, she worked as an executive director trainee at Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated (NTI), the organization responsible for overseeing the implementation of the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement. In the June 1997 federal election, she made an unsuccessful bid as a Progressive Conservative candidate for the riding of Nunavut. In September 1997, Okalik was elected president of Inuit Tapirisat of Canada (now Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, or ITK), Canada's national Inuit organization. She held the job until June 2000. In 1999, Okalik ran against Jose Kusugak for the position of president of NTI. Both lost to Paul Quassa, who had himself been NTI's president until losing to Kusugak in 1994.

In the 2000s, Okalik has held a number of positions. She was vice-chair, chair, and Baffin Trustee of the Nunavut Trust, which holds the compensation funds received from the Canadian government as part of the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement. She was also made a member of the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board in January 2001. In May 2006, she was elected chair of the board of the

Inuit Broadcasting Corporation, a position she still holds in 2010. She is also a member of the Canadian Arctic Resource Committee.

In 2008, Okalik stepped forward as a candidate for Nunavut's territorial elections, but was compelled to withdraw because she was two months shy of the 12-month Nunavut residency requirement for the period preceding elections. In a December 2009 by-election, Okalik became president of the Qikiqtani Inuit Association for a two-year mandate.

Okalik Eegeesiak

Additional Resources

Internet

- http://www.nunatsiaqonline.ca/stories/article/8657_okalik_eegeesiak_elected_president_of_qikiqtani_inuit_association/

  Article describing Okalik's election as President of QIA.

- http://www.cbc.ca/canada/north/story/2008/10/17/eegeesiak.html

  Article about her eligibility for the 2008 territorial elections.

- http://www.nunatsiaqonline.ca/archives/nunavut991130/nvt91105_03.html

  Article about NTI's presidential election in 1999, including a portrait of Okalik.

- http://www.inuitbroadcasting.ca/Releases/001_e.htm

  Press release announcing Okalik's election as chair of the board of the Inuit Broadcasting Corporation.

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Biography

Leena Evic

Leena Evic is an Inuit musician, educator, and cultural leader who was born in Cumberland Sound. She holds a bachelor's degree in education from McGill University and did master's level work on educational leadership and culture-based education. For 20 years she was involved in the education system as a teacher, school principal, and a developer of Inuktitut curriculum material for children. In 1993, she became Nunavut Tunngavik Inc.'s director of education, culture and social development as well as advisor on policy and programs. In 1998, Leena was appointed as the Canadian representative to the Inuit Circumpolar Council's newly founded Language Commission.

Leena is the founder and executive director of the Pirurvik Centre for Inuit Language, Culture, and Wellbeing. Pirurvik develops Inuktitut teaching and learning platforms such as websites, books, and CDs, and offers solutions for Inuit language usage in governmental and private organizations. One of Pirurvik's best-known projects is their translation of various Microsoft software systems into Inuktitut. Pirurvik is currently pioneering cultural programs that link elders with younger generations in the traditional Inuit learning and teaching cycle.

Leena is also an accomplished singer and songwriter. She is the only Inuit member of the Iqaluit community choir and has released *Inuttaqalauqpuq* and *And There Were Inuit*, two music CDs for children aimed at teaching or enriching the Inuktitut language.

Leena Evic

Additional Resources

Internet

- http://www.cbc.ca/radio2/songquest/artistpages/leenaevic.html

  Biography on the CBC Radio2 website about Leena's career, in music and in other areas.

- http://www.pirurvik.ca/en/about/people

  Short biography on the Pirurvik website.

- http://www.microsoft.com/canada/mscorp/potential/leenaevic.aspx

  Description of Leena's work translating Microsoft programs into Inuktitut.

- http://www2.parl.gc.ca/HousePublications/Publication.aspx?DocId=1039121&Language=E&Mode=1&Parl=36&Ses=1

  Report to Parliament's Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights in November of 1998 in which Leena describes the challenges faced by Inuit when dealing with the justice system.

- http://nnsl.com/northern-news-services/stories/papers/aug20_07ch.html

  Article about the Iqaluit community choir, of which Leena is member and sole Inuktitut speaker.

- http://www.nnsl.com/frames/newspapers/frames/newspapers/2005-04/apr18_05cd.html

  Article about Leena's album *And There Were Inuit*.

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1991 *Traditional Inuit Beliefs in Stories and Legends*, Frobisher Bay, Baffin Divisional Board of Education.

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Biography

The Honourable Ann Meekitjuk Hanson

The Honourable Ann Meekitjuk Hanson was born in 1946 at Qakutuut, a whaling camp outside of Kimmirut. She lost her parents at an early age and was brought up by relatives in Kimmirut and Frobisher Bay. As a young teenager, she lived with relatives in Baker Lake and with family friends in Toronto, where she attended junior and senior high school and business college. In the 1970s, Ann attended St. Francis Xavier University in Antigonish, Nova Scotia, where she studied community development. She also completed a certificate program in journalism at Nunavut Arctic College.

In 1964, Ann returned to the North, where she was variously employed as an interpreter-translator in Frobisher Bay, secretary to a Member of Parliament for the Northwest Territories in Ottawa and Yellowknife, and by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation as a secretary and later as a broadcaster.

Ann went on to develop her career in the media as a radio news anchor, producer, and writer. With the Inuit Broadcasting Corporation, she directed several eye-opening and sometimes controversial films about social problems threatening Inuit families, such as family violence and suicide. She was also the first editor of the Frobisher Bay community newspaper *Inukshuk*, which later became the *Nunatsiaq News*. In 1991, Ann Hanson was the narrator

of a National Film Board production entitled *Starting Fire with Gunpowder,* a documentary about the creation of the Inuit Broadcasting Corporation and the importance of the media as a vehicle for Inuit to perpetuate their culture.

In 2003, Ann was named a Member of the Order of Canada, and in 2005, she was appointed as the third Commissioner of Nunavut, in which role she served until 2010. The mother of five adult daughters, she currently resides with her husband in Iqaluit, Nunavut.

Ann Meekitjuk Hanson

Additional Resources

Internet

- http://inuitwhalers.ca/en/index.php
- http://inuitwhalers.ca/en/hudson-strait.php
- Video interviews with Commissioner Ann Hanson about her family's ancestry

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Houston, James and Ann Meekitjuk Hanson

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1993 *People from Our Side*, McGill-Queen's Press. (Interviews and translations by Ann Hanson)

Biography

Rhoda Innuksuk

Rhoda Innuksuk was born in a seasonal camp near the community of Igloolik in Nunavut. She began her career as a reporter for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation in Inuvik in the Northwest Territories, and in 1976, she co-authored a children's book entitled *We Don't Live in Snow Houses Now.* Her involvement with the Inuit political movement began in the early 1970s, and she was one of the first national female Inuit leaders to emerge in the early 1980s. Articulate and passionate about women's and youth issues, she brought many pressing social problems to the forefront of Inuit political thought and commentary. Between 1985 and 1988, Rhoda was president of Inuit Tapirisat of Canada (ITC), now called Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami. Her mandate as president took place during the period of national constitutional upheaval that was spurred by the adoption of Article 35 of the Constitutional Act of 1982, which sought to address aboriginal needs and aspirations.

At a time when most Inuit political commentary was about land claims and constitutional change, Rhoda's leadership brought the focus to youth issues when she created the Inuit National and International Youth Councils. These youth conferences and retreats brought Inuit youth together from all across the circumpolar world

to discuss their issues and concerns in a rapidly changing world. Rhoda was also the executive director of the Inuit Committee on National Issues, the political arm of ITC during the 1980s, and worked on the Innukshuk Project, which later became the Inuit Broadcasting Corporation. She also served as an executive council member of the Inuit Circumpolar Conference for three years and was president of Pauktuutit, the national association of Inuit women of Canada, in 2008-2009.

Rhoda has lived in Ottawa, Ontario, for 30 years. In Ottawa, where the largest Inuit community outside of the Arctic can be found, she has been involved with two organizations: the Tunngasuvingat Inuit (Ottawa Inuit Association) and the Odawa Native Friendship Centre, where she is an Inuit elder-in-residence.

Rhoda Innuksuk

Additional Resources

Internet

- http://www.naho.ca/english/midwifery/CanadianBios.pdf
  Short biography of Rhoda's life and accomplishments.
- http://www.canada.com/nationalpost/news/story.html?id=a25c4f60-84c0-489c-b58c-961490923c2b
  Newspaper article that describes a fifty-bed apartment complex for Inuit living in Ottawa.
- http://www.nunatsiaqnews.com/archives/2009/904/90403/news/nunavut/90403_2047.html
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Biography

Nancy Karetak-Lindell

Nancy Karetak-Lindell was born in Arviat. She attended day school in her community to grade 8, then attended grades 9 and 10 at Sir John Franklin High School, a residential school in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories. She graduated from grade 13 in Ottawa, Ontario. After seven years away from home, she returned to Arviat, where she met her husband, Jon Lindell. They had four children. Nancy involved herself in her community in various ways, including as financial comptroller for Arviat, municipal councillor, chair of the educational council, and member of the board of directors of Nunavut Arctic College. In 1997, she was asked to run as a Liberal candidate for the riding of Nunavut in that year's federal election. She won the seat and went on to win three subsequent times, in 2000, 2004, and 2006. After the 2006 election, she announced her retirement from federal politics.

During her days as a member of Parliament, she served in various capacities, among them as parliamentary secretary to the minister of Natural Resources in 2003 and as chair and vice-chair of the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development. She was also member of the Liaison Committee, associate member of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage and of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Social

Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities, and other committees.

After her retirement from politics, Nancy returned to Arviat, where her focus turned to youth issues as she became a board member of the Katimavik Youth Volunteer Program. She is currently the director of the Jane Glassco Arctic Fellowship program, an initiative created by the Walter and Duncan Gordon Foundation. The fellowship aims to encourage young Northerners from 25-35 to develop public policy that reflect the needs and culture of Canadian Arctic peoples.

Nancy Karetak-Lindell

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Biography

Madeleine Redfern

Madeleine Redfern was born in Iqaluit, Nunavut. In the 1990s, she was executive director of Nunavut tourism. In 2004, she was curator for an exhibition held at the Nunatta Sunakkutaangit Museum in Iqaluit titled *Eskimos in Advertising*. In 2005, she graduated from the Akitsiraq Law School in Iqaluit with a Bachelor of Law (LL.B.) from the University of Victoria. Following her graduation, she was chosen from among 200 of Canada's top law school graduates to clerk for one year for Supreme Court Justice Louise Charron. She subsequently became a legal researcher at Nunavut Tunngavik Inc., the Inuit organization created to implement the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement. In 2007, Madeleine was named executive director of the Qikiqtani Truth Commission (QTC), which was created by the Qikiqtani Inuit Association to conduct an inquiry into decisions made by territorial and federal governments regarding the Inuit up until 1980. In June 2010, she made an unsuccessful bid for the vice-presidency of the Inuit Circumpolar Council (Canada).

Apart from her professional activities, Madeleine has extensive volunteer experience. She was president of Tungasuvvingat Inuit Community Centre, secretary-treasurer of the Inuit Non-Profit Housing Corporation, founding member of the Wabano Aboriginal Health

Centre, founding member of the Ottawa Inuit Headstart program, and was the Inuit representative on Kagita Mikam, an aboriginal employment and training board. She was also co-coordinator of Iqaluit Restorative Justice, was a community representative on the Iqaluit Municipal Appeals Board, and is currently secretary-treasurer of the Maliganiik Legal Services Board and acting chair of the Legal Services Board.

Madeleine Redfern

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Biography

Joan Scottie

Joan Scottie was born in a camp named Kovonoqiaq, south of Baker Lake. During her youth, she and her family lived the traditional Caribou Inuit lifestyle. She first went to school when she followed her sick mother to Baker Lake in the early 1960s. As a teenager, Joan worked instead of going to school so that she could take care of her younger siblings, and at 16, she moved to Churchill, Manitoba, to look for work and attend the Churchill Vocational Centre. In the late 1960s, she worked as a community administration officer for the federal government in Baker Lake. In the 1970s, she attended college in Brandon, Manitoba, as well as in Fort Smith, Northwest Territories. Joan was a Baker Lake hamlet councillor, interviewer-interpreter, and was a land-use enforcement officer for Canada's Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. Joan has also worked as a wilderness guide for tourists.

In the 1980s, Joan founded the Baker Lake Kiggavik Citizens Committee. The committee voiced opposition to a uranium mining project that was planned for development less than 100 kilometres west of Baker Lake. Her activism led to a plebiscite in which 90 percent of Baker Lake Inuit voted against the mining project. In 2006, Joan resumed her fight against the uranium mining industry when the French group Areva proposed a mining project that would lead to the opening of other mines in the same area.

Joan Scottie

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Biography

Elisapee Sheutiapik

Elisapee Sheutiapik was raised in Iqaluit, Nunavut. She was first elected as mayor of Iqaluit in 2003, was acclaimed as mayor during the 2006 election, and won a third term in 2009. She was a founding owner and operator of the Grind and Brew, an Iqaluit coffee shop and deli where many residents meet and discuss community news and politics. Elisapee Sheutiapik is the current president of the Nunavut Association of Municipalities and represents Nunavut communities at the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, where she sits on the environment and sustainability committees. Elisapee Sheutiapik is also president of Pauktuutit, Inuit Women of Canada, the national Inuit women's organization.

Elisapee Sheutiapik

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Biography

Manitok Thompson

Manitok Thompson was born on Southampton Island, Nunavut. After graduating from the teacher education program in Fort Smith in 1977, she taught at various schools in the Kivalliq region as well as in Yellowknife. She also worked as a learning coordinator and was manager of translation services for Yellowknife's Stanton Regional Hospital. In 1994, she was elected as a municipal councillor in Rankin Inlet, and in a 1995 by-election, she was elected to represent the riding of Aivilik at the Northwest Territories' legislature. She was re-elected in the Northwest Territories general election later that same year. Following her win, she was appointed to cabinet where she held portfolios as Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs and Minister Responsible for the Women's Directorate. She was also a member of the Standing Committee on Finance, the Standing Committee on Agencies, Boards and Commissions and the Special Committee on Housing.

During the period that led up to the creation of Nunavut, a gender parity plebiscite was held by the Nunavut Implementation Commission, whose role was to design Nunavut's legislative and government institutions. The plebiscite allowed residents to choose whether they wanted a model of democracy that would hold a place for both a male and a female representative in each riding.

Manitok was one of the most vocal opponents of gender parity, maintaining that such a model was discriminatory because it precluded the most qualified candidate from winning fairly. The majority of voters who responded to the plebiscite chose not to support the two-member model.

In the historical first Nunavut election on February 15, 1999, Manitok won the seat for Rankin Inlet South/Whale Cove—she was the only woman to be elected. Nunavut's first premier, Paul Okalik, subsequently appointed her Minister of Public Works and Services and Minister Responsible for the Nunavut Housing Corporation. Later, she would be named Minister of Community Government and Transportation and Minister Responsible for Sport Nunavut. She also held the portfolios of education, human resources, and Nunavut Arctic College. Manitok retired from territorial politics in 2004 and ran unsuccessfully as an independent candidate in that year's federal election.

Manitok Thompson

Additional Resources

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Biography

Sheila Watt-Cloutier

Sheila Watt-Cloutier was born in Kuujjuaq, Nunavik. She attended school in Kuujjuaq, Nova Scotia, and in Churchill, Manitoba, and studied sociology and psychology at McGill University in Montreal. In the mid-1970s, she worked as an Inuktitut translator at the Tulattavik Health Centre in Kuujjuaq, then known as the Ungava Hospital, and subsequently as a consultant on health and educational matters. From 1991 to 1995, she was an education consultant in the review process of the education system in Quebec. Her efforts, and that of her fellow consultants, led to the 1992 report *Silaturnimut: The Pathway to Wisdom*, which was about the education system in Nunavik. During the same period, she produced the youth awareness film *Capturing Spirit: The Inuit Journey*.

In 1995, she was elected president of the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC—then known as the Inuit Circumpolar Conference) Canada. She was re-elected twice to that position. During her presidency, she participated in the negotiation of the Stockholm Convention (2001), whose goal was to eliminate or limit the production of persistent organic pollutants (POPs). Between 1995 and 1998, Sheila served as corporate secretary for Makivik Corporation and in 2002 was elected as the international chair of the ICC, a position she held until 2005. Her main objective as chair of ICC was to put a face on global

warming and explain its consequences for the indigenous populations of the Arctic, especially the Inuit. In 2005, after the publication of the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment, which stated that Inuit culture would not survive climate change, she filed a petition with the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), along with 62 hunters from Alaska and Canada. The petition alleged that greenhouse gases emitted by industry in the United States violated Inuit cultural rights. Although the IACHR decided against hearing the petition, her actions raised awareness about the dangers that many human beings face because of global warming.

Sheila has won international recognition for her environmental activism, receiving many awards in Canada and abroad over the last decade. She was awarded the Officer of the Order of Canada in 2006, accepted the Order of Greenland the same year, was named "Champion of the Earth" by the United Nations Environmental Program, and was co-nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2007. She also received a United Nations Lifetime Achievement Award for Human Development. Sheila has also been endowed with numerous honorary doctoral degrees from several Canadian and American universities. In the fall of 2010, Sheila will be teaching at Bowdoin College in Brunswick, Maine, USA.

Sheila Watt-Cloutier

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