

Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit

*What Inuit Have Always
Known to Be True*

Edited by Joe Karetak
Frank Tester & Shirley Tagalik

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EXCERPT

Acknowledgements

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All photographs are from the Gleason Ledyard Collection, courtesy of Mark Kalluak, unless otherwise indicated. We are grateful to everyone who shared photographs for this book. There are thousands of photos of Inuit in archival collections. Most of them, regrettably, are unnamed, as is true of Inuit shown in photos used in this book.

We are indebted to Frank Tester for his participation, advice and contribution to the book. We are also very grateful to our team of exceptional translators: Nellie Kusugak, Saimanaaq Netser, Rebecca Mike and Suzie Napayok.

Above all, we thank our Elders. Some of those who contributed to this volume are no longer with us. We recognize their devotion to promoting and revitalizing Inuit culture in order to provide well for future generations. Their rich experience, time, energy and commitment to Inuit youth and future generations, and hopefully to all who take seriously the urgent need for us each to find a different way of appreciating and relating to others and the world around us, is what has made this book possible.

Foreword

Creating the Book

Shirley Tagalik

This book is the result of a project undertaken with and by Elders from across Nunavut Territory. It has been an honour to do research with these Elders. We began this work in 2000, not knowing where this exploration of Inuit knowledge and worldviews would take us. It was a journey taken by Elders, where we facilitated and followed their lead. Participating has been — for all of us — a privilege.

The process began tentatively. Elders were not sure we could be trusted with their insights, experience and wisdom. They were concerned about how these might be used. Inuit culture is an oral one, and the prospect of writing a book was daunting. They were also hesitant because they were being asked to reach into a deep reservoir of experience and feelings blocked off at the time of forced relocation and colonization. Frank Tester's chapter describes the traumatic experiences that were a reality for Elders contributing to this book. For Elders from some regions, this information had been blocked for more than a generation. The process had to allow time for collective healing, building a trust relationship and reconnecting with the past and cultural teachings that were suppressed in this colonial period.

Rhoda Karetak expressed this eloquently when she shared a dream she had with the group.

I had a dream. I was carrying a baby that was not well. I knew that it was not my baby, but, because the baby was so sick, I started thinking that I wanted to just bury the baby. As I thought this, I could hear a very faint voice saying, "You cannot do that!"

"Yes, I know I can't." I knew there is a law that prohibits doing something like that and that I might end up facing charges. I fully agree with that law. But then I got a stronger

thought — an overwhelming urge to bury this baby. I was thinking, “I can do this. I have the authority to do this thing.”

In my dream, I started to dig a spot to bury the baby in a small crevasse in the ground. I was all by myself, so I took the sick baby and buried it. The face was not buried because the baby was still alive.

I started leaving and, as I was walking away, there was a very loud noise. The crying continually became louder. It became so loud that all nature heard it. At that point, I knew I had to go back.

When I picked up the baby that I had buried, it stopped crying as soon as I picked it up. I realized that it was the most beautiful baby. The baby was well and happy as soon as I picked it up. I was happy too.

Now why would I dream such a dream? I started to reflect on this because I knew that this was not just an ordinary dream. Then I suddenly recalled something — Inuit culture was once absolutely alive but has been getting buried. It was like when you bury a dead person, but this was something that was really still alive and active even though it was being buried. I knew that my dream was about the need to revive Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit.

Through her dream, Rhoda put into expression the feelings of many Elders. This confirmed that they needed to commit to the work of reviving what still remained of the deep knowledge that is Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ). The process of documentation began.

In one of the group meetings that preceded our focus on the book, and while he was working with the Department of Education, Mark Kalluak noted the following:

Some might think that Inuit never plan for the future. They sometimes think that we lived from day to day with no plan. We are here today because our ancestors were the ones who made sure that we could survive. They did not live one day at a time. We were made to become human beings right from

birth. They taught us how to live a good life and what to do in difficult situations.¹

The memory of how Inuit prepared successive generations to survive in the harshest conditions, based on tried and true understandings of the world, began to emerge and bring great comfort to this group of Elders. Memories, often accompanied by tears and laughter, were part of a process of documenting insights, knowledge and experience.

The idea of creating a book was another dream shared by the Elders. They were concerned that Inuit *Qaujimajatuqangit* was being presented in bits and pieces and that there was no single source that presented a complete version of a holistic philosophy of life. They also wanted to make sure that a definitive work on Inuit cultural knowledge came from Elders themselves and not from others writing about Inuit culture. It was important that the writing had its origins in the lived experiences of the group and not be presented as a historical account of something that had not survived its attempted burial by the processes of colonization.

The Arctic Inspiration Prize presented a much appreciated opportunity for Elders to accomplish this dream. In the proposal for the prize, we wrote:

Collectively, this team has been working to ensure that the knowledge of Inuit *Qaujimajatuqangit* (IQ) is documented and shared back to the Inuit community. The Elders approach this work with the greatest sense of urgency, knowing that they are the last knowledge holders who experienced Inuit life in the camps. They are very concerned that the Inuit way of being is revitalized so that the inherent strengths of IQ can heal and restore the resiliency and self-reliance required for success in Nunavut today.

This book can become a knowledge resource for academics, researchers, educators and practitioners who are concerned about cultural competence and safety. Most importantly, however, it is expected that Inuit who seek to decolonize and heal through the reclamation of this unique worldview will

use this knowledge to rebuild a society grounded in cultural beliefs and systems. It is the legacy of this generation of Elders — a gift to their children, grandchildren and generations to come. They take up the task with a great sense of urgency, seeing the outcomes of what has been lost and remembering the possibilities of how it could be again. It is expected to be a gift of hope for the future generations of Inuit.

The grant we were awarded allowed us to begin the work and helped secure additional funds to permit a full translation of the Elders' writings. Frank Tester would like to acknowledge the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) for years of support that have given him the insight and sensibilities that made it possible for him to work on this project and to acknowledge what a privilege it has been to work with the writing of Elders, some of whom he has known for many decades.

The writing process presented many challenges. The team met to identify key themes. Each Elder identified a theme they wanted to write about. Joe Karetak worked with Elders by phone and held many detailed discussions to guide them through the writing process. In some cases Elders provided an oral script, which became the basis of a chapter. Elders came together to collaborate on their work. For those Elders who provided a transcript, our team of translators had to work with various dialects and from various non-standard syllabic scripts. Often this required contacting the writer to discuss the content and to ensure the accuracy of both the transcription and the translation. This involved clarification of both meaning and intent. The translated versions of chapters were provided to me for editing. The English edited version was then shared with the writer, followed by further negotiation around the inclusion, clarification and referencing of content.

What initially seemed like a straightforward project began to take much longer to complete. Once we had a draft text, Frank worked on a second edit and further clarification, with the addition of endnotes to provide more information for the reader and to suggest possibilities for further exploring the ideas, concepts and events noted by the

authors. Joe Karetak provided a gripping account of his survival and rescue from the ice in a final chapter, illustrating the application of not only skills but personal strengths acquired from paying close attention to the teachings of his Elders.

As part of this process, Frank suggested that we bring together a group of Elder writers with Qallunaat (people who are not Inuit) to consider the importance of IQ for non-Inuit working in different fields of practice. In August 2014 our partners at the National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health co-hosted this encounter. Our Elders were joined by Landon Pearson, founder of the Landon Pearson Resource Centre for the Study of Childhood and Children's Rights; Lisa Wolff, director of Policy and Education for UNICEF Canada; Giovanna Mingarelli, chair for Global Dignity Canada; and Donna Atkinson, manager of the National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health. The team reviewed the book before arriving in Nunavut. They spent a few days in discussions with Elders about their chapters. A response to the book, in the form of an epilogue is provided by Margo Greenwood, academic lead for the National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health.

A sense of urgency was very real in preparing this book. Initially the writing team comprised ten Elders. As we neared completion of the writing process, five Elders remained. Their most sincere wish is that the book will provide Inuit with access to their own process of healing by reconnecting them with the unique knowledge and perspective of Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit. We also hope that the text provides each one of us — regardless of our cultural background — with insight into the relevance and importance of Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit to the modern-day challenges of the world in which we live. We present the book, gratefully acknowledging the dedication of Inuit Elders and their commitment to bringing back cultural strength through Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit — what Inuit have always known to be true.

Introduction

Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit, Truth and Reconciliation

Joe Karetak and Frank Tester

This book is about Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ), often referred to as Inuit traditional knowledge. The problem with the word “traditional” is that it implies something from the past, of limited value to living in a modern world. Nothing could be further from the truth. IQ is about a set of values and practices, the relevance and importance of these, and ways of being and looking at things that are timeless. Aboriginal worldviews are of increasing relevance and importance to a rapidly changing world. This book introduces the reader to a worldview, or a way of looking at human beings in relation to other forms of life — and to each other — that contrasts sharply with Western European ideas about what makes for a rewarding, meaningful and appropriate way to live on the planet. The recently completed Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada recognizes the importance of Aboriginal worldviews and “ways of making sense” to the future of all of us. The book is a contribution by Inuit Elders to this effort.

TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION

The residential school experience was thoroughly documented by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. The Commission came up with a list of recommendations, many of them highlighted by the issues, concerns and importance of IQ discussed by Elders contributing to this book. The Commission’s “Calls to Action” include reducing the number of Aboriginal children in care and calling on the federal government to enact an Aboriginal Languages Act. The extent to which Inuktitut and Inuinnaqtun — spoken by Inuit in the Eastern and Western Arctic respectively — has been affected by colonial history is noted by contributors to the book.

The Commission calls for the development of culturally appropriate curricula and opportunities to allow parents to fully participate in the education of their children. As Elders writing in this book make clear, trusting the education of their children to the school system has had huge implications for Inuit child rearing practices, culture, beliefs and the functioning of Inuit society. The Commission calls for the funding of healing centres, particularly in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut. In Chapter II, Rhoda Karetak explains, with conviction, why Inuit need opportunities to heal.

Elders Rhoda Karetak and Atuat Akittiq discuss shortcomings of the current justice system in Chapter 5, detailing how restorative practices worked among Inuit. The Commission calls for:

The federal, provincial and territorial governments to commit to the recognition and implementation of Aboriginal justice systems in a manner consistent with the Treaty and Aboriginal rights of Aboriginal peoples, the Constitution Act, 1982 and the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* endorsed by Canada in November 2012. (Call to Action No. 42)

Also in connection with justice, Call to Action No. 50 calls on the federal government, in collaboration with Aboriginal organizations, to fund Indigenous law institutes for the development, use and understanding of Indigenous laws. Inuit laws and practices are discussed in this book. While restorative justice currently has a presence in Nunavut, the concerns expressed by Elders make it clear that much remains to be done to integrate IQ with the Nunavut legal system and the practice of justice.

Finally, the Commission, in addressing “Education for Reconciliation,” calls on the federal, provincial and territorial governments to “provide the necessary funding to post-secondary institutions to educate teachers on how to integrate Indigenous knowledge and teaching methods into classrooms” (Call to Action No. 62ii). The Elders writing in this book provide the reader with a wealth of information relevant to Inuit knowledge about “making an able human being” and culturally respectful ways of teaching Inuit children.

Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit is a worldview shared, with differences in detail, by Inuit across the circumpolar world. It links the past and future by teaching important lessons about how to live a good life. IQ helps define Inuit by offering a set of laws, beliefs and values that serve as guides and expectations. IQ spells out processes for introducing, applying and supporting these laws and beliefs across generations. Key among these processes is *inunnguiniq*, the making of a human being.¹

The creation of Nunavut in 1999 was not simply the culmination of attempts by Inuit to right the wrongs of the colonial history outlined in Chapter 2. This is an ongoing struggle characterized by attempts to integrate the principles and sensibilities of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit with the workings of a modern northern territory. This book is a contribution to that struggle.

INUIT PRINCIPLES AND LAWS

IQ is more than a philosophy. It is an ethical framework and detailed plan for having a good life. It is a way of thinking, connecting all aspects of life in a coherent way. Western European culture and science, by contrast, tends to divide aspects of life into pieces that can be dissected, isolated and studied. Every aspect of Elder thinking revolves around four main cultural “laws,” or *maligarjuat*. We hope the reader will come to understand holistic thinking and the importance for Inuit of living in respectful relationships with all things.

The word “law” is a problem in discussing *maligarjuat* (literally meaning “big things that must be followed”). While they are as important as laws in Western European cultures, they are ethical commitments or principles. The four *maligarjuat* are: 1. working for the common good and not being motivated by personal interest or gain; 2. living in respectful relationships with every person and thing that one encounters; 3. maintaining harmony and balance; and 4. planning and preparing for the future. These ethical principles apply to everyone and never change, and they have the force of law in Inuit culture. Failure to abide by them puts everyone in danger. Inuit culture is profoundly ethical, but it has been greatly disrupted by colonial interventions, as revealed in Chapter 1.

There is another level of principles relevant to understanding the

ethical/legal framework governing Inuit society. *Piqujarjuat* are instructions or guidelines to be followed (literally “the things one should or must do to have a successful outcome or a good life, or there will be consequences). They outline how Inuit are supposed to do things. They are flexible and may not apply, or apply differently, depending on environmental, social and other conditions. They may also vary with individual circumstances or where people live.

If someone does not follow these laws — the *maligarjuat* or *piqujarjuat* — no one is necessarily going to punish the person. There are no police to arrest that person and no court or tribunal to determine if they are guilty of breaking the law. Elders knew from experience that failure to follow the advice found in IQ had consequences. Any violation against a law, even done secretly, will always be revealed in one way or another. The laws or principles directing Inuit society were established through *inunnguiniq* (the process of making a human being), which was carefully structured to assist children in developing strong adherence to these ethical principles, to the point where they became natural or core elements of the individual’s personality. One way of instilling these principles in a child is through the telling of stories, sometimes over and over. The same story has different versions and emphases from place to place and among those telling it, in order to provide the ethical principle that is needed by the child at that time. This explains why the matter of whether a version of a story is “correct” is not of concern. It is not hard to understand the impact that the Western school system, which often contradicted the principles holding Inuit culture together, has had on Inuit social cohesion and the integrity (wholeness) of individuals.

If someone broke a *piqujurjaaq* (law, singular), others in the camp might take action that amounted to a form of sentence through a process called *ajiiqatigiigniq*. *Ajiiqatigiigniq* is designed to resolve conflicts and to bring people in line with the laws. It is not a punitive process, but it is an uncompromising one. This process, discussed in what follows, has some things in common with Western ideas of restorative justice. Whereas restorative justice often (but not always) assumes the wrongdoer will restore something to the victim, Inuit emphasize the restoration of the individual to the group. In fact, the idea of justice

is challenged in Inuit culture. Inuit would say that there is no justice on earth. They would argue that it is more important to remove guilt than to seek justice. What is required is acknowledgment of a wrongdoing and a commitment to change behaviour. Inuit emphasize pursuit of the truth and a return to balance based on adherence to that which is true.

Failure to abide by the *maligarjuat* could, however, have serious consequences. A person might be ostracized by the community because they become known as someone not to be trusted. Elders would use *ajiiqatigiigni* in attempts to restore the person, but in extreme cases, individuals might be banished from a camp — likely the equivalent of a death sentence. The final scene in Zacharias Kunuk's film *Atanarjuat: The Fast Runner*, where the murderer and accomplices are banished from the family camp, is an example. In the case of *piqujarjuat*, failure to follow procedures might be attributable to someone not having been properly made into a human being, in which case responsibility would rest with those responsible for childrearing. Every effort would be made to give the person the skills they needed, consistent with their ability.

The *maligarjuat* make respectful relations with all living things and living in balance absolute priorities. Technological innovation challenges these laws or principles. For their survival, Inuit need to embrace technologies that can have serious environmental consequences. This is true of everything from the use of snowmobiles to the business of mining. The principles foundational to Inuit culture are undermined when priority is given to technological change at the expense of other living things (and all of nature is regarded as alive). In an Inuit worldview, this means a loss of harmony and balance that affects all of us. Inuit ancestors laid out these laws for future generations because they are known to be true.

In Inuit culture the application of principles is holistic, occurring through an integrated and mutually supporting system of beliefs, cultural practices and principle-based social processes. This perspective does not put Inuit at the centre. It engages the environment, universe and spiritual realms as considerations of equal importance. All things are integrated and intertwined. All things are impacted by each other

so that we can only exist successfully when we are in respectful relationship with animals, as well as rocks, land, plants, water systems, seasonal changes, etc. We must also have respectful relationships with each other. Alice Ayalik draws attention to this, noting the importance of the respect given to Elders. Laws are designed to respectfully accommodate all these elements. This is very different from Qallunaat² (Western) societal perspectives, where anything that is not human is defined as an object to be used for the benefit of human beings. While laws may protect *things*, they are not often treated, seen or given the same respect as human beings. Human beings are at the centre.

For Inuit, the ultimate goal of becoming human is to be as capable as possible in every area of life, but to also know the importance of respectful relationships and to value reliance on and support for others.³ The ability to develop shared approaches to living well is important. Inuit laws are powerful in the way they connect to cultural beliefs and values. Being made into a human being leaves one deeply respectful, with positive attitudes. Laws are to be internalized rather than externally applied. Social well-being is the result of applying these laws.

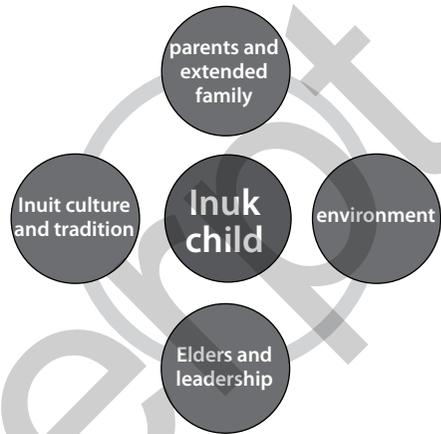
RELATIONSHIPS

The world now occupied by Inuit is dramatically different from the camp life experienced by many Elders. It will not be long before there is no Elder left who was born on the land. Their relationship with nature is important. IQ has its origins in a profound and intimate relationship with all of nature — a nature that surrounds us every hour of the day, all year long. We have limited control over nature. In all things — from gathering water through the ice in winter, to pitching a tent in summer, to deciding the best route to travel from one place to another and when to leave — Inuit are required to both understand and work with nature. This is a relationship that gives rise to certain values and personal qualities. Nature doesn't dictate these ways of being. There are always different ways of solving the same problem. But it does give rise to certain qualities upon which a successful life — and often survival — depend.

The modern world is often far-removed from nature. Most

Canadians live in cities surrounded by concrete and glass. Their relationship to nature is affected by many different kinds of walls — social, economic and physical barriers to developing relationships that are essential to Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit.

This diagram shows how, in an Inuit cultural setting, children are the centre of family life. Influences on the child are shown in the surrounding circles. The roles of being a parent or grandparent provide fundamental sources of purpose and meaning. Meaning was not found in having or owning material objects or property. These were simply the means of survival for one's self, one's family and one's community.



Inuit children learn by seeing and doing. Their roles and responsibilities — present and future — were defined and visible to them in the daily and seasonal routines of Inuit camp life. Removing a child from this environment and experience — as happened with the residential school experience — interrupts the learning of skills and the influences shown in Diagram 1. The values necessary to having a relationship with others and the natural world — values of sharing, interconnectedness, mutual reliance and respect — are replaced with the logic of a culture based on attempts to manipulate nature for profit and the importance of owning things.

As a result, Inuit values and what Elders believed a child needed to know in order to have a good life were to a large extent replaced. This book is an attempt by Inuit Elders to revisit and document Inuit knowledge in a world where important relationships with nature and with others are often swept away by technology, attempts to control nature and to acquire wealth, property and power, often at the expense of others.

Inuit believe that culture is about life. At the same time Inuit need technology to provide better predictability. Inuit technology was

reliant on the resources available in the environment. Although Inuit are highly adaptive and have harnessed new resources to improve their technologies, they have always maintained a keen sense of the inter-relatedness of the environment as the source of resources that enable technologies to develop and improve the lives of people. The *qamutik*, or Inuit sled, is a form of technology. Technology should offer a gentle and respectful way to overcome obstacles: for example, travelling more easily, hunting successfully or improving conditions for others.

Historically, Inuit needed technology to survive in a demanding environment. Food and other things needed for survival came from places that were well-known. To survive, Inuit had to be respectful of the environment on which they depended. In a modern world, we have largely lost sight of this reality. When we lose sight of the connections between things, a holistic view is more difficult to maintain. Much is hidden from view and cannot be learned by children if they are not watching, touching, feeling, smelling and learning from what is happening around them and from watching their parents and others act holistically in relating to an environment about which they have intimate knowledge.

This diagram shows the influences that are now affecting children and their learning. Colonization ended the nomadic lifestyle of Inuit. This drastically changed family dynamics. Children spent their days in church and government-run schools. Their teachers were Qallunaat — priests, nuns and teachers teaching value-laden lessons that introduced a very different set of rules, ideas and ways of managing life.

Chapter 1 makes it clear that through the relocation of Inuit to settlements — something that was not always voluntary — attempts were made to “modernize” Inuit. Inuit were to go from a predominantly hunter/gatherer society to a materialistic one and the



relations that are part of a capitalist culture and economic system. These relations included increasing reliance on store-bought products, living in wooden houses in permanent settlements and needing cash to pay rent and other bills. It also meant dealing with a bureaucracy of managers and different rules, laws and relations than the ones described by Elders contributing to this book.

At the time, most Inuit could not read, write or speak English. The governing system was administered in a different language by people with very different ideas about the meaning and purpose of life and ways of doing things. New laws were often rigidly enforced. People were sometimes arrested and charged without understanding what was happening to them or why.

Many problems are the obvious result of this history and experience. Attempts to colonize both the lands and minds of Inuit has sometimes resulted in shame, confusion, cultural denial, loss of cultural identity and low self-esteem. Many Elders and grandparents were, until recently, made to feel ashamed of their cultural ways of doing things and unsure of their roles in family and community life. It is now time to learn, recognize and think about this colonial experience and to seek the best ways for Inuit to meet responsibilities to each other, the environment, children and the future. This is what Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit is about.

THE *MALIGARJUAT* IN PRACTICE

For Inuit, a good life meant living well in communities. The four *maligarjuat* were guideposts for life. *Inuksuit* were built on the land to provide continual direction for future generations.⁴ Like *inuksuit*, the *maligarjuat* do not change in message but are steadfast reminders of how to live. What these look like in practice is discussed in what follows.

Maintaining Harmony

Maintaining harmony is important for living together and is also a state of mind. When we interact with Elders in communities, it is apparent that they have patience, inner peace and harmony when things are difficult or not quite right. Younger people want to be

able to achieve this in their own lives. If we start complaining about things that we cannot control (such as weather conditions), things only become worse. Mood and attitude are negatively affected. I (Joe Karetak) need to respond to these difficulties from a good place that brings me peace and restores harmony to my life. I used to think that Elders were calm and peaceful because they didn't understand or were not paying attention to situations and problems around them. Now I know that Elders also find these situations upsetting but have a way of responding that is calm, thoughtful and that leads to a more peaceful resolution. Having patience, confidence in one's ability, the determination to succeed and the ability to take a calm approach is a harmonious way to solve problems, as evident from the story of survival found in the last chapter in this book.

Being able to have a healthy, balanced response through hardships and stress is highly valued. This requires knowing and understanding Inuit culture and values, Inuit ways of being and guiding principles for healthy living. The harmony and well-being of Inuit requires the help of Elders. They can help youth to better understand the origins of misunderstandings and what should be done to solve present-day issues and problems. A better understanding of the realities faced by youth and the wisdom held by Elders is important to harmony in Inuit as individuals and in Inuit communities. Elders have lived with, thought about and are knowledgeable about Inuit culture. Their wisdom and their years of experience with difficult social change are important to the future of Inuit.

When Inuit society was well-run, using its own governance systems and laws, maintaining harmony was a central focus. But Inuit culture and society have undergone tremendous change. Inuit have often lost sight of the importance of harmony to their personal lives and how they live together. Elders are well aware of this and recognize that achieving harmony within oneself, as well as in communities, is still incredibly important to the future. Elders are needed to provide IQ as the source of this wisdom.

A guiding principle of particular importance to achieving harmony is *aajiiqatigiingniq* (working together to deal with threats to social harmony and balance). In the past, *aajiiqatigiingniq* created harmony

among community members and contributed to people feeling secure. It ensured that Inuit did not have to worry about each other all the time. When people don't practice *aajiiqatigiingniq*, the situation can become very difficult. When people go out hunting, split up and don't communicate with each other about where they are headed, an opportunity for disaster is created. If a blizzard comes up and someone is missing, one of the hunters may be asked which way his hunting partner went. If the hunter doesn't know, people must then undertake a very difficult search, not knowing where they should start looking.

People would *aajiiqatigiingniq* before going out hunting, especially when game was scarce. The community hunters would get together and talk about their options and make plans based on the resources and the information they had. Communities that applied this principle well were better able to overcome great difficulties. They would cooperate because they believed in using this process to come up with solutions that included everybody within their community. *Aajiiqatigiingniq* was used to make decisions that were not easy to make.

Louis Angalik, writing in this book, describes *aajiiqatigiingniq* as a critical tool for survival. It brought people together in order to plan. The same process was used when facing deeper social or emotional issues and involved those who needed to be involved to reach a resolution, including family members and those with expertise on the relevant issues. Rhoda Karetak describes its application:

The purpose of the *aajiiqatigiingniq* system was to ensure that *inuutsiargniq* (wellness) was continually supported by the community. *Aajiiqatigiingniq* is related to *parnangniq tuavinngin-nirlu* (carefully planning without rushing). We don't really use *aajiiqatigiingniq* that way today. However, in the past it was a careful and thoughtful process used to seek solutions when there were issues facing a person or family, or which impacted negatively on the community. The process was not employed lightly. Negative habits or behaviours were always quickly and strongly confronted as soon as they were noticed. If a person did not change their behaviour, then community caregivers — usually Elders and people significant to the

person doing wrong — would gather to set a plan in motion to correct the wrongdoing. We used to bring the people to account and we helped them to understand the consequences of their behaviours for everyone. As well, there was support provided for the person to correct the behaviour. Each person in the *aajiiqatigiingniq* process had a role to play in supporting the individual to improve. *Aajiiqatigiingniq* was intended as a process to restore the individual to well-being and to being a productive, caring member of the community.

Inuit communities still have Elders who are very knowledgeable, but without leaders who appreciate and respect IQ, the Elders' wisdom will not be passed along. There are some Inuit who believe that these principles are no longer important and that a new generation should move on. Others see what has happened as a result of rapid — and in many cases destructive — culture change. Without harmony Inuit — and all people — are individually and collectively out of balance. Violence and mistrust replace a common purpose with self-interest, driving individuals to step on the person beside them.

Working for the Common Good

The Arctic is unforgiving. It will not wait for anyone and does not feel remorse or regret. If you don't respect this, people will be concerned about your chances of surviving in the Arctic. Everyone has different skills and abilities. Historically, these were all important to surviving in an Arctic environment. The skills and abilities required to survive in a modern world are different, although the skills and abilities required to survive on an Arctic landscape remain remarkably the same. In order to nurture what is needed to survive in both the modern world and the Arctic environment, the same values that guided Inuit culture and society for generations are required. Inuit need to be able to work together and be in harmony with each other and with nature. Nurturing the skills and abilities of young Inuit and sharing the wisdom and experience of Elders that are presented in this book are important.

A principle of particular importance to following the *maligarjuat*



Sharing frozen caribou meat

that one should work for the common good is *tunnganarniq* (being kind-hearted and caring). *Tunnganarniq* starts from being respectful of all living things. From an Inuit perspective, greed is a very negative aspect of life, and *tunnganarniq* is designed to protect us from becoming victims of our own greediness. When food is scarce and conditions are bad, it is the weak and less capable who will suffer greatly. Failure to practice and maintain *tunnganarniq* will result in an imbalance in society. People who are treated badly because others are greedy and refuse to share will become resentful and perhaps angry. Their anger and resentment can destroy the harmony important to living together. Much of the conflict in Western society is the result of inequalities. The same problems are now becoming part of Inuit culture and society. Many of the laws in Western society deal with the consequences of having a culture where people are very unequal. The imbalance caused by a failure to internalize the value of *tunnganarniq* is the eventual suffering of all people. In Inuit culture, being kind-hearted is a way of being and behaving that extends beyond people toward all living things.

Being Respectful of All Living Things

Many Inuit seem to have a general view of the concept of respect, rather than the specific view that is central to this Inuit law. Many Inuit don't know what it really means, how to talk about it, how people attain it, how they use it or why it is important. Even with a law that required Inuit to be respectful of all living things, there were still situations and people in traditional Inuit society and camp life that caused problems. People sometimes behaved badly. The law or ethic that requires respect for all living things was a deterrent to a life without limits or that was disrespectful of other people, animals or the environment.

Disrespect can be looked at as a kind of debt. An animal has a soul because it is a living being. If I kill it to feed myself, I have to do it respectfully. Being respectful is like making a symbolic, emotional and meaningful payment. It is a way of acknowledging a life that gives us life. Those who are disrespectful build up a debt in life. Respect is something that we give and also receive. When we give respect, we are more likely to receive it.

Inuit believe that animals have spirits, and Inuit speak of showing respect for animals. Animals have blood and breath; need to eat and learn do certain things to survive. They have a soul that is needed in order to live and survive. We need to do things that show and remind us of the importance of respect. Aupilaarjuq, an Elder who contributed to this book, talked to us about the old animal bones that are often found lying on the land. He talked about turning these bones over because the animal must get tired of staying in one spot. It does not matter whether one understands this act literally or symbolically. When he turns old bones over, that action brings to mind the concept of respect and puts it into practice. Respect is grounded in a belief about the value of all others. Respect is core to Inuit beliefs because it is what brings Inuit together. Inuit respect the animals, the environment and each other.

Inuit have come to see, with great apprehension, how Inuit and Qallunaat now live together under Qallunaat authority, using Qallunaat systems which affirm Qallunaat values.⁵ Qallunaat society values progress, development, profit and control over nature. It is also true that Qallunaat value other things and that not all Qallunaat

think the same way. There are also some Qallunaat who think that large changes can be made to nature and the environment without suffering any negative consequences. This is the idea that “we can have our cake and eat it too.” They think we can manage our way out of most problems. Inuit, on the other hand, believe that everything we do has consequences for nature. Attempts to manage things have consequences. No animal was ever made extinct by Inuit practising their laws, values and beliefs. When the Qallunaat came, muskox and whales were hunted nearly to extinction. Military bases, built across the North in the mid-1950s during the Cold War, left the land covered with barrels of toxic waste. More recently, toxic wastes from mining and exploration companies have been found in a community dump and draining into a lake used for drinking water. Resource development in Nunavut introduces new threats. Inuit struggle with contradictions. Inuit youth need jobs to survive in the modern world, but Inuit history and culture tell us that resource development has serious consequences for the values, beliefs and rules that protected Inuit for hundreds and even thousands of years. Inuit struggle with this knowledge.

Faced with few choices, Inuit have adopted — or tried to adopt — Qallunaat ways of doing things while trying to preserve, strengthen and better understand Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit. In a modern world this is not easily done. Saying what you think you believe and value is not the same as living what you believe and value. Inuit know that being in respectful relationship through *inuuaqatigiitsiarniq* (living well together) did not leave a negative impact on the world. Inuit want to believe that they are now living by what is believed and valued by virtue of being an Inuk, but Inuit actually agree to live by all kinds of laws that contradict these beliefs and historical practices. It is the footprint that we leave — the impact we have on the earth over time — that will always tell the truth.

*Continually Planning and
Preparing for the Future*

Inuit recognize the importance of being prepared and planning for eventualities by being forward thinking. *Iliqqusituqat* is to lay out a philosophy for a good life, recognizing the role of culture in having a good life. Cultural knowledge is what Inuit Elders were responsible for passing on to future generations. The entire process of passing on wisdom and raising children was to make a human being who is regarded as highly competent, humble, willing to serve others and a deep thinker. Three key Inuit concepts important to becoming a human being — living well together, being kind-hearted and caring and communicating honestly — are noted in different ways by Elders contributing to this book.

Planning for the future was of great importance to traditional Inuit culture and to camp life. Much of the focus was on ensuring that camps had enough food to see them through the harsh winter months. Norman Attangalaaq deals with this in his chapter. Planning was important in relation to weather conditions and seasons. Inuit had to be in certain places at exactly the right time in order to hunt caribou using *qajait* (kayaks) or to take advantage of seals on the ice, migrating whales or berries that needed picking. Planning required a sound knowledge of conditions. Reading the weather was important. Being caught in a sudden rainstorm or snowstorm could be fatal. Knowing where to cache meat and how to do it so that wolves and other animals would not destroy it required thought, knowledge and planning.

Planning for the future also means having some idea of what kind of future you would like to have. For Inuit, the future was about giving consideration to many generations yet to come. The actions one takes today should consider the impacts for future generations. The choices and possibilities faced by young people living in modern settlements are many. However, the principle still applies that in making good decisions we always need to consider the long term impacts those decisions will have. Doing this is essential to having a good life.

Helping others to think about and plan for their future is also part of being responsible, respectful and contributing to our culture and communities. We need to ask important questions about what our

future will look like. This book is about the wisdom of Elders, Inuit ways of being, guiding principles and laws that help focus what we should be doing, where we should be going and how to get there.

THE DIFFICULTY OF WRITING ABOUT INUIT QAUJIMAJATUQANGIT

Why are Inuit trying to document the information which still exists about IQ? What Inuit stand to lose by not doing so is their identity in a modern world. IQ defines Inuit culture. It makes Inuit who they are. If Inuit culture is lost, Inuit lose themselves. This is a contributing factor in the social problems now facing Inuit youth.

Writing about IQ is not easy. Until the syllabic way of writing was introduced in the 1890s, Inuit did not have a writing system.⁶ The introduction of syllabics did not result in Inuit writing about their cultural practices and beliefs. Passing these teachings from generation to generation orally was important. It taught children to value and to remember what they were told. Communication, like so many other things in Inuit culture, was regarded as a relationship. One cannot have a relationship with someone who has written a book hundreds or thousands of miles away. Writing is different from oral telling. Even today, there is a great deal of fear associated with the idea of writing down what IQ is and recording on paper the stories used to illustrate how IQ works. Not only the meaning, but the significance of what is said, might change.

Written documents are helpful in giving the reader information, but it is more difficult to convey intent. The oral teachings of Elders were strongly worded and therefore remembered. Readers of this book will notice that sometimes information presented in the chapters written by Elders is restated. In the oral tradition of Inuit, when it came to making a human being, words of wisdom and advice were often repeated so that they would stay with the child. Inuit often preface a strong teaching with a phrase like: "So that my words will come back to you." The implication was that at some point in life, the knowledge would be needed and would be remembered. Appreciating the relevance and intent of the law was important to remembering and applying it.

There is also the concern that if one person writes something, it can easily be interpreted to mean that the author is speaking for the collective — that their words represent the ideas of others. An oral culture doesn't so easily present ideas as final or definitive. It holds out the very real possibility that others do not agree with what someone has said. In Qallunaat culture, knowledge is written, or booked. Humility among Inuit is extremely important. The levels of authority given to written documents become difficult for an Inuk writer to negotiate. For this reason, the contributing Elders have opted to speak in their own words to share their own experiences and do not presume to speak for all Inuit.

Elders also now use different writing systems. In editing the “Elder writing” for this book, we were conscious of the risk of twisting or mis-stating the intended meanings. So we used original Elder writing combined with taped interviews. The process of editing and validating went back and forth so that we could be sure the the intended meanings were captured accurately. Translating this information to the English language is another problem. It is important to use wording that flows, so that it is easy for English-speaking people to read and understand. Elders worry about being misrepresented and misunderstood. Reassuring them that we would constantly seek clarification and refer to the recordings we made was part of this process; one that lasted many years.

Sometimes we cannot instantly grasp the significance of information shared with us. We are not computers that can be loaded with an almost limitless amount of information. Understanding may come slowly — the result of thinking, doing, reflecting, rethinking, experiencing, watching and learning from our actions and the actions of others.

Giving out information in small doses is the best way to teach. It gives learners, be they children, youth or adults, time to think and absorb what they are hearing. The purpose of introducing information to someone is to hope they can use it in a time of need to solve a problem or to overcome an obstacle. Burdening someone with a lot of information in a very short amount of time is not useful, for they do not yet have a need for this information or a method for using it.

This is what happens with written information. This overburdening of someone with ideas that are not fully understood or needed may even contribute to mental health problems.

This is why Elders are critical of the Qallunaat education system, which loads children with a lot of ideas. Because students haven't experienced those ideas in the world, they cannot really learn, understand or appreciate them. The Qallunaat definition of an educated person is very different from the Inuit definition of an able human being. For Inuit, knowledge without application has no value. Skills and information must be applied and practised and used to improve the common good. This process builds wisdom. Knowledge without wisdom can be dangerous. Children who have graduated from high school are still committing suicide.⁷ The knowledge they gained in school is not helping them cope with the world they live in.

IQ is not a list of rules, values and principles, or even simply a way of thinking. The risk is that by writing about it, it will be seen this way. It is a way of thinking and doing based in beliefs, experience and wisdom, and it is being challenged by goals and ways of thinking that are part of a very different Qallunaat culture. Elders who have decided, in the interest of future generations, to share their experiences and insights with the reader, have put a lot of work and thought into their contributions to this book. We hope that you will be inspired, informed and rewarded by what they have to say.