

Inuit *Nunangat* and Cultural Identity: Borders That Unify and Define

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Inuit culture has substantially changed since it came into contact with the South, yet it is demonstrably one of the most traditional within Canada's quilt of cultures.¹ The remoteness of the Far North contributes to the retainment of traditional lifestyles and the lessening of acculturative processes even with widespread access to Western culture via the Internet as far as the northernmost hamlet in the Canadian Arctic. The Inuit attachment to land allows for little travel outside one's community and homeland, thus outside influences are far lesser than in the case of those Indigenous communities that live closer to urban areas further to the South of Canada. It appears that the geography of Inuit *Nunangat* limits Southern impact, which is apparent in many of the customs, such as hunting and sharing "country food," along with cultural manifestations of identity inherent to the millennium-old culture that are still practiced despite territory-wide access to modern lifestyle.² The isolated existence of Inuit within Canada's cultural landscape helps ethnocultural practices remain relatively intact. However, Inuit living in Arctic communities today have no personal experience "living out on the land," which is one of the most basic cultural definitions of *Inummarik* (Irwin 7).³ Post-World War II Inuit settlement into Arctic hamlets was so successful, that the comparatively easy life provided by the security of a close-knit community left only a dwindling number of Inuit who preferred living out of bounds and practically none who were able to maintain life independently without government aid.

The preservation of cultural identity within the multicultural ethos of Canada presents an apparent challenge for some Indigenous communities. Originally, multiculturalism was considered as a framework that assures the cultural retainment of Canadians from various backgrounds, expressing that "[n]ational unity [...] must be founded [...] in one's own individual identity; out of this can grow respect for that of others and a willingness to share ideas, attitudes and

1 "South" or "Southern" refers to Canadian citizens or culture south of the 66th parallel.

2 Inuit *Nunangat* means Inuit Homeland in Inuktitut.

3 "Real Inuk" in Inuktitut; a term to denote the traditionally accepted characteristic features of an Inuk.

assumptions” (P. E. Trudeau qtd. in the House of Commons). The context of this statement in 1971 was that of the divided Anglo- and Francophone nation, however, in the current epoch, this approach is understood to be extended to all ethnocultural groups within Canada. The balance between Canadianness and ethnocultural identity fuels a psychologically healthy populace that aims to retain a unique culture within the nation of Canada. Recent surveys, such as those conducted by the independent Angus Reid Institute, rank multiculturalism as essential in terms of things that epitomise Canadian national identity (qtd. in Angus Reid), which illustrates that multiculturalism in the 2020s is still embraced by the majority of Canadians regardless of their background. Multiculturalism, a policy uniting the Indigenous, settler, and immigrant populations, remains an integral part of Canadian public policy, but it has certainly been tested over the years as to how successfully accommodate groups with Indigenous cultural Identity. Canada’s multicultural approach rests on the equal importance of several different cultures within the one unifying nation of Canada, while acknowledging a shared Canadian identity.

How cultural identity is built and promoted may differ from individual to individual and the cultural origin of the group a person belongs to. Identity structure analysis [ISA]—a method designed by Peter Weinreich to study immigrant communities— is an applicable tool to further examine Indigenous cultural identity within a multicultural setting. ISA distinguishes between primordial perspectives showing ethnic continuity through the practice of traditions, and situational perspectives amplifying cultural revival through the process of acculturation (Weinreich et al. 115).⁴ The analysis of acculturation—a process that indicates changes that happen due to direct and sustained contact between groups of culturally dissimilar people resulting in habitual changes to that of the incoming minority—is a method that can be adapted to study the level of Indigenous cultural retainment in modern-day Canada. Since the Euro-Western settler population has exerted a substantial cultural influence on the Inuit, ISA may be of use in evaluating the factors contributing to the rapid change of Inuit life and the manner in which tradition is discarded. Heritage-cultural practices, values, and identifications that are uniquely Inuit and those from the received culture jointly shape identity (Schwartz et al. 237). These processes have both beneficial and detrimental psychosocial outcomes on Inuit culture. As ISA-based research demonstrates, ethnic identity is not necessarily fixed but can be redefined

⁴ Enculturation is the acquisition of the norms of a culture to be part of society, while potentially retaining diverging customs as well e.g., in one’s private life. Acculturation is a more transformative, holistic process.

and reconstructed (Weinreich et al. 21), thus, the characteristics and experience of Inuit identity may vary based on the individual.

Not only individuals, but different generational cohorts may assign diverging values to cultural identity. Succeeding generations from identical cultures renegotiate as to what should or should not be culturally significant (Bourdieu 1977). What one generation fights for and values may be viewed by subsequent generations as inessential. Changing cultural norms and preferences is reflected in the identity scaffold produced by a generation. The identity of an individual may change throughout the personal evolution of becoming an adult and differs based on social situations. In a cultural environment such as that of Canada's, in many situations the individual may choose which traditional cultural element of their ethno-cultural background they retain and which they drop (Berry, "Aboriginal Cultural Identity" 7), which process is in fact more aligned with enculturation. Throughout the process of enculturation, people learn the values and dynamics of a dominant culture in which they reside and internalize some of them. The nature of a situation, whether it is public or private, may also determine if an Indigenous or enculturated identity is applied. Individuals continue to enculturate elements of the various cultural manifestations available to them as opposed to wholesale acculturation strategies (Weinreich "Enculturation" 136).

Habitus—one of Bourdieu's most influential concepts—refers to the ingrained habits, skills, and dispositions, such as taste, food preferences, and artistic notions—that are acquired having been raised in a certain culture (78). An ample example is Sandra Pikujak Katsak's case from Igloodik, who while collaborating with Nancy Wachowich, confided in her explaining that:

I always tell elders that they are lucky that they grew up that way, in *kamiks* and skins and stuff like that. They always say negative things about stuff back then. They talk about having lice in their hair, or they say that it was too cold, or that they didn't have enough wood. They are always saying negative things about the way things were. I've always wanted to tell them that I wish that I were given the chance to live that way. (Katsak qtd. in Wachowich 224)

Bourdieu's theory of generational difference aptly explains why the Inuit value traditional ways such as Sandra but opt for progress when rallying for the protection of Inuit lands. The different manners in which tradition and modern life are appreciated are apparent in Sandra's deviation from how Elders think. In Sandra's life, her Indigenous culture is retained while elements of a new, Western culture are acquired. Primordial perspectives are present in her everyday life in the

form of pursuing traditional customs, such as sewing *amautiq* or using a *kamutiq* for transporting goods but her passion for ice hockey or video games is a marker of a situational perspective.⁵

Shifts in ethnocultural identity as in the case of the women interviewed in *Saqiyuq*, are the result of enculturation, and can be measured by John W. Berry's Fourfold Model, a less expansive form of the process. Berry's framework shows that on the part of the ethnocultural group, the fallout of direct contact with culturally dissimilar people leads to separation, marginalization, acculturation, or integration. Through cross-cultural contact, as the model suggests, one or both cultures changes regarding social expectations around language, communication, food, leisure, and most aspects of lifestyle (Berry 698). The traditions and customs of the Inuit have been extensively changed by the majority Southern lifestyle through cultural influence. Due to technology, the Inuit have never been quite as connected to the rest of Canada and the world as they are today. The shift in customs and practices is indicative of the changing times as the Inuit march from a hunter-gatherer culture to a modern society.

Similarly to enculturation, acculturation is thought to happen along multidimensional models (Ryder et al.), therefore, it is apt to assume that the changes in identity may vary depending on the amount of influence an individual or group may receive from mainstream society. Levels of enculturation may differ depending on the frequency of non-majority native language use and on whether traditional Inuit customs are observed, as well as on whether the generation in question has parents who had previously been immersed in Southern culture through schooling. Enculturation does not necessarily mean loss of ethnocultural identity, as individuals are thought to be able to maintain multiple cultural identities. Much like an onion, identity is layered, therefore, it is possible to retain traditions through the maintenance of ethnocultural roots and simultaneously adopting a new layer of identity to gain membership in the larger society, thus creating a new, amalgamated identity. Such duality is detected in Poul Roving Olsen's study of enculturation in the music of the Greenlandic Inuit. While their music shows Western influences, such as the choice of brass musical instruments and Western melodies, it also retains traditional components to it. In examining Inuit music, Olsen observes that "the Eskimo attitude has been either one or the other [. . .] two or more different styles are living side by side without influencing each other in any conceivable manner. This duality may exist as an active social phenomenon [. . .]" (37). Olsen postulates that duality might be a social phenomenon specific to Inuit.

⁵ *Amautiq* is a hooded parka worn by Inuit women; *kamutiq* is a long wooden sled

Additionally, enculturative impact may have psychological effects on Inuit population. The proliferation of Western, sedentary lifestyle and reliance on processed foods diminishes the need for physical activity leading to loss of fitness (Rode et. al 217). Sea lifts and stores make Southern goods available, but lack of awareness about the negative effects of low-quality, sugar-rich processed foods causes health concerns, such as those regarding weight management and dental hygiene. In the meantime, the ownership of snowmobiles has increased by almost an order of magnitude in just ten years in the seventies, while the introduction of salaried work made hunting and fishing a pastime activity for many. Such changes result in a less physically fit young generation (Rode at al. 228). Moreover, enculturation may generate psychological problems in youth who are more susceptible to anxiety stemming from having to juggle their identity in two distinct worlds. Enculturation-induced anxiety appears to be one of the leading causes of substance abuse, self-harming, and suicide in Northern communities. Excessive alcohol consumption, drug abuse, and engaging in violent or criminal behaviour are unfortunate coping mechanisms for diminished self-esteem and negative self-image (Seltzer 173).

Inuit represent three generations: the Elders, who were born during the time of the policy of dispersal, an era of rare Southern presence; the first settlement adults, the first generation born in arctic hamlets in the 1950s and 60s; and the young generation, whose parents do not have personal experience about “living out on the land.” It is natural, that there is tension between generations, especially if members of the young generation are unsatisfied with the results of the decisions made by their Elders. First-hand knowledge provides information based on experience about life before and after the formation of settlements, hence the discrepancy between Sandra’s nostalgia for an imaginary epoch when Inuit were lords of the tundra and the view of the Elders’ who “always say negative things about stuff back then” (Wachowich 224). This difference in habitus implies that other elements in cultural identity may vary as well. The habitus of any generation survives through the protection of their memory by the forthcoming generation. The generational cohort of nomadic times is not alive anymore, and authentic information about what *Inummariit* was before the time of settlements is scarce. The creation of a substantial historical record is amiss, for Inuit culture was purely oral until the mid-twentieth century. Therefore, the folk stories, myths, and song-poems collected by Knud Rasmussen in the 1920s is of tantamount importance to deciphering the *Inummariit* as it once was understood.

Only if the young generation has a cultural memory about the nomadic past that entailed living on the land are they able to conceptualize *Inummariit*, if by this term we mean an Inuk gifted with traditional land-based skills and customs as in the

times before settlement. In Mary Elizabeth Piercey-Lewis's research of Inuit music she identifies drum dancing and the accompanying *pisiit* as representative features of Inuit identity (178). *Pisiit* represent not only *Inummariit* values but—as a key feature of its nature—are transmitted orally. However, while the elders' generation was raised in an oral tradition, children and their parents have adopted a written culture (178). Lacking the social context, for school age children, the language and meaning of traditional poems is abstruse. The divide between the generations is manifested—as suggested by Bourdieu—in the way they are cognizant of the world around them:

Young people do not understand the texts of traditional songs as their elders do, nor do they understand the places that these songs talk about in the same manner. What has resulted is an understanding, which values the “old ways” of “real Inuit” but, due to completely different life experiences, conceptualizes them differently from the older generation. (Piercey-Lewis 195)

The Elder generation went through a time of change from migration to settlement as children, then becoming the first parents to have no guidance as to how to raise a family in a settlement. In contrast, the young adults of the 2020s are growing up in a literate and digital age in which many of them are not taught land skills.

The generationally different conceptualizations of identity reveal that through the motions of history, technological advancement, and the input of each generation, Inuit identity is understood slightly differently by each generation. While Bourdieu suggests that both the cultural capital and habitus of each generation are altered (77-78) due to modernization, there is a collective identity all members of a group regardless of which generation they belong to, can identify with. In the case of Inuit, although the young generation regards *Inummariit* qualities differently than the Elders' generation as observable in their appreciation and inclusion of popular Southern culture in their lives, they all identify with certain characteristics, such as good hunting skills as the basis of being a true *Inuk*. Bourdieu observes that through intergenerational relationships youth can learn traditions (32) if they are open to it. Such acquisition and inclusion of traditional identity in a modern setting is apparent in Inuit singer Riit's music, consisting of Western-style popular songs containing traditional Inuit *katajjaq*.⁶ Therefore, tradition lives on, albeit in a changed way, creating a new tradition for the upcoming generation.

As acculturation—and enculturation, a less invasive form of culture transfer—refer to changes that take place as a result of contact with culturally dissimilar people,

⁶ Inuit non-verbal throat singing usually performed by two women facing each other.

groups, and their social influences, language is often severely impacted (Berry 698). Language is one of the most important cultural characteristics of a given cultural group and it is a core medium through which identity is manifested. Thus, the language in which news, information, and literature is published and consumed is significant to one's identity construction. A substantial amount of fiction, non-fiction, and poetry by Inuit authors has been released in English, but the number of Inuktitut language publications is dwindling. The scarcity of Inuktitut (or English) language publications may be an indicator of enculturation or simply stems from the oral, hunter-gatherer recent Inuit past.

Since the diminished use of native language is a significant marker of enculturation levels, the continued use of Inuktitut in the North is of elementary significance. Based on interviews conducted in the Northern Qikiqtaaluk hamlet of Igloodik and in the Nunavik community of Quaqtaq by Louis-Jacques Dorais, present-day Inuit view their language as an essential part of their identity (302).⁷ Participants in the survey expressed that English (or French) skills are primarily regarded as a tool for getting a job (Dorais 295). The use of Inuktitut—which is crucial to Inuit identity—is fostered at family occasions, cultural functions, and social gatherings. However, in order to have equality of opportunity in higher education and the job market, the Inuit attend the same K-12 system offered elsewhere in Canada resulting in a lack of substantial focus on Inuit perspectives, including language proficiency.

The latest census shows that Inuktitut is spoken by a little above fifty percent of those under fourteen years of age as their first language. According to the data, nearly fifty percent of Nunavut—the most populous Inuit territory—use mostly English at home. Compared to the results of a similar survey conducted in 1991, only twenty-nine percent used English, and seventy-six percent of Nunavut families spoke native fluency Inuktitut (Martin, “Inuit Language Loss”). The protection and promotion of Inuktitut in school, work, and official settings may halt the rapid language loss of the past fifty years. In 2021, a new 42-million-dollar deal was signed by the government of Canada to support Inuktitut language use through a variety of initiatives (“Working Together”), this by no means is the only large-scale government fund dedicated to save the endangered Inuktitut languages.

However, fluency is not regarded by all as an integral part of Inuit identity. Natan Obed, the current president of Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, argues: “[t]he fact that [he doesn't] have fluency in Inuktitut is only one small part of who [he] really [is]” (qtd. in Madwar). Supporting Obed's views, Jesse Mike argues that questioning

7 Northern Qikiqtaaluk is identical with the northern parts of the formerly Baffin Region. Inuvik is the name of the Inuit lands in Northern Québec.

Inuit identity based on language skills is inappropriate (qtd. in Madwar).⁸ Since nearly half the Inuit teenage population in the North does not have native Inuktitut fluency, thinking about language as one of the most relevant markers of ethnic identity is worth re-evaluating. Obed observes that:

There's so many young Inuit now that are not completely fluent in Inuktitut, that have grown up with one parent who's not Inuk and one parent who has grown up outside of it. I think sometimes that's lost in the debate. That if you don't have Inuktitut, that somehow you can't be an advocate for it or that you are not ever going to be a good one. (Natan Obed qtd. in "I'm an Inuk")

While I concur that Inuit identity cannot be questioned solely based on one's language skills, native language fluency is undeniably a crucial factor in identity construction.

Borders reinforce the notion of "us," they function to frame the identity of those inside, they are metaphors for spaces where divergent discourses intersect. They are dividing lines fortified by gates and complete with road signs written sometimes in a foreign language emblazoned with coat of arms signifying the culture inside. Border crossing is a political, economic, and a cultural act. When such crossing is executed within Canada, borders are more accurately understood as cultural boundaries. Although regional boundaries are soft borders that are socially created, how they are established and internalized is crucial to the identity management of those inside. Borders also supposed to indicate where certain peoples traditionally reside, in spite of often the case being that an area may be home to various such groups.

Inuit identity construction has received a beneficial boost, because of successful land claims starting in the 1990s. The most prominent Inuit-owned land is Nunavut, the largest Inuit territory established in 1999, followed by the recognition of the Inuit *Nunangat*—in other words homeland— encompassing a substantial amount of the lands and waters of the Canadian Arctic. Inuit land claims are nation-forming acts that reinforce the notion of belonging through such symbolic acts as the extensive use of coat of arms in public and particularly official spaces. Additionally, the toponymic revolution starting with the naming of the new Inuit territory of Nunavut created a platform for enhancing the feeling of ownership.

⁸ Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami [United Inuit of Canada], previously Inuit Tapirisat of Canada, founded by Tagak Curley in 1971, and presently headed by Natan Obed, is a nonprofit organization representing all Inuit in Canada.

Such place names as *Qikiqtaaluk*, replacing Baffin Island are significant aids in strengthening Inuit identity (Légaré 110). However, such unifying acts neglect the fact that regional borders tend to be arbitrary. Instead of precisely separating cultural groups, borders denote economic agreements, therefore creating complex situations for those within. An example of this is the physical location of traditional Dene hunting grounds that overlap those areas also used by the Inuit creating a peculiar situation where ancestral Dene lands are located within the Inuit territory of Nunavut (Légaré 106).⁹ Such complicated ownership claims to one territory make egalitarian divisions challenging, as they have an exacerbating effect on experiencing and preserving cultural identity.

The reason why several groups claim a territory lies in the history of the Indigenous populations in the pre-contact era. Prior to regular Southern contact beginning in the early twentieth century, there were various migrating Inuit and First Nations groups in the Canadian Arctic, whose size varied between 30 to 100 individuals (Damas 17). Since Indigenous hunting parties consisting of close-knit groups of families were following game on a seasonal pattern, specific claims to land signified by borders were not established, rather an understanding based on tradition was forged allowing different groups to hunt the same land. Contact with the Hudson's Bay Company and European interest in Arctic fox pelt changed subsistence living into a mixed economy. In the 1950s and 1960s the earlier "Policy of Dispersal" approach was discarded to extend the welfare state to the Arctic, as the Canadian government intervened in the nomadic way of Inuit life. The permanent settlements established in the North heralded the end of the era of migrating groups for all Indigenous peoples inhabiting the Arctic.¹⁰ Although the Inuit have great attachment to the land, in fact good land skills are of primary importance in the characterization of a real Inuk an *Inummariit*, intimate knowledge of the land does not shield the Inuit from enculturation in an age when those feats of Western culture that cannot be transported to the North by sea or air lifts, arrive over the Internet. Arctic Inuit live in houses, drive snowmobiles, quads, boats, own a TV, cell phone, and use the Internet just like any other Canadian.

Inuit who leave the homeland experience higher levels of enculturation. According to the statistical survey conducted by the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami

9 *Dene* is a First Nations tribe with hunting grounds within the Inuit territory of Nunavut.

10 Examples where relocations were contentious are that of the *Ihalmiut*, a group of Inuit who lived in the *Keewatin* Region (now *Kivalliq*) and experienced large-scale starvation due to the dwindling number of caribou. *Ihalmiut* were relocated a number of times. Ernest Burch details the event in his "Caribou Eskimo Origins: An Old Problem Reconsidered." In the eyes of the 92 individuals, who were relocated to the High Arctic hamlets of Grise Fiord and Resolute, the process was understood as temporary, and when it turned out to be permanent, the Inuit protested in disappointment.

in 2018, about seventeen-thousand of the sixty-five thousand Inuit in Canada live outside the homeland. For those who leave the North and choose to live in the South, Western cultural influence becomes more pronounced, and keeping traditional customs will be challenging. Away from the homeland, the Inuit may struggle with a lack of access to Inuit customs. Not being able to speak Inuktitut also has an alienating effect. Nevertheless, some Inuit artists and professionals remarkably flourish in the South (Patrick 101), which is possible if a concerted effort is made to safeguard Inuit cultural identity. Urban Inuit are a significant part of contemporary Inuit identity, especially so in the case of mixed-heritage people, some of whom like Natan Obed, the president of Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, are highly successful professionals. As Southern Inuit author Norma Dunning states, Indigenous artists “walk inside two worlds,” but regardless where they are, they are Inuk.

In the case of Inuit, a people with marked cultural specificity, spatiality has strong influence on constructing cultural identity. Being away from the North has a culturally deterritorializing effect on identity, suggesting that territoriality is linked to Inuit identity (Patrick 105). Reterritorializing the homeland is fundamental to Inuit identity and is palpable in frequent references to *Nunangat*. There is an apparent opposition between multiculturalism, a political approach that encourages immersion in different but equally highly regarded cultures within Canada, de facto erasing cultural boundaries, and the appreciation of Indigeneity with the affirmation of the special place First Peoples occupy in the cultural history of the country. Furthermore, immersion in many cultures smudges cultural boundaries meanwhile the Inuit struggle to retain their own distinct culture. Biculturalism seems a more manageable solution to the dichotomous problem of concurrent Indigenous identity preservation and the creation of a mainstream all-Canadian identity.

The current stance is that boundaries worldwide are in the process of disappearing. The theory of boundary removal—the idea that boundaries are constantly changing as globalization erases them—is based on the observation of economic realities (Newman et al. 198-200). In this political climate, the formation of sovereign ethnocultural territories within Canada indicates an internal dissatisfaction with the multicultural ethos that cannot speak for the expressed wishes of all living in Canada. Inuit *Nunangat* serves as a prime example of a soft border and cultural boundary within a nation, fortifying the Inuit identity with its mere existence, nevertheless, boundaries have already been eliminated for the approximately sixteen thousand Inuit who live off land in Southern metropolitan centres. By meeting other ethnic groups that travel, work, or live in the North, Inuit socio-spatial identity—the feeling of belonging to a region—is affected, as a result habits and customs change and as a consequence so does cultural identity. Southern

lifestyle—through the Internet and other commodities—reaches the North, therefore transforming the culture of even those Inuit who never leave the land. Inuit cultural identity at present is the sum of its parts; the rapid change due to outside influences culminates into the formation of an amalgamated identity.

To conclude, there is an administrative-spatial duality inherent to Inuit identity by being not only Inuit, but Canadian as well (Dorais 302). It is pivotal to address issues relating to language, education, and sociopolitical questions to counterbalance the cultural loss of the past few decades, which is epitomized by the diminished levels of Inuktitut language proficiency within Inuit *Nunangat*. This is especially so in the case of the about fourteen thousand Inuit living in the South. Access to federally and provincially funded services in urban centres, such as Native Friendship Centres and the Inuit-specific community service, the Tungasuvvingat Inuit (TI) Community Centre, is necessary to fostering well-being for urban Inuit. Also, the erosion of Inuit ethnic identity could be lessened through the continued use of Inuktitut not only in private but in professional settings.

The remoteness of the Inuit homeland limits Southern influence, serving as a buffer for acculturative processes. People remaining in the *Nunangat* primarily develop their identity based on the cultural history of the homeland and have wider access to fostering Inuktitut and participating in traditional activities. Both Berry's and Weinreich's models as well as Bourdieu's theory show that cultural identity can be fluid, and as such, it is possible for Inuit cultural identity to survive as well as expand. Inuit have been masters of successful adaptation to harsh environmental conditions; therefore, it is certain that they can thrive in Canada today. To this end, keeping Inuit intellectual and material culture alive is vital to promoting Inuit identity, albeit this is not to say that it is desired or possible to keep a culture sealed off from the outside. Inuit customs that span over hundreds of years may be amended by Southern comforts, which is what Inuit call *ajunamat*, a result of cultural influence that cannot be avoided. Such changes relating to modernization—and in this case enculturation—have implications to Inuit identity, which can be preserved by the Inuit philosophy of *sappulik*, never giving up even in face of grave danger.

Since the latter half of the twentieth century, the articulation of Indigenous identity has been greatly shaped by local, national, and even global efforts, such as those of socio-political movements supportive of Indigenous causes, especially those relating to cultural retention and energy management. As Indigeneity has come into focus, the protection of Indigenous lands, languages, rights, and cultures has received institutional support from both the government and non-governmental organizations. In this advantageous setting, it is hoped that the Inuit will continue to receive the necessary tools to retain their cultural identity by safeguarding their

immediate culture and feel at home in the larger cultural context of Canada, as most adequately expressed in the phrase coined by Jose Kusugak, the late president of Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated: “First Canadians, Canadians First.”¹¹

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11 First Canadians, Canadians First: The National Strategy on Inuit Education is a program by Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami devised in 2011. Their vision is “to graduate bilingual Inuit children with the skills and knowledge to contribute with pride and confidence to the 21st century” (itk.org). It is a phrase coined by Jose Kusugak, renowned teacher, storyteller, and politician, who was also in charge of land claims at Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated within Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami.

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