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### **Abstract**

My research will focus on the analysis of transmission of Inuit knowledge in two distinct contexts: the family and school. By a comparative study of two Inuit communities of the Canadian Arctic, I plan to examine the way how Inuit modify the school system to take in account their cultural traditions.

## Research proposition to IPY

Studying at Laval University in Quebec, I am a researcher at the *Centre Interuniversitaire d'Études et de Recherches Autochtones* (Interuniversity Center for Aboriginal Studies and Research) taking over from the *Groupe d'Études Inuit et Circumpolaires* (Group for Inuit and Circumpolar Studies). The aim of this center is to develop knowledge on Aboriginal cultures and societies, and to contribute to an active participation of the Aboriginal to the social, economic and politic life of the society.

My research is part of the general Community-University Research Alliance (CURA) project "Memory and History in Nunavut" supervised by François Trudel. CURA seeks to explore the original methods of expression of the social memory of the Inuit of Nunavut and their articulation with western historical knowledge (Trudel 2002). The oral tradition is part of the Inuit identity. Among various initiatives to the insertion of the oral tradition in a school program, elders come to school to share their knowledge.

The aim of my present research is to examine the role of elders in the transmission of Inuit knowledge in schools. My research is mainly based on the fieldwork I did in Arviat in the spring of 2003. Arviat has a population of around 2000 inhabitants. It is situated on the West coast of the Hudson Bay in Nunavut. In the past, there was no school in the North and thus, all learning took place in groups of a few families. In the sixties, the mandatory implementation of schools caused a disruption of the transmission of Inuit knowledge through this mode. Actually, the school system is not a model conceptualised by the Inuit and for the Inuit. However, since the implementation of schools in Arviat (elementary 1959; high school 1990), the Inuit have made efforts to integrate the learning of their knowledge into a school system originating from the south. The Inuit knowledge taught in Arviat schools consists of oral story telling, the teaching of values, sewing, survival techniques, the playing of games, practice of drum dances, throat singing and construction of objects. The latter includes traditional and modern toys, tools and sleds. It is a partial transfer of the learning from the private sphere (family) to a public and institutional sphere (school). Through this migration, the Inuit try to modify the school system to ensure a better respect of their cultural traditions.

I wish to pursue my research by analysing different educational contexts in the Inuit society. The percentage of children in Inuit societies is very high, and their education is a priority to the Government of Nunavut. The application of analytic and conceptual tools of Anthropology to the field of Education allows the discovery of new dimensions of the latter. The starting question will be: "How is the family education linked to the school education of Inuit in Nunavut?" Actually, the Inuit consider school as an important preparation for the insertion of the youth in the society, but they would like that form of education to respect their traditional knowledge including, amongst others, the hunting and the values of elders. According to the Royal Commission Report on Aboriginal Peoples (1996), the schools in the North face many problems. The thesis of Douglas (1998) reveals how the social norms and interrelational processes young Inuit learn in school contradict of some the organizing principles of Inuit kinship. The work of Briggs (1970, 1998) is a huge scientific contribution concerning the Inuit education inside families, but it does not consider education in the school's context. The books of the collection "Interviewing Inuit Elders" (2000) are full of precious ethnographic data on education, but they have not been analysed yet.

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Canadian Arctic, I plan to examine the way how Inuit modify the school system to take in account their cultural traditions.

To identify the various aspects of education from an Inuit point of view, I will do a fieldwork in Arviat and in Iqaluit. I choose these two communities because they differ in many respects, for example, regarding the percentage of white and the use of the Inuktitut. In Arviat, I will make some further research based on my previous work in this place. I will use the same methodology to collect the data in the two communities: participant observation in families and in schools, interviews with people chosen depending on their roles in the transmission of knowledge.

My contribution to the advancement of the knowledge will be twofold. One intraregional comparison will show the great social and cultural diversity inside Nunavut and will allow the opening on other problematic. My research project questions the classic distinction between the formal and informal education. If this study proposes to bring an ethnographic contribution, it also aims to develop theoretical thought. Its anthropological roots contribute to a more complete analysis of the different contexts of socialisation. The theoretical thought will be on the existing links between the formal and informal categories of the education. Therefore this project will be a contribution to Anthropology. My project will open up various possibilities, based on Inuit perspective, to improve the school system for a better respect of the Inuit cultural traditions.

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