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Contemporary Inuit Food Sharing and Hunter Support Program of Nunavik, Canada

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INTRODUCTION

The characteristics and processes of social change in human societies vary with time and space. The peoples we call “hunter-gatherers” have experienced drastic social changes since the 15th century, with the majority of these societies having disappeared or undergone forced modification by external forces or groups of non hunter-gatherers.

Inuit, Inupiaq and Yup’ik are politically divided by the borders of Russia, USA, Canada and Greenland. In these regions, Inuit living in locally varied arctic environments, have historically had different contact with Europeans, and experienced different national northern policies. Thus, their societies differ from area to area, to include the forms of social change among Canadian Inuit living in the western arctic, Nunavut, Nunavik, and Labrador. Even within a region, social change in a small village is considerably different from that in a large town.

We know from various arctic studies that while Inuit have undergone drastic changes, the maintenance of subsistence activities has allowed historical reproduction of the Inuit social relationships. It is recognized that Inuit articulation with the cash economy has not always been incompatible with the continuation of subsistence activities [LANGDON 1991; WENZEL 1991; KISHIGAMI 1996; MARQUARDT and CAULFIELD 1996]. For example, Canadian Inuit seal hunting was compatible with the cash economy until the early 1980s [WENZEL 1991], with seal harvesting task groups remaining organized on the basis of kinship and with meat being shared or transferred in particular ways within an extended family, or between Inuit of different families. Thus, through the customary sharing and gift giving practices, social relationships at the core of sharing were maintained, while sealskins were sold by Inuit to the Hudson’s Bay Company or co-op for cash. This cash was then used to purchase ammunition and gasoline for snowmobiles and outboard engines, which were necessary materials for carrying out contemporary hunting and fishing activities. In a real sense, therefore, those Inuit hunting and fishing activities invested with cash income value made possible the reproduction of socioeconomic relationships in the contemporary context.

This shows that Inuit subsistence activity is a socioeconomic system, composed

of harvesting and sharing, and organized by special social relationships such as kinship and hunting partnerships [WENZEL 1991]. Furthermore, these activities are correlated with indigenous knowledge, worldviews and ethno-technology.

The symbiotic relationships between subsistence activities and the fur trading economy continued until 1983, when the European Community (EC) banned imports of specific animals, especially seal products. This event resulted in the collapse of the fur market and, in turn, led to a drastic decrease in income from Inuit harvesting activities as hunters found it harder to meet their costs. The resulting decline in the hunting and fishing activities has since caused great changes in social relationships upon which Inuit subsistence is based.

In 1983, a hunter support program established under the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement was started among the Nunavik Inuit. This program has become an important provider of meat and fish with them in each Inuit community. The country foods caught by individual hunting and fishing activities are, whenever possible, still shared through communal meals, as well as through other types of social relationships based on kinship, neighbor, and co-hunting arrangements. All these sharing practices contribute to the maintenance of the larger suite of Inuit social relationships. Importantly, however, the Nunavik hunter support program has created a larger umbrella for mutual help above the level of the family and has also contributed significantly to a broader community identity.

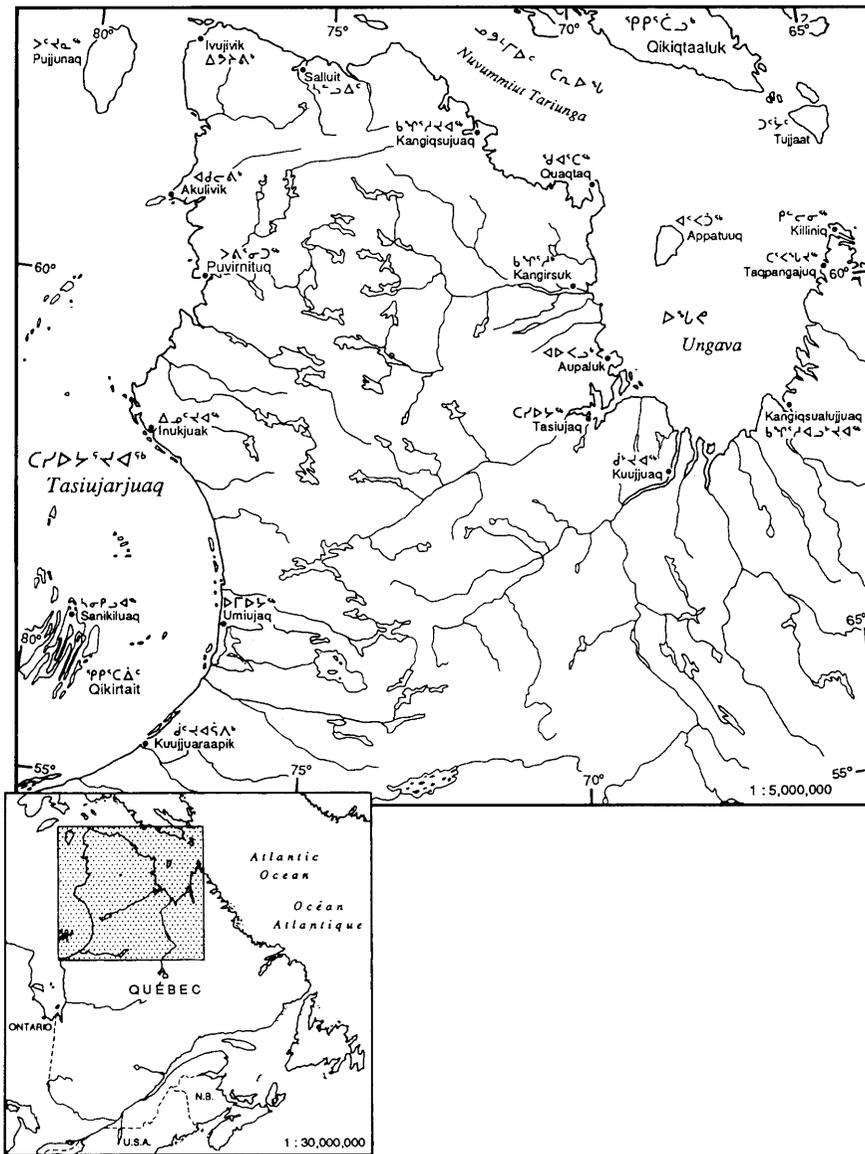
In this paper, I delineate the scope and range of hunter support programs in the Nunavik community of Akulivik, with a special reference to the impacts of the program on the Inuit of northeast Hudson Bay over the last few decades through examining cases recorded during the 1980s and 1990s from Akulivik. From this, I proceed to the Nunavik of Canada. Then, I examine Peterson's hypothesis regarding social change among hunter-gatherers in the contemporary world [PETERSON 1991: 2].¹⁾

A HISTORY OF THE NUNAVIK REGION, AND THE SOCIETY AND ECONOMY OF AKULIVIK

The village of Akulivik lies on the eastern coast of Hudson Bay (60 degrees 48 minutes north latitude and 78 degrees 8 minutes west latitude, see Map 1). It was officially established as a municipality of the Nunavik in 1976. I shall now briefly outline the modern history of Nunavik region, Canada, and describe the social and economic aspects of the village.

History Of Nunavik Region, Canada

Inuit, Inupiaq and Yup'ik peoples in general have been the principal occupants of much of the arctic tundra region lying beyond the continental treeline. They lived in self-sufficiency by making full use of the natural resources present in their territories and by trading some of these resources with neighboring groups.



Map 1. Nunavik, Canada.

However, before the middle of this century, several factors combined to create substantial change because of close contact with Euro-Canadians and Americans. These factors include involvement in the fur trade, Christianization, and, because of increasingly intensive contact with non-Inuit, drastic population decline due to the introduction and spreading of infectious and contagious diseases.

In Nunavik, Inuit began trading furs with Euro-Americans around 1910. By

the 1930s, most Inuit had been converted to Christianity by either Anglican or Catholic missionaries [KISHIGAMI 1994: 228–229]. Further, from the late 1930s to the end of the 1940s, tuberculosis prevailed at almost epidemic levels among the Inuit in this region. Thus, the government of Canada was forced to intervene medically.

A turning point in Nunavik Inuit life occurred around 1950. Until the middle of the decade the Inuit in Nunavik were non-sedentary rarely occupying a particular place for any prolonged period. However, early in the 1950s there began the uneven struggle between the attraction of government communities, which had better houses and easier access to medical, mission, trading, and welfare services, and that of the land, which offered traditional pursuits, but also posed the uncertainty of disease and starvation [PAINE 1977b: 13]. Also, the government wanted to assimilate the Inuit into the Canadian mainstream. Therefore, in the interest of the efficiency of administrative and social services, the sedentarization of the Nunavik population was preferred and planned for by the federal government of Canada. The Inuit living in the Akulivik area were thus moved during the 1950s and 1960s to Puvirnituk. By the mid 1960s, Inuit drawn from all the different Akulivik camp groups lived in Puvirnituk through the year and became increasingly involved in wage employment and the transfer economy. As the Inuit became more dependent on the national economy of Canada, money became ever more significant. The main income sources at this time were transfer payments by the federal government, petty wages from labor, and cash from selling soap stone carvings and the furs of seals and arctic foxes.

From the late 1960s to early 1970s, government protectionist and assimilation policies toward aboriginal peoples, including Inuit, a process which Robert Paine [1977a: 3] has termed “welfare colonialism”, were implemented in the arctic region by the federal authorities. However, after the land claim movement took on force in the early 1970s, the federal government undertook the negotiation of several claims settlements with representatives from each of the indigenous groups concerned.

It was during this time (1971) that the Premier of Quebec, Robert Bourassa, declared the “James Bay Hydro-Electric Project” to be an important development not only for Nunavik and the Cree regions of northern Quebec, but also critical for the province as a whole. As the Inuit and Cree voiced their opposition to the project, the Quebec and federal governments began to negotiate indigenous rights, including land rights. In November, 1975, all parties agreed to and signed the “James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement” (JBNQA).²⁾ While, as a result, both the Inuit and Cree surrendered their aboriginal title and rights by the agreement, they did obtain specific rights to subsistence resources and to limited lands, as well as compensation money. Further, the JBQA also provided the means for a hunter support program, which was initiated in Nunavik beginning in 1983.

After a fifteen year stay in Puvirnituk, the Akulivik people returned to their

homeland, the Cape Smith region, in the early 1970s and established the village as a municipality in 1976.

Economic Structure

The contemporary economy of Canadian Inuit is characterized by a mixture of subsistence and cash. The Nunavik Inuit have been politically absorbed into the Province of Quebec and Canadian governmental systems and economically integrated into both the world system and the national economy of Canada. As a result of their experience over the last four decades of resettlement, Nunavik Inuit cannot fully carry out hunting and fishing activities without an array of imported technologies and, thus, cash, which is used to purchase gasoline, ammunition, rifles, nets, snowmobiles and boats with outboard engines.

Although almost all Akulivik adult men engage in hunting and fishing, only about half of the 60 adult males in the contemporary community are active hunters and fishermen who do not hold or participate in wage employment as their main source of cash. Participation in wage labor, however, is generally low because few jobs exist in Akulivik, or other Nunavik Inuit villages. For example, in 1995 there were 55 full-time jobs, 34 part-time jobs, and 24 other mainly seasonal construction jobs in Akulivik, whose population was approximately 400 in that year [LEFEBVRE 1996:158, 184]. The population obtains its food from hunting/fishing (60%) with the remainder coming from imported southern foodstuffs purchased from the co-op store. The men who are active hunters, however, capture most of the seals, caribou and fish that enter the village, depending on transfer payments from the federal and provincial governments and/or selling soapstone carvings to obtain funds to support their hunting and fishing activities.

Social Structure

Before the 1950s, the general pattern of Nunavik Inuit subsistence activities was organized around small camp groups that seasonally migrated from one place to another in northwestern Nunavik regions. Summer and winter camp groups took two different social configurations. Typically, summer camp groups were made up of one large extended family, the nuclear domestic units of which resided in several separate tents. The winter group, on the other hand, was made up of several summer groupings. Akulivik Inuit summer groups usually ranged in size from five persons (1 tent) upward to approximately 20 persons (4 tents) in the period before resettlement (circa 1934) to Puvirnituk. While summer camps were small, the large winter camp groups had 140 persons at a maximum, established on the sea ice.³⁾

By the late 1960s, virtually all Nunavik Inuit were established in sedentary government villages. These communities were usually composed of people from formerly different camp groups (extended families), that prior to government village life had existed independent of government economic support. Hunting and other seasonal activities were conducted from these "independent" communities and

followed seasonal changes in important animal and fish resources. Since the 1960s, however, government villages have become the centers of residential life.

In the past, several previously distinct extended families co-resided in a winter village, and marriage frequency among these families was high.⁴⁾ Due to primarily technological innovations in hunting equipment and tools, and economic individualization in government village life, hunting groups became smaller, with activities sometimes being conducted by single individuals, although cooperating units made up of father-son pairs, several siblings or cousins and/or friends remained the norm. However, it must be noted that each extended family continues to function as the primary unit for food sharing and the provision of mutual help in the village.

In 1996, there were 411 persons living in 87 households in Akulivik, with the average household consisting of 4.7 persons, while average household size in 1990 was 6.1 persons. Thus, household size decreased during those 5 years and a nuclear family form of residence now best describes the situation of a majority of the village's population.

Most household heads in Akulivik are related to each other by blood or marriage and, in point of fact, genealogically, most household heads share a common ancestor three to four generations removed. Akulivik is, in reality, virtually composed of one large kin group by virtue of the "ancestral" connections that relate most extended families. In terms of daily operations, there are no more than 18 distinct and restricted extended families in the community.

FOOD SHARING AND MUTUAL HELP IN NUNAVIK SOCIETY IN THE 1990S

In the 1990s the Inuit of Akulivik continue to practice food sharing and mutual help, especially during periods of reduced country food availability. Hunters who participate in cooperative hunting or fishing activities generally share game on the sea ice or tundra almost immediately after animals are harvested (*ningiktuk*). When hunters return to the village, they customarily give meat directly to their kinsmen and neighbors who live in houses physically adjacent to their own (*parutuk*). Alternatively, successful hunters invite these people to participate in meals at their houses (*kaikurik*).

Game Sharing Among The Hunters

Since about 1960, due to the use of technological innovations such as snowmobiles and high-powered rifles, Inuit hunters typically engage in hunting and fishing activities either as individuals or in smaller cooperating groups than before. Thus, the frequency and amount of game sharing that occurs among hunters, especially in the immediate aftermath of a kill, has decreased since the advent of these introductions. However, Akulivik hunters still consider game sharing to be a principal normative practice. Among cooperating hunters, the individual who

captures game, directs the transfer of meat to other task group participants. Furthermore, a hunter who captures major game species, such as a bearded seal or beluga whale, gives a portion to his kinsmen and to fellow villagers with whom a less formal connection may exist.

In order to illustrate the range of sharing at this level, I will now discuss four cases involving winter sealing, ptarmigan hunting in winter, and beluga whale and polar bear hunting in summer. Each of these case illustrations are based on data recorded in 1998.

(1) "K" left Akulivik alone to hunt seal and fish for arctic char for one day in January, 1998. After departing, he encountered 4 other hunters in the area where he intended to hunt and joined them to form a cooperative seal hunting group. On this occasion, only K was successful, catching a big bearded seal. Following K's success, the meat and viscera from his seal, except for the heart (which was kept by K) were divided by him equally with the other four hunters. In addition, the sealskin was given to one of the unsuccessful men, and the blubber portioned to each according to stated need. In this way, hunters of the group shared the game almost equally.

After returning to Akulivik, K then made a telephone call to the community FM radio station announcing that he had a bearded seal, inviting anyone who wanted a portion to his house. A number of villagers came to take away parcels of meat. He also delivered meat to several persons as gifts, and some people also visited K later to participate in meals of cooked bearded seal.

(2) "A" in Akulivik went alone to hunt ptarmigan and net arctic char at the end of January, catching about 30 ptarmigan and five arctic char. Upon his return to the village, he used the FM radio station to tell the villagers to come to his house to receive some birds. He also sent his son to deliver some of the catch to the widows and elders who were his neighbors, and his wife made a few telephone calls to invite specific people to supper. In this way, his catch was distributed to a wide circle of villagers.⁵⁾

(3) In June, two parties of 3 and 4 hunters, respectively, went after beluga whales and caught several each (6 in total). The meat and maqtaq (whaleskin parts), were divided and delivered to all the households of the village after each hunter had taken his share.

(4) At the end of July, a young man, "H", killed a polar bear at Cape Smith Island close to Akulivik. It was his first polar bear kill. He butchered the bear under the instruction of an old man and then divided the meat equally among ten families who had come to the island to fish and picnic. After H's return in Akulivik, he gave the head and skin of the animal to his symbolic midwife ("*sanajik*").⁶⁾ When the families who had been at Cape Smith Island returned to Akulivik, the meat they had received while there was further redistributed to other villagers through meals and as gifts.

Food Sharing Through Meals

While in Akulivik from mid-December, 1990 to early January, 1991, I observed 17 meals (lunches or suppers) held at the house of my host (the “A” of 2 above). During this period, his household included himself, his wife, and their two daughters. At nearly every meal, several guests were present. Although they were sometimes invited by the wife, they consistently appeared only when the food was ready. These primary guests included members of A’s extended family, friends, namesakes, immediate neighbors and distant kinsmen [KISHIGAMI 1992: 189]. One case is shown as an example in Figure 1.

From late January into February, and in July 1998, I stayed in the same household and again observed the pattern of meals. During this second observational period, the household consisted of A and his wife, their adopted son and second oldest daughter. In January–February, I observed a total of 28 meals. There were only two occasions in which members of the household ate alone. At the other 26 events, other members of A’s extended family, along with more distant relatives and neighbors, were present and shared in these meals. One such meal is illustrated in Fig. 2.

I recorded another 34 meals at A’s in July. There were only 4 cases when household members partook of a meal without guests. At the other meals, the circle of participants was essentially identical to that present in January–February (see Fig. 3).

Of the 62 meals observed, 56 (90%) involved members of A’s kinsmen and/or unrelated but immediate neighbors. I conclude from those cases that a household (the principal main unit of residence today) is not the exclusive unit of consumption in Akulivik. Generally, members from several households of the extended family attend meals. This is especially the case where the household head is an elder. In this circumstance, it is typical for his/her sons and daughters and nephews and nieces to give their catch to the elder and then to later visit for meals at this central household. Furthermore, distant kinsmen and other villagers may join these meals, although with less frequency than close kin.

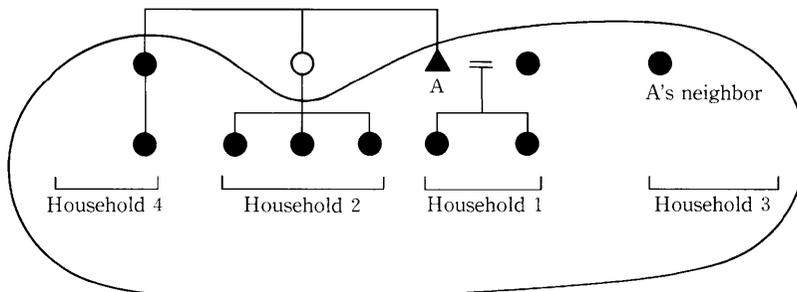


Fig. 1. Social relationships of the participants of A’s supper
▲ and ●: Present

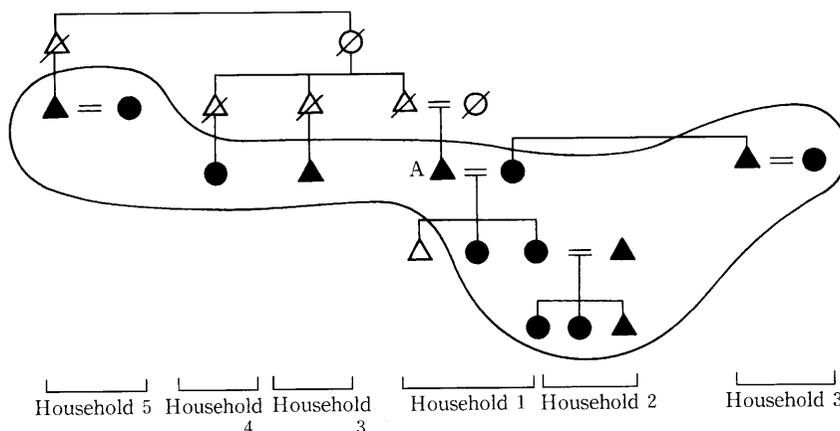


Fig. 2. Social relationships of the participants of A's lurch of Feb. 1st, 1999 at house
 ▲ and ●: Present

Mutual Help

Food sharing among the Inuit is one of the chief social institutions in mutual help. There are, however, other institutional means of sharing resources in Akulivik.

When a person does not find that his relatives had things which he needs, he asks other villagers to give them to him. There are direct requests for food and other resources made to other villagers through FM radio broadcasts. For example, when a young woman is out of powdered milk, disposable diapers for her baby, cigarettes, or flour, she may make a telephone call to the local FM station and

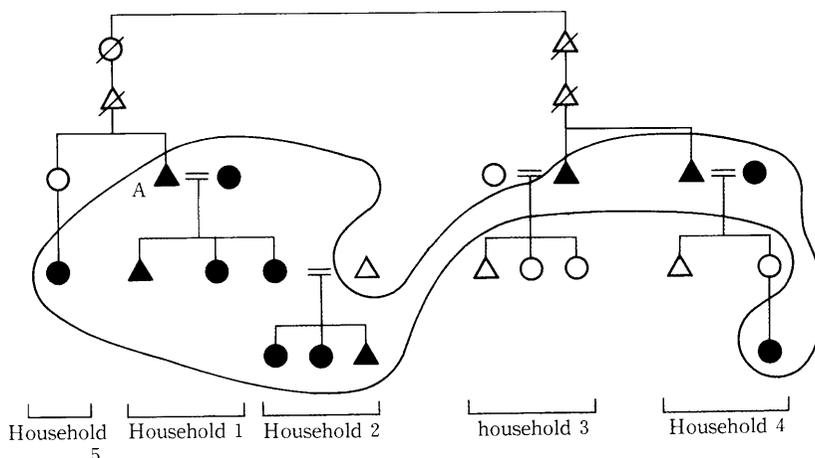


Fig. 3. Social relationships of the participants of A's lurch of July, 11th, 1998 at house
 ▲ and ●: Present

request other villagers to give her the necessary material. If somebody in the village has any to spare, he/she will provide her with it without charge.

Secondly, there is mutual help among households of kinsmen from an extended family. Currently, there are 3 large hunting boats in Akulivik, 2 of which are privately owned by local Inuit. Each boat is purchased, owned, managed, and used by a senior man in cooperation with his brothers, sons and nephews. They collectively provide the money and labor to run the boat for hunting and other purposes. In this case a large extended family is the social unit managing the boat.

HUNTER SUPPORT PROGRAM AND ITS ENACTMENT

Hunter Support Program

The “James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement” [1975], resulted in a “support program for Inuit beneficiaries for their hunting, fishing, and trapping activities” of the Nunavik region. The Inuit requested the government of Quebec to establish the program to maintain their vital hunting and fishing activities and to obtain country food. The program was legalized in 1982, through Bill 83 of the Quebec Provincial Government.⁷⁾

The aim of the program is “to favor, encourage and perpetuate the hunting, fishing and trapping activities of the Inuit as a way of life, and to guarantee the Inuit communities a supply of produce from such activities.” Each village administers the program. Thus, each village council can obtain a community hunting boat, a communal cold storage house or buy meat and fish from local hunters with the program’s funds and provide these to villagers without charge.

The program budget is given by the provincial government to the Kativik Regional Government of northern Quebec and after taking 15% of the budget for the regional administration, the remainder of it is redistributed to each village by the latter. The program allocation to Akulivik between 1989 and 1997 was approximately CA\$115,000 in 1989, CA\$139,000 in 1990, CA\$142,000 in 1991, CA\$150,000 in 1992, CA\$182,000 in 1993, CA\$135,000 in 1994, CA\$208,000 in 1995, CA\$523,000 in 1996 and CA\$185,000 in 1997. The annual community budget is subject to yearly agreements with the Kativik Regional Government. The amount is given to the community according to its beneficiary population, inflation rates and proposed budget. The sums spent on the hunter support program have basically increased over the years due to the rapid population growth of the Inuit, and dramatically between 1994 and 1996 due to the community’s need in that they hoped to repair their community boat.

Enactment And Use Of The Program In Akulivik

In the following section, I will describe how the Akulivik people used the hunter support program in 1997.⁸⁾ The primary use of the program in the village was 1) to employ the community boat for walrus hunting for a week from late

September to early October, 2) beluga whale hunting for a week in October, and 3) in the free distribution of seal meat, caribou, ptarmigan, arctic char, and mussels bought from local hunters to give to the villagers.

In January and February 1997, the councilors bought 5 bearded seals and 10 ringed seals specifically for redistribution within the village. The village councilors purchased the meat of bearded and ringed seals for CA\$2.5 per pound from local hunters and distributed this meat without charge to the households of elders and widows. When there was sufficient meat, the council also gave meat to other households. 15 pounds of meat can provide several days of meals for the average household of Akulivik.

In March—April, 1997, the village councilors purchased seals and caribou through the hunter support program.⁹⁾ They distributed the meat to the households of elders, widows, and others. In April, about 40 caribou were obtained over the month from local hunters. On one occasion the meat from 10–15 caribou was distributed to all the households in Akulivik.

From May to August, food was plentiful in Akulivik because of large harvests of Canada geese and snow geese. Arctic char were abundant near the shore in July and August. The Akulivik Inuit caught a considerably large amount of game for themselves which they shared with their kinsmen and other villagers. Thus, during this time, the councilors did not purchase any food through the program in the village.

For a week in late September—early October, the councilors, as part of the hunter support program, sent 6 hunters to Nottingham Island (being more than 100 kms away from the village) for walrus hunting. Two of the hunters acted as captain and first mate of the community boat. The other 4 persons were selected by the mayor and councilors from the total group of hunters. A privately owned boat accompanied the community boat on the walrus hunt. The councilors provided both boats with gasoline (200 gallons each) and CA\$1,000 worth of food and ammunition from the program budget. The program also paid CA\$50 to CA\$100 per day to each hunter for their service. The hunters were allowed to keep the walrus tusks for themselves, but not to take more meat than other villagers. 5 walruses were caught, and the meat was equally divided and distributed to each household in the village, about 100 pounds each. In addition, upon the arrival of the boats at Akulivik, a lot of villagers came to the seashore and had a feast.

For about a week in October, a beluga whale hunting expedition was carried out using the community boat. Akulivik hunters used to hunt for Beluga whales in the Richmond Gulf in the southeastern part of Hudson Bay. However, in 1994 they changed their whale hunting ground to a place further north near Ivujivik. In 1997, due to lack of program funds, the village was not able to send the community boat for beluga whale hunting. Instead, local hunters used two private boats. The councilors provided CA\$500 in food and ammunition to each boat. Also, the Akulivik co-op paid CA\$100 to each hunter who participated in the hunting expedition. After the hunt, 5% of the maqtaq was shared by the hunters. The

remaining maqtaq and all the meat was equally divided and delivered to the 87 households in the village.

In November, many Inuit in Akulivik engaged in net fishing for arctic char at Kuuvik. In the last few years, the councilors have not organized and sent fishing groups to Kuuvik through the program. Rather, support funds were used to buy fish from the local Inuit and to distribute the fish to all the households. In 1997, the councilors purchased 2000 pounds of arctic char with CA\$5000 (CA\$2.50/lb) from the program. Each household was given 10 fish, supplemented by several caribou that were bought and distributed to several villagers that month.

In December, the councilors purchased 200 pounds of arctic char with the program funds for the community-wide Christmas feast.

Usually, meat and fish purchased by the hunter support program were distributed among the households soon after their arrival at the village. But some meat and fish were kept at the community storage. When any person needed the meat or fish, he/she might go to the storage to get some for him/herself or ask a village official to deliver some to him or her at home. Also, meat and fish from the support program are served at community feasts on several occasions such as New Year Day, Easter Day, Canada Day, and Christmas Day.

In addition to the above mentioned activities, the program also supports the following activities: search and rescue operations (budget of CA\$10,000), repairs to the community boat, making trails for snowmobiles and other four-wheel vehicles (all-terrain vehicles), deepening waterways for canoes, and elders teaching hunting and survival skills to youngsters.

INFLUENCES OF THE HUNTER SUPPORT PROGRAMS ON AKULIVIK SOCIETY

In this section, I will focus on the program's activities and economic effects during a two month period from 17th of February to 16th of April, 1998 in Akulivik.

Table 1 shows the dates when meat was purchased through the program, the number of caribou, and the weight of seal meat. The age cohort of local hunters selling through the program, the number of meat sales by each hunter, and the program income of each hunter are presented in Table 2.

During the two month period considered, the program obtained 132 caribou and 2,749 pounds of bearded and ringed seal meat from the total number of 87 hunters for redistribution to needy villagers. The hunters earned a total amount of CA\$20,590 from the program.

Impacts Of The Program On Villagers

According to the mayor of Akulivik, if more than 10 caribou are available, they are divided and delivered to all the households. If fewer than 10 caribou are available, meat goes first to the households of elders, widows and persons with

Table 1. The dates on which seal or caribou meat was purchased from local hunters through the program, number of caribou purchased, weight of seal meat purchased

Date/month (1998)	# of caribou	weight of seal or fish
17/02	12	459 pounds
18/02	6	366 pounds
23/02	2	223.8 pounds
26/02	0	115.4 pounds
27/02	10	0 pound
02/03	14	0 pound
05/03	0	124.6 pounds
06/03	0	194.6 pounds
09/03	21	40.8 pounds
10/03	2	229.8 pounds
11/03	0	34.8 pounds
13/03	2	0 pound
17/03	0	20 pounds
18/03	8	0 pound
19/03	21	0 pound
20/03	4	260 pounds
23/03	0	36 pounds
24/03	12	118.8 pounds
25/03	8	72 pounds
26/03	0	140 pounds
27/03	0	213 pounds
03/04	3	0 pound
13/04	3	0 pound
15/04	4	0 pound
16/04	0	100 pounds
Total	132	2748.6 pounds

full-time jobs, who often help their father and brothers' subsistence activities by providing them with money or gasoline, and only then to other households in need of meat.

During these 2 months, there were 6 times when all the households in the village received caribou meat and 9 other times when distribution was restricted to

Table 2. The age cohort of local hunters selling through the program, number of meat sales by each hunter, and the program income of each hunter

Hunter's ID #	times to sell meat	earned cash	age cohort
#01	1	\$144	30's
#02	1	\$440	50's
#03	1	\$274.93	40's
#04	1	\$110	40's
#05	1	\$420	50's
#06	1	\$440	40's
#07	1	\$110	20's
#08	1	\$90	20's
#09	1	\$90	20's
#10	2	\$175.50	50's
#11	2	\$199.50	40's
#12	2	\$319.50	40's
#13	2	\$310	20's
#14	2	\$232	20's
#15	2	\$880	60's
#16	3	\$439.50	60's
#17	3	\$930	40's
#18	3	\$1240	30's
#19	3	\$1190	50's
#20	3	\$292.50	40's
#21	3	\$1300	50's
#22	4	\$1410	30's
#23	5	\$1808	50's
#24	6	\$1781.50	60's
#25	6	\$1680	70's
#26	8	\$1227	60's
#27	8	\$984	40's
#28	11	\$2071.50	40's
Total	87 (\$236.7 per time)	\$20589.43 (\$735.34 per person)	

widows, elders and full-time wage earners.

Assuming that one caribou can provide for 5 persons for 2 weeks, the hunter support program project secured food for 9,240 person/days (5 persons \times 14 days \times 132 caribou). This means a total of 23 days' food for the Akulivik population. In addition, there were 17 purchases totaling 2,750 pounds of seal meat.

As I described earlier, the first focus of the hunter support program is widows, elders, and full-time wage employees who cannot go hunting and fishing. These individuals/households benefit most frequently from the hunter support program. Secondly, those villagers who, because of bad luck in their hunting and fishing, require occasional support are supplied. These two groups of Akulivik Inuit rate the program as being highly successful.

On the other hand, the program is seen as problematic with regard to a third group. This consists of young Inuit at age of 20s to mid-30s who only receive meat from the program and do not contribute themselves to food production. This group neither participates in hunting and fishing nor seeks employment. Thus, they depend on transfer payments from the federal and provincial governments and draw heavily on food from the hunter support program and their kinsmen. As a result, they are seen as not fulfilling their responsibilities to their kinsmen and to the village. It is interesting to note that those young people do not hesitate to receive some meat and fish from their kinsmen or the hunter support program because they think that being Inuit, they have a right to freely obtain them from other Inuit or the hunter support program. They do not give any food to other Inuit simply because they do not have any. But they do not think that a problem. It is a reality that there is a discrepancy between the Inuit norms on food sharing and the young Inuit's behavior and cognition about it.

Impacts Of The Program On Hunters

One of the reasons that the hunter support program was established by the Nunavik Inuit was to provide cash income to full-time hunters in middle and old age who, due to their lack in English language competency, and education, could not participate in wage labor. During the two month period discussed here, 28 hunters sold their catch to the program, receiving almost \$20,600. In terms of age cohorts, there were 4 hunters in their 20's, 4 in their 30's, 9 in their 40's, 6 in their 50's, 4 in their 60's and 1 in his 70's.

Those 28 hunters sold meat 87 times. On average, a hunter received about CA\$237 each time. However, there was considerable variation, from CA\$90 to CA\$2070, in any hunter's total income during the period. On average, a hunter's income was about CA\$735 during this period.

Tables 3 and 4 show both higher income from, and higher frequency of sales to the program the greater the age of the hunters. Although no individual's income from the program was sufficient to meet all cash needs, the hunter support program offered one of the few secure income sources for hunters over 40. However, it is

Table 3. Income from the hunter support program and age cohort of hunters who sold meat to the program

Income age cohort	Less than \$99	\$100–\$499	\$500–\$999	\$1000–\$1499	\$1500–\$1999	\$2000–\$2500
20's	2	2				
30's		2		2		
40's		6	2			1
50's		3		2	1	
60's		1	1	1	1	
70's					1	
Total	2	14	3	5	3	1

Table 4. Frequency of selling meat by each hunter to the program and age cohort of the hunters

	Once	2 times	3 times	4 times	5 times	6 times	8 times	11 times
20's	3	1						
30's	1	1	1	1				
40's	3	2	2				1	1
50's	2	1	2		1			
60's		1	1			1	1	
70's						1		

also apparent that full time hunters cannot be economically independent solely through selling their catches to the program.

DISCUSSION

Akulivik hunters still share game firstly with kinsmen, and secondly other villagers. Research results on household activities from 1990 [KISHIGAMI 1992] and 1998 indicate that food sharing was most frequently practiced among households within the extended family and then among physically neighboring households in the community. Several hunters also gave food to elders, sick persons, and widows. Further, food sharing was indirectly extended through participation in meals at the homes of successful hunters.

The hunting and fishing activities of the Inuit are not so extensive in contemporary Akulivik as to always meet the amounts of food needed. However, this situation is improved by the Inuit's use of the hunter support program to provide all the villagers with country food.

In the winter and fall seasons, when lack of food is most common, the hunter support program provides country food to the Akulivik Inuit in need and sometimes to all the households. In the summer season, when there is abundant food, hunting and sharing is extensive within extended families. Also, food giving across the village is done through radio announcements. In these ways, food and other necessities reach Inuit in need and also others.

The contemporary Inuit of Akulivik respond to economic situations by a combination of several institutional means of mutual help: 1) customary food sharing practices, 2) the hunter support program and 3) mutual help by use of local FM broadcasts. All Inuit receive some meat and fish through the community hunter support program and existing food sharing networks. Once food is obtained by the Inuit, they share it with their kinsmen and neighbors again and again. As long as food sharing is practiced by the Inuit on basis of kinship and other social relationships such as namesake, midwife and hunting partnerships, those social relationships are activated and maintained by the people.

The food supplied by the hunter support program forms a kind of food sharing at the village level. Although this communal mutuality seems to be an emergent phenomenon in the modern context, it is in reality a carryover from the small community situation that characterized the Nunavik Inuit before sedentarization. Inuit regard resource sharing for mutual help as one of their traditional social characteristics. The sharing practices at the village level across kin groups maintain and strengthen their local group identity as Akulivik residents and furthermore a feeling of being real Inuit.

On the other hand, the practices of the program may cause social change in the Akulivik society. Through the program, Inuit have begun to receive meat and fish from unspecified individuals, thus weakening reciprocal obligations or responsibilities to food givers. Furthermore, some young men and wage workers who do not engage in harvesting activities have become net receivers of meat and fish through the program. At the moment, there are strong kinship norms on food sharing and mutual help among the Akulivik Inuit. Wage laborers and some young Inuit without harvesting activities still receive some meat and fish from their relatives and the hunter support program without stigma. However, the social differentiation of the Inuit into two categories, harvesters and net-receivers of country food, may cause some alterations in existing social relationships in the long run.

The hunter support program is highly valued by the Akulivik Inuit in terms of its overall economic and social effects. However, the practice of the program, as well as the decline in fur trading and hunting/fishing activities in general, may have some devastating effects on food sharing networks of young Inuit within and across extended families in the future. In order to keep the program effectively functioning in socio-economic terms, some means for the young Inuit who do not engage in harvesting activities should be taken to involve them in the hunter support program and other indigenous mutual help systems.

CONCLUSION

Food sharing and mutual help are social institutions characteristic of small scale societies such as hunting-gathering societies [ALTMAN 1987; DAMAS 1972; LEE 1979; WOODBURN 1981]. The existence of such institutionalization among the Inuit has been primarily explained in terms of its functions of mutual insurance toward survival and community integration [COLLINGS, WENZEL and CONDON 1998; KELLY 1995: 161–181; WENZEL 1995]. The Akulivik Inuit themselves recognize those functions. In this paper, I have emphasized another aspect of Inuit food sharing rather than its functions would. That is, Inuit food sharing is a part of larger subsistence relation and correlates with reproduction of their social relationships [ELLANNA and SHERROD 1984; WENZEL 1980, 1991].

In the case of the Akulivik Inuit, the hunter support program supplements customary country food distribution. These two major means of sharing make the reproduction of social relationships possible. In the case study from Akulivik, I showed some causal relationships between the reproduction of Inuit social relations, food sharing practices and the hunter support program in Nunavik. While hunting and fishing activities have drastically declined since the 1980s, the hunter support program, starting in 1983, has led to the distribution of some meat and fish among all the Inuit households in each Nunavik village. The fish and meat are then shared on the basis of social relationships such as kinship and co-hunting relationships. Food sharing promoted by the hunter support program contributes to the maintenance of Inuit social relationships in spite of rapidly changing economic-political circumstances affecting Nunavik. My study generally agrees with Peterson's hypothesis that as long as the economic activity of foragers is socially constituted, they can reproduce distinctive sets of economic and social relations by their socio-economic practices even under the severe influence of a dominant society in the state and the world system [PETERSON 1991: 2].

Contrary to Murphy and Steward's hypothesis [1956] that indigenous subsistence culture will decline under the influence of cash economy,¹⁰ this study shows that depending upon conditions, Inuit social relationships can be reproduced even in a society absorbed into a national and world system. One of the conditions for this reproduction is that any positive national policy toward indigenous subsistence activities must not only be agreed upon by the aboriginal people and the state government, but the indigenous people must actively carry out the local application of this policy.

From this study, I hope to revise Peterson's hypothesis about the social change of hunter-gatherers living in first world nation states in the following way. Indigenous minorities living within a large nation state, such as Canada, are becoming increasingly dependent on the nation state and its national economy. However, this dependency will not necessarily result in an elimination or weakening of indigenous people's distinctive social relationships and ethnic identities. When positive national policies toward the indigenous peoples and positive native

initiatives (e.g. economic and political practices) coincide, economic activities will continue to be socially constituted. Under the above-mentioned condition, the distinctive socio-economic relationships of the peoples can be reproduced in spite of undergoing some socio-economic changes.

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Notes

- 1) Peterson's hypothesis is as follows: "Yet if economic activity is socially constituted, —it is possible that as well as being transformed by these external influences foragers may assimilate some, many or all of intrusions and linkages with the dominant economy to their own internal social purposes and in so doing reproduce distinctive sets of economic and social relations" [1991: 2].
- 2) All the Inuit of Ivujivik and Puvirnituk and one half of the Salluit Inuit in Nunavik have disapproved the agreement.
- 3) Among the Inuit, people are classified into three categories such as close kin (*ilagiit nangminariit*), kin (*ilagiit*) and non kinsmen. According to Balikci, who worked with Netsilik Inuit in the late 50s, "ilagiit" means "the circle of relatives" and "ilagiit nangminariit" "related people who may go away but come back and then share food, help each other, and stay together" [BALIKCI 1970: 112]. The former is usually composed of several related extended families and the latter an extended family.
- 4) After the 1960's, all forms of voluntary partnerships such as joking and dancing partners disappeared, with the exception of namesake and midwife relationships [KISHIGAMI 1990, 1997a, 1997b].
- 5) Persons who came to A's house to get some share: A's elder brother (3 ptarmigans, one arctic char), A's wife's friend (his wife's colleague in school, a widow, one ptarmigan), one sick elder in bed (several ptarmigans). Persons to whom A's son delivered his catch: a widow of his late cousin (three ptarmigans and one arctic char), old couple next door (three ptarmigans). Sharing through meals (three arctic chars and 14 ptarmigans): household members (A, A's wife, daughter and son), others (A's daughter and her son, A's wife's brother, A's hunting partner, A's brother's daughter and her husband and daughter, A's wife's cousin. The participants in the meal were members of A's extended family.
- 6) A symbolic midwife means a person who puts the first clothing on a new born baby while whispering his/her wish to the baby on the east coast of the Hudson Bay in Nunavik. The midwife and his/her baby establish a special relationship between them. The former teaches the latter in the latter's childhood and gives many presents. On the other hand, the latter has to give all of her/his first catch or thing made to the former. See Guemple [1969] and Kishigami [1997b].

- 7) The Cree established their own hunter support program differing from the Inuit's. Regarding the Cree hunter support program, see Feit [1982, 1991], Scott [1984], and Scott and Feit [1992].
- 8) See earlier reports for the year 1984–1986 [KISHIGAMI 1993].
- 9) The purchase price of whole female or young male caribou was CA\$110 and that of adult males CA\$100.
- 10) They summarize the hypothesis in the following: "When the people of an unstratified native society barter wild products found in extensive distribution and obtained through individual effort, the structure of the native culture will be destroyed, and the final culmination will be a culture type characterized by individual families having delimited rights to marketable resources and linked to the larger nation through trading centers." [MURPHY and STEWARD 1956: 353]

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