

Module 2

Changes in Expressions of Cultural Identity in northern North America: Media, Art, Education, and Recreation

Contents

Course objectives	1
Introduction	2
Indigenous and non-indigenous northern identities	4
The impact of media on indigenous peoples	9
Expression of identity and self-determination through media	11
Expression of identity and self-determination through literary and visual arts	14
Family, education and recreation as social institutions for self-determination	17
- Indigenous families: cultural standards vs. government-imposed rules	18
- Education systems: indigenous concerns vs. educational practices	24
Recreation	31
Glossary of terms	32
Literature	32

Course objectives

Whereas the impact of colonization and assimilation on the traditional livelihood of the indigenous peoples of the circumpolar world was the main topic of CS 321, this course sheds light on the changes in expressions of cultural self-determination of the indigenous peoples of northern North America, Greenland and Northern Europe, and the Russian Arctic. Complex issues in relation to culture, identity and self-determination were discussed in detail in the previous module, which serves as an introduction to explain the theoretical background which

subsequently will be applied in this, and the following modules where the case studies of the different regions will be addressed.

In this module, you will be familiarized with the complex issues surrounding the revival of cultures and languages in northern North America. We will explain how culture, identity and self-determination apply to indigenous and non-indigenous people in the North. We will then move to a more specific discussion of media, art and written literature and the importance of family, recreation and education – such as the use of mother tongue in formal school systems – for indigenous families in northern North America. The focus in this module is on the indigenous people of northern North America whereas the next two modules discuss the aboriginal populations of the Russian Arctic and Northern Europe/Greenland.

Upon completion of this module, you should be able to:

1. understand and explain complex issues in relation to culture, identity and self-determination, and give concrete examples;
2. identify the threats to indigenous languages in northern North America and provide examples of the revitalization of native languages in northern North America;
3. give examples of indigenous religion in northern North America;
4. describe art, media and written literature in northern North America, their definition, redefinition and development over time;
5. explain the impact of media on the indigenous people in northern North America;
6. explain the importance of family, education and recreation as social institutions for indigenous families in northern North America;
7. explain the different ways in which ethical, spiritual and cultural values transfer within indigenous families in northern North America.

Introduction

This module discusses the way in which the identities of peoples in northern North America are shaped and expressed. In spite of 200 years of European influence, northern indigenous peoples still retain their identities and cultures. We start this module by presenting a native and non-native perspective on the identity of northern inhabitants and their environment. To

people who are natives of the North their homeland is familiar, and full of life, whereas to southerners the North has been (and, often, still is) perceived as remote, harsh and empty.

Like identity, culture determines behaviour through traditional beliefs and observances, and language is the foundation for any culture. According to Freeman (Freeman 2000:xiii), language affects the way people think and the way people understand the world in which they live, and is thus important in maintaining a distinct cultural identity. Unfortunately, formal school systems have often been used to weaken the use of indigenous languages, thereby affecting the identity of indigenous peoples (Ibid). Besides language and education, religion, family, and art are all considered to be vital for reinforcing identities and allowing expressions of self-determination.¹

The media – television, radio, newspapers and more recently internet – has an impact on the cultural self-determination of indigenous people, sometimes negatively because southern media often misunderstand and misrepresent indigenous peoples and their cultures sometimes positively when media are successfully used by indigenous peoples to express themselves or gain worldwide attention for their issues. An example of such positive use would be the public media campaigns of the Cree of James Bay to protest against the building of a new hydro-electric project on their traditional homeland which resulted in a cancellation of the plans by the governmental authorities in 1994 (Felt 2000:51-53). There are many theories about the ways that media influence people. Global media can inform and bring greater understanding of each other amongst different peoples, or it can negatively effect indigenous peoples by eroding their cultures. On the other hand, indigenous peoples successfully use mass media to reinforce their cultures, express their opinions, defend their rights and provide others with accurate information – not southern perspectives – about themselves. Besides through the media, indigenous peoples are successfully presenting and representing themselves in many other creative forms, such as in written literature, through festivals, and in art, for instance Inuit art, which is well-known and desired around the world. In addition to northern writers and musicians, northern visual artists are also being heard and seen.

This module also provides an overview of the main characteristics of education, family, and recreation, understood as social institutions. It summarizes the main contributions that each of

¹ Emphasized, especially, in article 3, 5, 31 and 36 of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN 2008).

these institutions is expected to make in the maintenance and development of the societies in which they exist. Education is often thought of as a public institution through which we gain knowledge, skills, experiences, and credentials that are important outside the household. While some aspects of public and private life remain relatively separate from one another, the two spheres of life constantly shape each other, sometimes giving rise to new tensions and problems. The module explores how family life and education are being reshaped in the north of North America as communities try to achieve effective self-determination that addresses local concerns while at the same time its members try to achieve the standards of societies that place increasing value on formal education, knowledge, and global connections.

Indigenous and non-indigenous northern identities

Outsiders have identified the indigenous peoples of northern North America and put them into groupings such as Dene (also called Athapaskan) and Inuit (Inuit and Inuvialuit in Canada, and Inupiat, Yupik, and Aleut in Alaska). However, the indigenous peoples have their own ways of naming and defining themselves. Each group of people has ways of defining itself as distinct from neighboring peoples. While neighboring peoples may share some cultural characteristics, each people has unique characteristics that identify them after living on their land for centuries or even millennia. The distinct identities of peoples may be expressed in language, religion, art and technology.

Identity changes continuously through time as people invent and learn new things, meet new peoples with new ideas, develop new trade ties, move to new territories. However, even with continuous change, a people can retain a sense of continuity – a sense of being the same people – and even with the advent of European contact and the greatly accelerated pace of change that it brought, the peoples of the North have retained their unique identities into the twenty-first century. Culture, including culture of indigenous peoples, is alive; it can change according to new circumstances. Traditional aboriginal activities are modernized when indigenous peoples for example start to use snowmobiles during reindeer herding. But this does not necessarily mean that they lose the core of their culture. Some northern peoples have experienced more than 200 years of continuous contact with people of European ancestry; for others that experience is only a few decades. Today, virtually all northern indigenous peoples are in contact with non-indigenous people. In spite of the changes that this contact has

brought in the form of missionaries, education, and government intervention, the indigenous peoples of the North have retained their distinct identities.

There are many ways that people can express their identity. In the previous module we concluded that each person has an individual identity that sets him or her apart from other people, but there are culturally constructed ways in which each person creates identity. Language – as discussed in the previous module – is one of the most obvious markers that can be used to identify a person as belonging to a particular group, but there are other markers as well, including religion, family, recreation, and art forms. For example, we may recognize a bentwood hunting hat, beautifully decorated with painted designs, carved ivory pieces, and grass, as belonging to an Aleut man; or we may recognize an elaborately beaded white caribou or canvas amautik as belonging to an Inuit woman from Baffin Island. These are markers of identity that people both inside and outside the culture can recognize. Such objects tell us not only what culture the wearers belong to but also that they have pride in their culture.

Religion is also an important marker of identity. Religious freedom remains difficult and controversial for native Americans; partly due to the frequent efforts by European missionaries to convert the indigenous peoples of northern North America into Christianity, but also because many struggle to maintain relationships with their sacred places or have limited access to traditional medicines and territories (Nelson 2009:227). In general, their worldview regards humans and their environment as interconnected. Rather than dividing all things into different categories – objects, natural phenomena, humans and animals – the indigenous world consists of living social entities including plants, animals, and humans, but also rocks, lakes and even snow. The Cree people of the Canadian North argue for instance that all these objects and phenomena are creations of god and have souls (or *inua* in Inuit language). Animals and natural forces are respected and if a Cree was not able to hunt a particular animal because it was too far away, the Cree considered this as a sign given by the animal in question that he or she would have a successful hunter later on. Patrick Attungana, an Inupiat, provides another example. He says that the whale ‘gives itself to all of the community.’ However, in order for the spirit to return, the meat must be shared with the community (Bodenhorn in Freeman 2000:137). This spiritual way of thinking about the world is different from for instance, literal belief in the Old and New Testaments where human beings dominate nature under god. There are different religious practices among the

inhabitants of the circumpolar north. The Cree, for instance, used to sing hunting songs before or after foraging events (Brightman 1993:104) Some of the religious practices are combined with other denominations of world religions such as Russian Orthodox Christianity (in the case of the Aleut people) or the Catholic Church (in the case of the Innu). Most indigenous peoples, however, continued practicing their traditional religions by following the instructions of respected individual specialists, better known as shamans, or in case of the Kaska people ‘*nédete’è*’ or ‘*dreamers*’ (Moore in Freeman 2000:192). Shamans mediate between human beings and the spiritual world, for example, with the objective to heal those who are sick or seeking to ensure the availability of animals. Communication with the spirits of nature (including animals and phenomena) by songs, offerings or other performances such as the ‘shaking tent’ (Tanner in Freeman 2000:78) is another characteristic of the indigenous religion of the native people of the American Far North.

Northern communities always had their own uniquely northern character. Besides objects to express pride of identity, such as hunting hats and amautik, the indigenous peoples of the North traditionally told stories of life on the land, of the experiences of the ancestors, of interactions with the spiritual world, and other themes that derived from life as it was. With new forms of expression such as the media, they continue the traditional art of storytelling, telling their stories in written form and expressing themselves on the radio, on television, on the internet, and in film. Moreover, the peoples of the North are telling new stories of the experience of colonization and of their drive towards decolonization. The story of colonization is one in which outsiders tried to erase the identities of northern peoples and replace them with European ones or, at least, European-defined ones. The stories of decolonization are ones in which the peoples of the North refuse to be defined by outsiders, and instead reclaim their identities and express them in their own ways.

Non-indigenous inhabitants of the North have their stories, too. When people of European ancestry first came to the North, some came to exploit northern resources as whalers, trappers, traders, and miners, as well as in other roles. Other southerners were drawn to the North to Christianize, educate, or regulate the indigenous peoples residing there. Many southerners have gone to the North, realized their dreams of wealth and adventure, and returned to their homes in the South. Other southerners have seen their dreams dashed in the harsh climate or unfamiliar cultures of the North whereas some others who went to the North stayed there. Southerners who have settled in the North have often tried to recreate Euro-American and

Euro-Canadian society in northern communities with varying degrees of success. Although most indigenous cultures have mechanisms for integrating outsiders into their communities, the prevailing attitude of superiority among Euro-Americans and Euro-Canadians, has made it likely that few could or would assimilate to indigenous cultures. Furthermore, the dictates of distance, climate, and resources made it difficult to reproduce southern society in the North and the northern culture southerners often admired turned out to be a romantic and unreal notion of the North. As a result, few people of European ancestry became fully integrated into northern indigenous communities and cultures. The ideas about identity and expression of identity held by both indigenous and non-indigenous northerners will be discussed in more detail in the following sections on identity, media, visual arts, and literary arts.

To the people who are native to the North, the North is their homeland: welcoming, familiar, and full of life (Nelson 1983). To southerners, by contrast, the North has been (and, often, still is) perceived as remote, forbidding, unknown, empty and strange. Simpson-Housley (1996:12) argues that such descriptions easily can result in misconceptions. It is certainly true that “strangeness” is only in the perception of the observer. As European colonialists left their homelands over the last 500 years, and assumed the right to colonize others, they also claimed the right to define the people. This process of defining non-Europeans as *strange* has been called “othering” (Minh-ha 1991). While indigenous peoples have resisted external definitions, they have to some degree accepted those definitions because of the power and authority of the West. This module focuses on examples of ways in which the people of Alaska and the Canadian North have resisted outside definition, but the fact remains that the power of the colonizers to define is great. For instance, one of the ways to influence is by the choice of words we use. If, for example, you attended Canadian or American schools, how often did your text refer to North Americans of European ancestry as colonizers? Clearly, Euro-Canadians are not indigenous to North America; therefore, they must be colonizers. That is certainly the way indigenous North Americans see them, but people in power always try to legitimate their power, not just legally or militarily, but by an even more powerful force; ideology. When colonized people believe what the colonizers say, then the colonizers are truly successful. Therefore, one of the ways Canada and the United States have tried to define the original peoples of the continent is as ethnic groups. Such a definition makes each group just one among many, with no claim to special status, land, or other rights. Moreover, Norwegian researcher Einar Niemi (Niemi 2006:397) argues that categorization of collective identities is used by politicians and scientists to support certain policy, control social thought

and gain political purposes. The categories (such as nations, ethnic groups, classes, immigrants and so on) are not neutral and play a role in the legitimatization of the selected policy and in building hierarchy between groups of peoples and excluding some. For instance, a people can be called indigenous or 'immigrant' at different times, immigrant meaning that these people are not local, moved from another territory and have origins different from the majority (Ibid). Indigenous people, on the other hand, are local and have been living on the territory "since time immemorial", and hence, have the right to this territory (Ibid).

Indigenous peoples in Canada and the United States have steadfastly refused to accept being defined as ethnic groups. By contrast, they consider their identity to be layered. That is, the indigenous people in a group may consider themselves to be Sahtu Dene (a specific group of people with shared language, territory and identity), Dene (a group of related peoples with related languages), and indigenous (the original people of a place; Aboriginal people). They may consider themselves a people deeply rooted in a particular place while at the same time sharing characteristics with indigenous peoples globally. Furthermore, indigenous peoples nearly always consider themselves connected to lands within the state and as having rights that pre-date the existence of the state. They generally argue that land is central to their identity as indigenous peoples (Smith and Ward 200:6). The relationship between land and identity is clearly reflected in the creative works discussed later in this module.

In recent years, a more positive attitude has been held by non-indigenous North Americans towards indigenous peoples – the interest in Inuit art being a specific example. This interest, however, can result in another problem, namely that of the appropriation and commodification of aspects of indigenous culture. "Appropriation" refers to the act of using something without permission of the owners, such as Aboriginal images and names. "Commodification" refers to the marketing and sale of aspects of Aboriginal cultures. Appropriation and commodification inevitably involve stereotyping that can have negative effects on indigenous cultures, which are then romanticized and misunderstood. In such situations, Aboriginal people are seen by outsiders as picturesque people, quaintly dressed while singing and dancing to entertain tourists. Smith and Ward (2000:14) contend that such commodification can "serve to sanitize the marginalization of indigenous peoples into a familiar social and political reality." In other words, an unreal image of indigenous people is maintained while the real issues and problems of indigenous peoples are ignored.

The impact of media on indigenous people

Today, the indigenous peoples of northern North America express their identity in many ways. A few of these ways have been discussed briefly in this module, including the expression of identity and self-determination through media and art.

Canadian communications theorists have been very influential in the development of media theories. Marshall McLuhan's concept of the medium as the message may be familiar to you. He was concerned not only with the message that was being transmitted, but also with the form through which it was conveyed, because he believed that how the message is perceived is influenced by the medium (Vivian and Maurin 2000:2). McLuhan believed that the "global village" – the new, widely available communications technologies – would contribute to democratization (McLuhan 1964). Some influential media theorists of recent years, like Bill Gates (1995) and Nicholas Negroponte (1996) have essentially adhered to McLuhan's ideas. However, Ginsburg (2000:36) claims that the media "failed to appreciate fully the significance and persistence of cultural difference, as well as social and economic inequalities." These and other factors have affected the ways in which the realities of mass media have played out in the twenty-first century.

American sociologists Paul Lazarsfeld and Robert Merton (1996:14) have suggested that mass media serve a number of functions. One of these is the conferral of status on issues, persons, organizations, and social movements. This means that the public believes that if a person or an issue is represented in the media, he, she, or it must be important. Another function of the media, according to Lazarsfeld and Merton (1996:16-17), is the enforcement of social norms – that mass media are used to present a picture of what is considered ideal by society. The third function of mass media, as contended by Lazarsfeld and Merton (1996:17), is its "narcotizing dysfunction", by which the authors mean that mass media serve to render the population politically apathetic: the public is too drugged or numbed by the entertainment factor of the media to be concerned with important political issues. Although, the dominant schools of thought in communications theory have not really considered how the media affect remote and indigenous populations, mass media are pervasive, even in 'remote' northern communities, which were isolated from the rest of the world only a few decades ago. Northern communities are still isolated by great distances, the high cost of travel, and the

unreliability of communication media, but the fact remains that even the most distant of Arctic communities is connected to the world through satellite communication. This process has been called “globalization.” As mass media bring urban, southern, “mainstream” values, beliefs, customs, and products to the North, they change northern cultures (and peoples). Alaskan Yupik educator Oscar Kawagley (1934-2011) expressed concern about this, saying that satellite TV images beamed from the South present ideals that are portrayed as desirable but are unattainable for young Yupik people (Kawagley 1995:58). These images of southern lifestyles confer status on objects Yupik cannot have and on people Yupik cannot be. Television programs portray the urban, southern lifestyle as the norm, signifying that there is something wrong with the very different lives of northerners. This can create unhappiness and dissatisfaction with those who do not meet the televised ideal. Moreover, the “narcoticizing” effect of the mass media diverts the attention of northerners, especially of Aboriginal people, away from political issues like loss of lands and resources and lack of self-determination, to narcoticizing preoccupations like attaining material objects like cars and stylish clothes.

Some media critics such as Noam Chomsky and Ward Churchill would go so far as to say that colonial governments, like that of the United States, not only encourage or influence the media to present normalizing and narcoticizing images, but actually wage propaganda wars and present disinformation in the media (Herman and Chomsky 1988; Churchill 1994). Churchill argues that the US government very effectively vilifies indigenous American groups that speak out about their ongoing colonization (Churchill 1994). Furthermore, media critic David Taras (2001:195) claims that the Canadian media is in crisis because Canada is inundated by American programming and the values that it brings. He says that rather than being presented with serious news and information, Canadians are being “Disneytized” by mindless entertainment. Anthropologist Arjun Appadurai applies a similar concept to the Westernizing influence in other parts of the world, calling it a “McDonaldization” (Appadurai 1990:3).

Although the role of the mass media as a tool for further intellectual colonization is obvious, there is also a growing awareness that telecommunications technologies can be used to reinforce the unique identities of indigenous and remote northern peoples, like those of northern Canada and Alaska (Ginsburg 200:29; Smith and Ward 2000:4).

Expression of identity and self-determination through media

In recent years, indigenous peoples have begun using media and other creative forms to express their own points of view. These cultural activists present perspectives that counter tendencies such as “Disneytization” and “McDonaldization” by – as Ginsburg (2000:29) argues – strengthening their communities and framing storylines that include indigenous perspectives. In other words, indigenous artists and journalists working in the media are offering an indigenous perspective educating the non-indigenous public about indigenous issues and realities while at the same time preserving their cultural heritage for their own communities’ futures. Indigenous media activists are also asserting their right to self-determination and community ownership of cultural property. Ginsburg (2000:31) said, “These activists were attempting to reverse processes through which aspects of their societies have been objectified, commodified, and appropriated by the dominant society; their media productions and writings were efforts to recuperate their histories, land rights, and knowledge bases as their own cultural property.” The need for written material was initially less urgent because the history of indigenous populations was embedded in places, songs, stories, dances and movement from place to place according to the seasons rather than in written records (Kawagley 2011:273-276). More recently, however, Inuit communities have started to document their oral stories and cultural practices and also to incorporate these now documented materials for use as part of the curriculum in educational programs.

Radio arrived in the Canadian North in the 1920s while television followed in the 1960s with the development of satellite signal transmission. Programming in both media was initially generated in the South and was focused on non-Aboriginal concerns. By the 1970s, Inuit were becoming concerned about the assimilative effects of southern media. Historian Mary Vipond (1992:155) argues that even the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), which is supposed to serve all Canadians, has been criticized for a centralist bias that neglects indigenous perspectives. Film curator Sally Berger claims that Inuit were concerned that “radio and television broadcasts brought outside values, undermined the use of Inuktitut language, created unrealistic desires and frustration, and increased generation gaps between the young and the old” (Berger 1995a:105). Inuit responded by forming regional

organizations to influence CBC programming and, in 1981, the Inuit Broadcasting Corporation (IBC) was formed to produce Inuit culture and language programming (Berger 1995a:105). As of 2014, IBC offers programs such as: Takuginai (Look Here) – educating Inuit children with cultural values such as respect for elders – and Illinniġ (learning), focusing on political and social development issues (http://www.nac.nu.ca/programming_e.htm). Both programs are offered in the aboriginal language. This movement has also produced some remarkable filmmakers, among them Zacharias Kunuk.

Zacharias Kunuk is an Inuit filmmaker from Igloolik, Nunavut. He has received international acclaim with his award-winning film, *Atanarjuat* (The Fast Runner). According to Berger (1995:111), Kunuk finds video a particularly appealing medium because of its ability to reflect the oral tradition of Inuit culture. Kunuk started his career as filmmaker with the IBC but, because he felt the organization was directed by ‘outsiders’, he found he could not express an Inuk point of view and, therefore, began making independent films (Berger 1995a:105). His films include a four-part series portraying the seasons of traditional Inuit life in the Igloolik area; a 13-part series called *Nunavut: Our Land* (1995); and, the consummate *Atanarjuat* (2001). Kunuk and his partners, Norman Cohn and Paulossie Qulitalik, in Igloolik Isuma Productions claimed that presenting Inuit language and images on television is important for their children and for educating outsiders about Inuit perspectives (Berger 1995b:188).

Whereas Zacharias Kunuk and Igloolik Isuma Productions have been very successful in the film industry, other northern filmmakers have struggled to produce their films. The filmmakers in Nunavut decided to band together to support their emerging industry, forming Aġġiit; the Nunavut Media Association. Recent examples of First Nation film productions are *Older than America* (2008) and *Unikkausivut: Sharing Our Stories* (2011). A co-production between indigenous organizations and the National Film Board of Canada, Unikkausivut is a collection of (archival) films offered in Inuktitut that sheds light on narratives told by Inuit peoples themselves. Not only in Canada, but also in Alaska successful productions emanating from joint initiatives which have been presented at film festivals partly because many Alaska Natives now have wealth from their for-profit corporations and some of them are media and public relations companies. Moreover, there is a proliferation of public and commercial radio and television networks and Alaskan radio stations are available in contemporary Alaska, such as the National Public Radio and Public Broadcasting Corporation which have networks

of local stations – both radio and TV in every community and support local production. Alaskan radio stations are available with general programming as well as with local native programming – for example, the Alaska Public Radio Network (APRN) which is heard every day throughout Alaska and has had a series designed to feature every single Alaska village on the APRN network.

Although the need for indigenous television programming has been recognized for some years and progress in its development has been made, the impact of southern-based media on Aboriginal culture is still a concern, as expressed at the 2002 Inuit Circumpolar Conference (Wilkin 2002). Kuupik Kleist, the chair of the special commission on communications, argued that southern media can be a destabilizing force in the Arctic because of its enormous power to shape public opinion. He cited the collapse of the seal industry in Canada following a southern media campaign as an example (Wilkin 2002).

Newspapers in printed form exist in most of the larger northern communities in Alaska and the Canadian Arctic, but in recent years electronic news media have also flourished, since the use of the internet has become more common. The distance between northern communities remains great, and transportation can be unreliable due to harsh weather conditions. According to Zimmerman et al. (2000), the internet is both “a blessing and a curse for indigenous people”: while the lack of control and censorship allows indigenous people to represent themselves as they see fit, it also allows others to represent indigenous people as they wish or even to represent themselves as indigenous when they are not. Electronic media seem particularly suited to the North. Nunatsiaq News, also available in Iqaluit, Nunavut, is one such journal that covers local, national, and international stories and provides a forum for northerners to express their views (<http://www.nunatsiaqonline.ca>). Alaskan online news journals include the *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner* (<http://www.news-miner.com/>) and since 2009 the statewide on-line news journal *The Alaska Dispatch* which bought the *Anchorage Daily News* in May 2014. The combined newspaper and online operation has a strong aboriginal focus.

A few scholarly and popular scientific journals are published in Alaska and northern Canada. One of these is *Alaska Geographic* (<http://www.alaskageographic.org/category/10/main-category>), published in Anchorage. It is a scientific journal published for a popular readership.

The Alaska Quarterly Review (<http://www.uaa.alaska.edu/aqr/>) is a literary journal published by the University of Alaska Anchorage.

Expression of identity and self-determination through literary and visual arts

Art has become a major vehicle for expression of Indigenous identity. In this section, we discuss the expression of identity and self-determination through literary and visual arts. All of the indigenous peoples of northern North America have powerful traditions of storytelling and oral transmission of knowledge. These compelling media are still used, but the written word has been added as another means of expression. Many indigenous and non-indigenous northerners are producing literary works in all forms – poetry, short stories, novels, and plays among them. Northern publishing houses, like Outcrop in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories and the University of Alaska Press publish the work of northern writers. There are far too many northern writers to mention so a few will be presented briefly.

Mary Tall Mountain (Koyukon), born in Nulato, Alaska, writes moving poetry that presents beautiful images of northern peoples and lands and life in the American inner-city. Her works include *The Light On the Tent Wall: A Bridging* (1990a), *Matrilineal Cycle* (1990b), *A Quick Brush of Wings* (1994), and *Listen to the Night* (1995).

George Blondin (Sahtu Dene), with the help of his daughter Georgina Blondin, has written two books of oral narratives ranging from the ancient past to his own experiences. Those books are *When the World Was New: Stories of the Sahtu Dene* (1990) and *Yamoria: The Lawmaker* (1997). They tell the stories of George as a Dene person, his people, their beliefs, and experiences without the mediation of an anthropologist or other Western writer or scholar.

Alootook Ipellie is a visual artist and writer of stories. His stories have been written as short stories (*Summit with Sedna, the Mother of Sea Beats*, 1998), poetry (*Waking Up; Journey Toward Possibilities; Walking Both Sides of an Invisible Border*; all 1998), and in illustrated book form (*Arctic Dreams and Nightmares*, 1993), and are very different from those of

George Blondin. The stories of Ipellie illustrate past and present, Inuit and Inuit culture, and traditional and contemporary practice and belief. He presents another face of contemporary northern life. Alootok has witnessed monumental change in his life, which has inspired him to write (Moses and Goldie 1998:503). He was born on the land, and his family lived in camps before they were forced to settle in Iqaluit, where they experienced great cultural upheaval (Moses and Goldie 1998:503).

Richard van Camp (Dogrib) was born in Fort Smith, Northwest Territories. He claims that the multicultural atmosphere of the community has inspired his writing (quoted in Moses and Goldie 1998:524). Van Camp writes in a variety of literary forms, including novels (*The Lesser Blessed*, 1996; *Come a Little Death*, 1998), short stories (*Birthmark*, 1997a), and children's books (*The Man Called Raven*, 1997b). More recent publications of northern novels are *The Pale Indian* (2005), which is a novel written by Robert Arthur Alexie about a young man's return to his native settlement in the Canadian Arctic after being raised in Calgary. The novel illustrates the differences between the big city and the remote Arctic North. Another examples are Daniel N. Paul's criticism of European colonialism in *We Were Not the Savages* (2006) and Joseph Boyden's 2005 novel *Three Day Road* that won the Governor General's award. The novel is about the Ojib Cree adaptation and response to the 1st World War, and the necessary healing on return involving all the ancient shamanism and culture.

Although visual artistic expression seems to be universal, "art" as traditionally defined by the West is not. Indigenous peoples have been instrumental in redefining Western notions of art. Western curators, scholars, and art critics once claimed the exclusive right to define art in Western terms and to judge art by Western standards whereas indigenous creative works were typically defined as artifacts or curios (Crandall, Richard C., 1999:9) or, later, "primitive art." In claiming the right to define the arts of indigenous peoples, Western art critics and curators assumed the authority to determine what was "authentic" Inuit or other indigenous art forms. The concept of "classic" art forms – be they visual art forms, music, or other kinds – implied that forms not considered "classic" were degenerate or, at least, of less value. It has been suggested by some Western art critics that indigenous art made for sale is not authentic and that the works are merely curios. However, indigenous peoples have always created artistic objects to be traded across boundaries (Smith and Ward 2000:13). Fortunately, like identity, ideas about art change over time and, in the last four decades, we have seen a change in

perceptions of art in the American and Canadian Arctic that has allowed for the appreciation of northern indigenous art forms by southern art experts. Northern art forms, such as decorative clothing once considered “craft” by southern curators, collectors, and scholars are today recognized as bona fide works of art.

The story of the development of Inuit art is the story of the movement from southern control and definition of northern cultural production to much greater self-determination and control by northerners. Inuit art has become a major vehicle for expression of Inuit identity and is widely recognized around the world. Today, the creation of works of art is an important part of the northern economy, with artist’s associations (Nunavut Arts and Crafts Association), co-operatives, schools, and festivals (the Festival of Native Arts, at Fairbanks; Nunavut Arts Festival and the Great Northern Arts Festival) supporting the development of the arts. The interest in Inuit art has resulted in the development of a large body of literature illustrating and describing Inuit art. Some of that literature describes the development of Inuit art from its ancient beginnings to its present forms. Where old decorated objects found in archaeological contexts were once designated solely as artifacts, they are today considered by many scholars as art.

In Alaska, some of the more popular kinds of works are walrus ivory carvings, old ivory carvings, and jewelry: soapstone carvings, bone (usually whale) carvings, basketry, dolls, drums, prints, and baleen baskets and etchings. Some artists have organized co-operatives, such as the Oomingmak Musk Ox Producers’ Co-operative, which markets intricately crocheted muskox products from remote Alaskan coastal villages – each village having its own exclusive designs. The work of Aboriginal artists in Alaska is controlled by the Indian Arts and Crafts Act of 1990, which has caused some controversy. While the act is designed to protect Aboriginal artists and art buyers from inauthentic works, its narrow definition of who can claim to be an Aboriginal artist excludes some people who consider themselves, and are considered by their communities, to be Aboriginal.

Finally, the indigenous peoples of northern North America, like all peoples of the world, have traditional music forms. When Europeans went north, they brought with them musical forms that were often adopted and adapted by northern peoples, which resulted in new forms, like Inuit accordion music and Cree fiddle music. Today, a wide variety of native musical forms exist, from traditional Inuit throat singing and Inupiaq drummers to subgenres more inspired

by popular music such as film music and even rock and hip hop. Production studios in the North such as Inukshuk Productions Inc. record these musical products and live-performances are offered to audiences at festivals such as the annual Aqqik music festival in Nunavut.

Thus, the transition from a traditional way of life lived isolated from all but immediately neighbouring peoples to instant global satellite communication, internet and world-wide trade systems has been rapid for many northern peoples. The results have been both negative and positive. The negative results include the assimilative effects of southern-generated culture and ideologies. Furthermore, globalizing influences have placed a great pressure on indigenous languages and values (Freeman 2000:xiv-xvii). A positive effect is the access of northerners to media to present their own perspectives, reinforcing their identities and allowing expression of self-determination. Northern peoples have been successful in using many expressive media – communications media, literature, visual arts, and music – to communicate their pride in who they are within and among their communities, around the circumpolar North and within the political boundaries in which they live. The accelerating pace at which such cultural production is currently occurring indicates that we can expect to see a lot more creative and expressive products of northern North Americans in the future.

Family, education and recreation as social institutions for self-determination

All societies rely on particular kinds of family arrangements and educational structures to maintain themselves from one generation to the next. There are many variations in family and educational structures across cultures and even within societies. However, regardless of the form they take, the institutions of family and education are intended to ensure that a society or cultural group transmits its basic orientations, values, expectations, and knowledge to all members. Families and education are often understood in these respects as agencies of social reproduction because their role is to reproduce or maintain conditions that are crucial to society's survival. Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor believes that individual identity is shaped through dialogic relations with others – understood as family, friends, teachers and 'significant others' and cannot be created through self-searching in isolation (Taylor 1992:34).

As societies become larger and more complex in nature, family structures and educational organizations are also likely to become more diverse, complex, and formally organized. In primary social organization, education, recreation, and family life are highly integrated with one another through holistic relationships among kinship organizations, economic activities, indigenous knowledge systems, and other activities. By contrast, in conjunction with processes of industrialization, urbanization, and the development of modern state organizations, there tends to be growing specialization and separation among family, education, and other social institutions in 'modern' western education systems. This section examines the changing relationship between family, education and recreation among the indigenous peoples in the North American Arctic, and how southern formal school systems interfere with the interests and concerns of these peoples.

Indigenous families: cultural standards vs. government-imposed rules

One way in which families and education are commonly understood is with reference to private and public aspects of social life. The family and most forms of recreation are regarded as the centre of personal or private life. Formal education (often called schooling), by contrast, is thought of most often as a public institution in which people gain knowledge, skills, and capacities required for integration into work, citizenship, and other forms of participation outside the household. This section identifies many of the ways in which the institutions of family and education are organized around expectations about private and public spheres of life. The discussion focuses, also, on transformations in the ways that family life and education affect and overlap with one another. It also explores significant effects these changes have had on family members and educational participants.

The family is considered to be at the heart of personal life. Family is widely understood, as observed in the title of an influential book by Christopher Lasch (1977), as a "haven in a heartless world." We assume that families offer us a place where we can be ourselves and interact with those closest to us in ways that are not constrained by the rules and expectations associated with schools, workplaces, civic responsibilities, and other areas of public life. Families provide a basis for caring, emotional exchange, and support. These informal intimate relationships are crucial for the adequate support and development of infants, children, and dependent adults. They also provide ongoing emotional security and physical and material

support for other family members. Families play a powerful role in shaping our personalities, values, beliefs, and life chances.

Families, of course, do not always match the ideals portrayed by the media. They exhibit considerable diversity in how they are organized and how their members experience family life. For these reasons, researchers and policy-makers who study family relationships typically refer to “families” rather than “the family.” Variations are evident across cultures and situations according to such dimensions as how marriage and family are defined, who is considered to be part of a family, who lives together, whether or not children are present, what kinds of child-care arrangements are practiced, how decisions are made, and who has responsibility for particular kinds of tasks. The norm for families in contemporary urban environments tends to be parents and their children living in a single household. Often, families do not fit this model. Many Aboriginal people, for instance, are likely to think about families in terms of relationships among more extensive family networks and kinship connections. Questions about how to define family are usually less important than considerations about what families actually do and how their members experience family life.

Families, however, are not strictly private institutions sheltered from other areas of social life. Public policies and laws define and regulate various dimensions of family life. Laws and regulations, for instance, govern such issues as marriage, divorce, abortion, and child custody arrangements, while income tax legislation, criminal codes, and other official statements define, frame, and influence family affairs in numerous ways. Families are generally understood to be responsible for the welfare of their members, but governments also play a role in determining eligibility and guidelines for social welfare and various types of child, family, and income support programs and services. Families have also been subject to increased scrutiny and legal provisions as media and public attention have highlighted issues like domestic violence, substance abuse, prenatal care, medical or safety concerns, and children’s rights. The public interest is defined in many such circumstances to take precedence over the rights of specific family members or family units.

Public intervention into private life remains an issue that is often highly controversial and uncertain. Intervention is often associated with a “dark” side to family life. Individuals may carry their tensions and strains into family life, which are there magnified by the highly interpersonal and emotional nature of family relationships. Significant abuses of the trust

associated with family life can be hidden by the private nature of families. Many communities in the circumpolar North experience high incidences of family breakdown, family-related violence, alcohol and substance abuse, child and adolescent suicide, and other serious problems. These factors often reinforce one another. In many instances they are rooted in circumstances such as poverty, unemployment, previous victimization and abuse, incarceration, residential schooling, and community relocation that enter into family relationships from previous personal experiences and social conditions.

Effective discussion and action regarding these problems is often limited by the isolation of family experiences, combined with fears and shame associated with making private matters public. In many family-related matters, even when it is widely agreed that some kind of public intervention is required, there is not always a consensus about who should take responsibility and what courses of action should be followed. The issue of violence against women is an example wherein there are many cases where public silence has prolonged private suffering. Aboriginal women's organizations in recent years have been determined to address this matter, taking their concerns to government agencies and bodies such as the Arctic Council, which made a public declaration of commitment to break the silence and take action against all forms of violence against women in the circumpolar North. Another issue that has received growing attention is fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS) and related risk associated with alcohol and substance abuse during pregnancy. Public advocacy and awareness of the problem and its implications have been accompanied by growing demands for improved education and appropriate forms of intervention to address the problem.

Family law and government regulations related to family matters are likely to be formal and technical in nature. Various pieces of legislation, administrative guidelines, and constitutional documents define who is and who is not officially considered to be a spouse or family member eligible for specific rights or services. These documents, however, do not always correspond with each other, creating confusion and inconsistency. Family policies are also not likely to satisfy all moral and ethical positions held by different social groups. Public debate in both Canada and the United States on recognizing marriage rights among same-sex couples, and court decisions about parental rights to use corporal punishment such as spanking their children, illustrate the highly contested nature of many family-related issues.

Families in North America's North have experienced both extremes of the virtual absence of

external scrutiny and regulation, and excessive – often damaging – intervention and regulation by governments and other outside agencies. The relative isolation and need for self-reliance that confronts many northern families provides some freedom and tolerance for diversity. Family-related decisions and practices can, however, also be highly regulated by strict cultural norms and community pressures. Forms of regulation, such as traditional Inuit or Dene community norms, cultural expectations or government-imposed rules and procedures can sometimes conflict with one another. Colonization and administrative procedures based on conflicting cultural standards have often had serious effects on family life.

Recent trends illustrate these phenomena: Northern circumpolar regions, as much or more than other areas in North America, have experienced a dramatic shift away from previous family forms. The nuclear family (with a husband and wife living together with their children) has replaced the extended family form as the dominant norm guiding assumptions about families in contemporary societies. Even these family structures are being transformed in significant ways. Nuclear families are replaced by growing numbers of families with single parents, unmarried couples with or without children, couples without children, and alternative family types. Nunavut and the Northwest Territories, in comparison with other regions, continue to have relatively high proportions of couples with children living at home (Statistics Canada 2011a). Despite these developments, the extended family relationship remains important throughout much of northern America's Arctic, where family members participate in wider support networks and interpersonal connections even when they are not living within a single household. Family and household sizes are also typically larger in the circumpolar North compared to other regions, with higher than average birth rates and larger proportions of the population in preschool and school-age groups.

What do these changes mean for family life? There is an ongoing challenge to align modifications in policies and people's thinking about families more closely with actual changes in family structures and realities. Family-related policies can have deep, often damaging, effects on family life. One notable example that has deeply affected many northern circumpolar communities in Canada and the United States is the phenomenon known as the Sixties Scoop. This refers to the removal of thousands of Aboriginal children from their families, especially during the 1960s and 1970s. Social workers and social services agencies, often without a clear conception of the nature of family relations among indigenous communities, identified serious family problems that they thought warranted taking the

children into custody and placing them in child welfare institutions, foster homes, or adoption. Children were frequently placed with non-Aboriginal families not living in the Arctic North. By the early 1980s, substantial numbers of Aboriginal children from the Yukon and Northwest Territories had been taken into custody or sent for adoption. Similar processes in the United States led to the enactment of the *Indian Child Welfare Act* of 1978 in order to protect the rights of Aboriginal children, families, and tribes. Aboriginal families and communities lost their children who also were deprived of their ability to develop strong interpersonal bonds. Patrick Johnston (1983) describes the Canadian experiences in some detail, offering an account of an ongoing legacy of personal and cultural damage that individuals, families, and communities continue to struggle with, even today.

Another situation in which it is important to consider underlying factors and consequences of external intervention is the increase in the numbers and proportions of single-parent families relative to other family types (Statistics Canada 2011b). This trend is a cause for alarm for many groups who point to statistics that demonstrate the higher likelihood that children living with a single parent, compared to those living with two parents, will experience serious difficulties, such as poverty, learning disorders, poor health status. These concerns are often posed in ways that “blame the victim,” attributing these problems to inadequate parenting, bad judgment, or deficiencies in the family. Such approaches typically fail to take into account the complex nature of the issue. Not all children with single parents experience these difficulties. Single parenthood has many dimensions, arising in different cases from unplanned pregnancies, personal choice, marital breakdown, or death of a parent. Many observers tend to emphasize the deprivation of single-parent families. This shift in focus allows us to consider other important questions. To what extent, for instance, do single parents have access to financial support and resources necessary to sustain their families? How do schools, workplaces, or other agencies respond to the needs of single parents and their children? To what extent are different family units supported or disadvantaged by prevailing patterns of attitudes, services, and supports in their communities?

Thus, families and family-related issues are at the core of efforts by Aboriginal people to regain control over their lives and cultural heritage. Aboriginal organizations have identified family relationships as crucial to the maintenance of indigenous knowledge systems, language retention, and the development of strong connections to the world as Aboriginal people. Patterns of social and economic development induced by colonization, the adoption of

southern models of organization, and global changes have altered family relationships considerably, often undermining conditions required for the well-being of families. These factors have been recognized over the past two decades through a variety of initiatives and strategies oriented to provide culturally appropriate family support, often in conjunction with self-government and locally determined initiatives. Recognition in Aboriginal communities of the importance of children to a strong future, combined with the relatively high birth rates and proportions of children in circumpolar populations, have placed special emphasis on the importance of priorities like adequate prenatal care and services and recreational activities for children and youth. Community leaders are also beginning to acknowledge that major economic developments and social initiatives cannot proceed without first securing conditions for personal and family well-being.

The emphasis on local control has been supported by a more general policy orientation that acknowledges that parents and other family caregivers have primary responsibility for the well-being of children and family members (Consolidation of Child and Family Services Act, Article 2). All jurisdictions in North America's North have embraced this philosophy. Within a broader commitment to having local control over core social services, they have also incorporated this approach into government policies and child and family service organizations such as the Department of Health and Social Services – responsible for child and family services - of the Government of Nunavut. In Alaska and the Yukon Territory, services for children, child protection, and other family-related matters are also incorporated within local departments of health and social services.

There are, nevertheless, pronounced variations in how, and to what extent, this approach has been carried out. Jurisdictional, administrative, and financial complications often limit the extent to which effective local decision making or autonomy have been achieved. Moreover, does local control mean (more) influence by indigenous people? There has been growing pressure to broaden First Nations and band input into these programs but in most instances, the degree of local and band control achieved to date falls well short of the objective to gain full Aboriginal jurisdiction over child- and family-welfare services.

Hence, the present climate throughout much of North America's North is one in which forces that threaten the stability of family and personal life co-exist with strong initiatives and

incentives to repair and preserve fundamental family relationships. Many of these tensions are also evident in the area of education.

Education systems: indigenous concerns vs. educational practices

Education is understood most commonly through its role in guiding transitions from family and community life into wider social and economic participation. All societies require some forms of structured learning processes to ensure that their members gain the skills, knowledge, and values essential to meet appropriate cultural and social demands and expectations. Education systems became much more formally organized as people turned increasingly to formal education to provide credentials as well as basic literacy and numeracy skills, cultivate citizenship, and offer more advanced training suited for life in advanced industrial and post-industrial societies. Education is expected to reflect and be relevant to the communities and regions that it serves. However, educational processes are also oriented to broadening horizons to ensure that people develop knowledge and competencies related to ongoing technological, social, and economic developments.

While most communities and groups share an overall belief in the importance of education for personal and social development, tensions periodically arise between local concerns and educational goals, when for example curricula, and practices are defined by interests that lie outside of specific communities. Curriculum, for instance, at best included little or nothing of native culture, and, at worst, actively suppressed it. These tensions – long a feature within the development of educational systems - have become especially evident in current initiatives to restructure education to meet demands associated with knowledge-based societies and global economic competition. Consequently, although education is widely regarded as a source of personal empowerment, social development, and economic opportunity, it can also operate as a powerful force in restricting personal and social options. It is important to understand why it is possible for widespread inequalities and gaps in education to exist among different individuals and groups at a time in which most people look to education as a mechanism to promote equity and opportunity.

Researchers and other observers have identified several reasons to account for differences in educational participation and outcomes. The analysis of these issues is important not only to provide a better understanding of how education systems operate and what consequences they have for their participants, but it is also significant for the development of effective policies to

address major educational problems. As with family issues, many explanations of educational differences are individualistic in nature, emphasizing educational success or failure as the result of individual characteristics, choices, and efforts. Cultural perspectives, by contrast, highlight how variations in educational participation and outcomes are the products of cultural differences either between groups, or between institutions like schooling and the people who participate in those institutions. While individual and cultural approaches emphasize the diverse range of participants and interactions that are central to contemporary education, they are often posed as “blaming the victim” or “cultural deficit” ideologies that suggest that some individuals or groups are not capable of achieving greater levels of educational success.

Institutional and structural perspectives, by contrast, focus more fully on the role played by education systems and the social systems in which they are located to shape educational processes and outcomes. Institutional explanations attribute educational inequalities to features of schooling, such as the curriculum, teaching, evaluation, and other elements of schooling processes and organizational patterns, rather than to individuals or their cultures. Structural explanations extend the analysis beyond education and other specific institutions by identifying underlying features, such as socio-economic inequalities and policy frameworks, which contribute to differences in educational practices and outcomes.

Variations in educational success among individuals and social groups cannot be reduced to a single cause, given that individual lives and social factors, along with economic circumstances, policy decisions, and other conditions, interact with one another in a highly complex manner. While individuals may have better chances to succeed in their education by modifying their behavior in certain ways (by attending classes or completing assignments more regularly, for instance), they may encounter obstacles or discriminatory treatment in or out of school that will affect their motivation or ability to complete their education. It is essential, therefore, to understand education and prospects for educational change in relation not only to educational participants or characteristics of the education system itself, but also in conjunction with other institutions such as community, social, and political environments in which the education system operates.

Education has been targeted as a central area of emphasis in the struggles of indigenous peoples and other colonized groups to regain control over their lives. Issues of educational control and representation are significant because education is not a neutral institution.

Education, not only broadens but also restricts social and economic opportunities. Educational processes are selective and influence who succeeds and who fails. Education, moreover, determines the kinds of knowledge, values, and learning that are deemed important. Finally, education contributes to personal development and selection in a dual way: by cultivating knowledge, skills, and learning capacities; and by shaping people's identities and personal characteristics.

The emphasis within democratic societies is to ensure that all individuals and groups can share, influence, and benefit from these features of education systems. However, educational practices, structures, and outcomes can also reflect and contribute to social inequalities in numerous ways. Children from poor families, for instance, are less likely than those from wealthier backgrounds to achieve higher levels of education, while the amount of education a person has, influences prospects for employment, income, social participation, and family well-being. The legacy of Indian residential schools in North America demonstrates how some forms of education can be highly destructive and damaging. Residential schools, operated by the federal government and religious agencies that were formally committed to assimilate Aboriginal children and prepare them for life in modern societies, separated children from their families, undermined their cultures, and imposed harsh rules and procedures on them. As with later child welfare practices, residential schooling frequently inflicted physical, emotional, and sexual damage that continues to haunt individuals and their communities. Evie Ikidluak, an Inuk educator from Quebec - emphasizing the difference between residential schools and the education of Inuit – argues that in Inuit society children 'learned' whereas in school they are 'taught' – and even in another language than the language they used at home (Rigby, MacDonald and Otak in Freeman 2000:100). Children in residential schools had little opportunity to learn the complex land-based life skills, knowledge, and perspectives of their own culture. Moreover, parents and other family members were effectively bypassed, or limited, in the education of Inuit children and replaced by school teachers who had little knowledge of the Inuit culture.

Northern circumpolar societies, despite some variations from one case to another, have exhibited some common patterns of development as they have attempted to overcome the impact of colonial domination. Frank Darnell and Anton Hoëm identify four historical periods of educational change throughout the circumpolar world:

1. From early contact between European settlers and indigenous populations to the mid-1950s, school policies, rules, and curriculum were imposed to replace indigenous traditions with a southern education system.
2. From the late 1950s to mid-1960s, indigenous organizations began to challenge the dominant southern education system.
3. From the late 1960s to the mid-1970s, indigenous groups became more highly organized and assertive in their efforts to influence educational policies in a direction consistent with their needs and aspirations.
4. Since the mid-1970s, the articulation of the aims of self-determination corresponded with government policies to promote local control, autonomy, and culturally sensitive educational reforms. These strategies are likely to vary from one case to another because there are different levels of educational authority in the United States and Canada. Education is primarily the responsibility of state, provincial, and territorial governments, which in turn delegate much of the authority to make decisions about programming and resources to local school districts, whereas federal Indian affairs agencies have had control over much Aboriginal education leading to more recent agreements to transfer authority to tribal and band agencies (Darnell and Hoëm 1996: 248-252).

The position paper *Indian Control of Indian Education*, released in 1972 by the National Indian Brotherhood (a forerunner to the Assembly of First Nations), offers a strong example of an early vision of education's importance for self-determination. The paper emphasizes the twin goals of parental responsibility and local control in education as means by which Aboriginal people could regain the ability to determine their own futures and achieve meaningful participation within Canadian society. The document, and many similar reports since its publication, emphasized the distinction between educational systems that produce failure by exerting control over minority groups and those that enable Aboriginal people and their societies to have a chance at success through encouragement and representation in the curriculum and the decision-making process. The discussion in this module emphasizes that, while several encouraging educational reforms and transitions have occurred during this period, many pressing problems remain.

The first school to be controlled locally by Aboriginal people in Canada and the United States began to operate in the early 1970s. Since that time, local control has been strengthened, as

locally controlled education institutions and local authorities in Alaska and Canada's North have replaced federal and state authorities. Numerous parallel changes in curricula and organizational structures have been implemented to respond to indigenous concerns. The creation of the Territory of Nunavut in Canada in 1999 provides the strongest impetus for an education system compatible with broader strategies for self-determination. Consequently, in these regions, educational policies and institutions have introduced several modifications in programming, organization, and operations to encourage indigenous students to increase their levels of educational participation, engagement, and attainment. This module's reading assignment by Yamamura, Netser, and Qanatsiaq (2003) highlights an initiative in Nunavut in which the core area of mathematics has been modified in order to incorporate Inuit perspectives and the knowledge of elders. Community elders are used frequently as instructors and supervisors in educational programs for indigenous peoples. Skilled elders contribute, for instance, with narratives and the demonstration of traditional hunting techniques, sewing or clothing-making classes (Rigby, MacDonald and Otak in Freeman 2000:106-107).

Thus the aim of the numerous reforms and strategies implemented to improve education in communities in the North American Arctic has been to address local concerns. This objective has been reinforced by the introduction of community learning models that integrate schools with the families and communities with which they work. Government funding arrangements have promoted the introduction of Inuit curricula through initiative, such as Inuuqatigiit in Canada's North and the expansion of opportunities for students to learn in Inuit. The Inuuqatigiit curriculum is a program that combines traditional knowledge and culture with 'modern' western techniques. Igunaq for instance, an Inuit delicacy of 'aged' walrus meat, is used to demonstrate the chemical processes involved in fermentation (Rigby, MacDonald and Otak in Freeman 2000:106). Youth camps, often arranged in summer or late spring, are another example of educational practices where students learn various traditional techniques to hunt, survive or otherwise develop their skills. Furthermore, the internet and other communication technologies have become increasingly important tools employed to facilitate exchanges between communities and to provide information about local heritage, events, communities, and people. Successful initiatives have been implemented in several areas, including measures to:

- include instruction in indigenous languages, both as language training and through integration with other subject areas;
- introduce indigenous perspectives and culturally relevant materials and content into the curriculum;
- ensure that culturally appropriate teaching methods and approaches to the material are integrated into core curriculum areas and not only special courses focusing on Native studies;
- foster teacher sensitivity to indigenous students and their cultures and communities;
- increase the number of teachers and other school personnel who are of Aboriginal ancestry and who represent and understand the communities in which they are working;
- ensure that programs and support resources are in place to respond to student needs;
- involve parents, community members, and elders in educational decision making, programming, and activities;
- provide stronger support and learning options for preschool children and the children in the early school years;
- provide a range of opportunities for adult education, distance learning, and post-secondary programming in areas that have historically been restricted to the elementary or secondary levels;
- foster an environment that is both serious about educational improvement (often called a climate of achievement) and attentive to the personal and emotional needs of students (often called a climate of caring).

Teaching indigenous languages to future generations, – often the mother tongue of Aboriginal students – is essential in terms of identity and self-determination. Sally Ash (2011:189-195), representing the Sugpiaq coastal people from the southern part of Alaska speaking the native language Sugt'stun, one of the languages that is in danger of being lost entirely, explains the importance of including Aboriginal languages in the education system.

‘Elders wanted us to get an education and get back something that was taken away from us, not to mention the pain and shame they went through speaking a native language... I was proudest when my kids were born because I was back in the village and learning once again from my elders and women in the village about the rules on being a mother and raising a child in the Sugpiaq ways... When I got the school bilingual instructor job [back in the village] I felt so lucky!... It was only then that I

really realized how much of the language was dead and dying in my home and in the Alutiiq-Sugpiaq region. I had always thought our language would be alive and well in Nanwalek, but it seemed in a blink of an eye that only the elders and a few young adults were speaking the language... This void, this emptiness had come silently, subtly. How did I, as a speaker of the language, let this happen?... As our elders say, “*Agun ’lu kinautacin* – don’t forget who you are.”

In spite of these innovations, many educational programs and school systems fall far short of achieving the targets and transformations that have been identified as core areas of improvement. History from an indigenous perspective, for instance, has often been lacking within the overall school curriculum and most of the programs that deal with indigenous people are not working because those indigenous peoples are overlooked in planning, administering and teaching in those programs (Pingayak 2011:321-324). Castellano, Davis and Lahache (2000:251) argue that although general educational participation and attainment levels have increased in circumpolar regions in North America, they remain generally well below comparable levels in other regions. Moreover, graduation rates and populations that have attained at least upper secondary education in Nunavut, Labrador and Northwest Territories are below Canada’s national average (Canada Statistics 2011). Such trends indicate that recent reforms may have not been entirely successful in addressing the most serious educational gaps and issues. Many circumpolar communities continue to experience limited opportunities to influence and explore culturally relevant curricula, teachers and administrators who lack sensitivity to student concerns; tensions between homes and schools; and inadequate resources that hinder effective educational planning and implementation. Indigenous people need to be more involved in education processes not only to revitalize native languages but also to make children proactively proud of who they are instead of being ashamed or passive observers (Ash 2011:189-195). So far, the incorporation of Aboriginal and local content into school programs remains minimal and insufficient in many educational contexts; classroom language and activities remain remote from students’ daily lives; and the proportion of teachers of Aboriginal ancestry in Alaska and Canada’s northern territories remains well below comparable proportions of students of Aboriginal ancestry. Education that lacks relevance to the daily lives of people who participate in educational institutions can lead to frustration, boredom, and hostility. There is assumed to be a separation between “school learning,” which is evaluated for grades and credentials, and “real-life learning,” which is not always considered essential for further education or jobs. Educational analysis employs the idea of silencing, which refers to a process in which students and the communities they

represent do not speak out because they feel incompetent, ashamed, intimidated, or embarrassed to talk about their interests and feelings.

Recreation

Recreation as a way of cultural self-determination is commonly regarded as one of the most personal areas of social life, viewed as “our own” time to pursue specific interests and desires. Recreation can involve sharing, participation, close connections within families and possibilities to cultivate close ties with one’s cultural heritage. Recreational activities are also shaped by geographic and community contexts. The range of sports, cultural events, services, and other recreational options varies considerably depending on the size of the community, mix of cultures and people in an area, available resources, wealth and income, facilities, and access to various forms or recreational activities. An example of such an event is the Cree Language Festival, which is an annual event where students sing songs and act in plays while simultaneously acquiring advanced skills in their native language.²

Analysis of recreational activities as expressions of cultural identity in a circumpolar context highlights the growing tensions and boundaries discussed earlier in this module between public and private spheres of life. More generally, as societies have come to rely increasingly on paid employment outside the household, instead of meeting their basic needs through their family and kinship networks, they have become able to differentiate more fully between work time and free time. In the process, much of that “free time” has been transformed because recreational activities are shaped by external forces. New technologies, mass media, formal organizations, and paid entertainment increasingly replace activities that were once based on cultural traditions and family and community relationships. People are more likely to spend their time outside of work or school, watching television, playing computer games, surfing the internet, taking music lessons, playing or watching organized sports, or simply “hanging out,” than they are to tell stories or visit family members. Moreover, endeavors that have long been part of local and informal traditions are frequently organized as businesses and large-scale planned events. Tourism has become a major source of employment and economic activity throughout much of the circumpolar North, as ecotourism and services related to guiding,

² <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatoon/cree-festival-celebrates-heritage-1.2656098> (Accessed June 17, 2014).

hunting, and fishing are packaged as recreational options. Major events, like the annual Arctic Winter Games (in 2016 to be held in Nuuk, Greenland), illustrate how activities built around cultural exchange and widespread participation among diverse circumpolar regions have become large-scale, multi-million dollar enterprises.

The discussion in this module has outlined some of the unique features and challenges associated with media, art, and education, viewed especially as public institutions, and family life and recreation, understood especially in terms of private and personal life in the North American Arctic. It has emphasized some of the ways in which the boundaries between public and private life, and between different social institutions continually overlap and affect one another. Various examples have been offered as a way to explore the impact these changing relationships have had on the indigenous populations of the American and Canadian Arctic.

Glossary of terms

Amautik	parka worn by Inuit women of the Canadian arctic.
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