DUMPCANO: WASTE MANAGEMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE IN IQALUIT

by

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A thesis submitted to the Department of Cultural Studies

In conformity with the requirements for

the degree of Master of Arts

Queen’s University
Kingston, Ontario, Canada

(April, 2016)

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Abstract

On May 20, 2014, the Iqaluit dump lit itself on fire, burning for 178 days.

‘Dumpcano’ as it was nicknamed, cannot be seen in isolation: Iqaluit is surrounded by unremediated dump sites, left behind from both the Canadian and American military and passed to a municipality that is overwhelmed with social problems. This thesis will use the infrastructure around waste—there is no recycling or separation of waste in the Territory, and the majority of dumps across Nunavut regularly burn garbage, a practice that’s been discontinued in the rest of the country—to address issues of identity, sovereignty and how the doctrine of Terra Nullius created the circumstances for the institutional neglect that led to the dump fire. This thesis will explore how ideologies, ideas, policies and practices emergent from settler colonial circumstances in Southern Canada were applied to the North in inappropriate ways. This tension around how the imagined image of the North has affected policy is accessible through my discussion of the growth of consumption culture in the North, while at the same time Canadian identity has been shaped by the image of the empty Arctic. While the Inuit of Nunavut were never under the Indian Act, their citizenship was founded not on equality but on the use of their habitation as an expression of Canadian sovereignty, which has grown increasingly relevant as Arctic nations debate who owns the Arctic and the oil beneath, and the Northwest Passage continues to melt. This thesis will explore the toxic legacy in Iqaluit and provide recommendations for Canada’s future.
Acknowledgements

Thank you to everyone I met in Iqaluit, who shared their time and stories with me—this thesis would not have been possible without the incredibly warm welcome (that sometimes involved chicken wings at the Legion) I received in Iqaluit. Thank you to the Northern Scientific Training Program and to everyone at the Nunavut Research Institute for helping to make my research trip possible: without you this thesis would probably be much shorter. Thank you as well to the Ban Righ Centre for your support. And thank you to everyone involved with Fellowships at Auschwitz for the Study of Professional Ethics: I didn’t know it at the time, but you were teaching me how to do better.

Thank you to my two supervisors, Bob Lovelace and Sam McKeegney, for your kindness, patience, and ruthless red pens. I learned a lot. I think that was the point.

Thank you to my peers in the Cultural Studies program, for helping make this creepy little Hogwarts school of magical misfits a reality. Extra special thank you to my academic life mate, Michelle Smith, for glitter, codependence and general awesomeness. And thank you to my family, mom, dad, Sarah and Joshua for always reminding me that I can do the thing, as long as I remember to spell the small words first. Remember: nobody’s smart but Sarah.

But most of all, thank you coffee. Without you, nothing I’ve ever done would be possible.
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**Terminology**

Throughout this thesis I defer to style choices, as discussed with my committee, regarding word choice. Therefore, I use Indigenous or Aboriginal peoples throughout this thesis, and where possible the specific name of a group or a person. The guidelines set out by Duncan McCue in his guide, *Reporting in Indigenous Communities* ([http://riic.ca](http://riic.ca)) were invaluable in my efforts to decolonize my terminology. I have capitalized North and South purposefully throughout this work. When terms and capitalizations appear in quotations however I have not altered them, and so some may reflect a different terminology, and may reflect the historical context and positionality of the works quoted. Words in Inuktitut appear first in italics with the translation, thereafter as regular text.
Chapter 1 Introduction

On May 20, 2014, the Iqaluit dump lit itself on fire. It would burn until September 16, 2014. For 178 days it would spew toxic smoke over the capital of Nunavut.

‘Dumpcano,’ as it was nicknamed, is a product of the doctrine of Terra Nullius. It was created out of centuries of valuing the region only for the resources that could be extracted from the terrain. Why create reasonable waste management strategies, why invest in sustainable communities when, ideologically, the space is conceived as empty and devoid of worth? Changes in the way people live in the North push Southern values on a Northern environment to accommodate this industrial development. People have been disconnected from the land around them and therefore also disconnected from a vital part of Inuit culture. This connection is necessary, regardless of culture, for the establishment of sustainability. In this sense, what is meant by Terra Nullius is actually closer to Terra Nihilum: not ‘land belonging to nobody’ but rather ‘that which is not conceived of as land at all’.

In this way, the population in Iqaluit has also existed in an intellectual Terra Nullius: never under the treaty system, they were deemed citizens of Canada when it was convenient (mainly when their occupation could establish sovereignty in the Arctic) but treated with a paternalistic disregard—that is when they weren’t being ignored entirely. This traps both the land itself and the people who call it home in a dangerous grey zone that allows Canada as a nation to benefit from the Arctic while simultaneously ignoring the real needs of the region.

This thesis will explore how ideologies, ideas, policies, and practices emergent from settler colonial circumstances in Southern Canada were
applied to the North in inappropriate ways. This application betrays many of the flaws, tensions, and erasures of that line of thinking. The tension between Settler ideologies and mythologies—especially the stories we tell ourselves about the North and how that orientalizing\(^1\) of Canada’s internal colony has affected policy—is accessible through my discussion of Terra Nullius. It would be very easy to see the history of Northern Canada as simply a change in Inuit culture: the transition of a ‘conquered’ civilization, or a ‘primitive’ culture ‘civilized’ by the South, the product of imperialism and colonialism, to Southern life ways and life styles. It would be simple to see the creation of consumption and waste in those terms. But Iqaluit refuses to be simple. Iqaluit, with its diversity and the very nature of the community today is evidence of the gradual transition of a living culture. Inuit culture isn’t something static under glass—it’s not a primordial ‘other’ enshrined in a cultural snow globe that can be pointed at as some ancient utopia spoiled by the white man. Inuit culture is and has been evolving forever. And modern Iqaluit culture involves a mélange of identities. The cultural transition can not be seen simply as a problem, result, or effect of the transition from one life way—Inuit or Aboriginal—to another—Southern, Western or imperial. When I arrived in Iqaluit, I expected to find a population split into two halves—Inuit and transient. And while I did find those groups, I also found something else: layers of a community that is complex,

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\(^1\) I apply Edward Said’s terminology to reference one group’s imagined idea of another group of people, and the way in which that group can then find their own reality shaped. In this way, for example, the film *Nanook of the North* is an orientalized portrayal of Inuit culture, that has impacted Southern understandings and the policies that emerged from those understandings. I use this term primarily because Terra Nullius is itself a profoundly orientalized and orientalizing doctrine, as will be explored throughout this thesis.
diverse, and includes people who call the North their home, and have connections to and insights into the development of that space, regardless of race or place of origin. For the purposes of this thesis, when I use the term ‘Northerner,’ it indicates the population in Iqaluit who call the North home, both Inuit and non-Inuit.

To understand the dump fire and how the South conceptualizes the North is to realize that this population, with one foot in settler colonialism and the other in Inuit culture, straddle the answers to the problems and the creation of the problems as well. They’re standing astride a river of cultural complexity that is often ignored or forgotten, in the drive to envision the North as either solely Inuit—often in igloos—or prefabricated Southern. There are people who live there. Some are Inuit. Some are not. Some are there for a lifetime. Some are there for a year. They’re all part of the problem and the solution, because they are all part of the real, lived experience of modern Iqaluit that is often unseen, an intellectual erasure of reality that is a continuation of the doctrine of Terra Nullius, this time applied, in some ways, to the intellectual descendants of the creators of the doctrine themselves. If we continue to polarize Northern identity—as one or the other, Inuit or Southern, other or not-other—then we will never reach a more complete understanding of the true nature of the North. That ‘truth’ itself is problematic—conceptualizations that might imagine the ‘truth’ of the North to be immediately and unproblematically accessible don’t leave room for the inherent complications of the bi-cultural reality of Iqaluit, or the solutions lurking in that mucky grey area.

It’s important to point out that Iqaluit is not demonstrative of the entirety of Nunavut. It’s the capital, the hub, the government seat and one of the biggest
settlements. The nature of Iqaluit is not the nature of the rest of the communities in Nunavut, nor is the experience there necessarily transferable to understandings of Northern experience in general. However, understanding how this melting pot of a community that lives visibly with the intersection of many cultures can perhaps shed light on problems that will begin to rear their heads in the rest of Canada. This is a microcosm evidenced by a high school girl slogging through the snow up the road to Inuksuk High School, wearing a traditional parka with fur trimming and embroidery and a pair of Ugg boots, listening to an iPod. Dumpcano gives us a unique opportunity to isolate the problems through one particular lens—the dump fire—and in so doing, do something about it for Iqaluit and the rest of the world.

While there has been research done around sustainable waste management and environmental justice within North America, these systems have seldom been addressed within the Northern context. The extant research\(^2\) has focused on extra-special waste, such as nuclear, toxic or industrial wastes, or the importing of waste from more affluent communities to other communities, typically less affluent and often marginalized communities or communities of colour. The research focus has been the effect, both immediate and over time (air and water quality degradation, 

for example), of someone else’s waste being dumped in your backyard, and not with a Northern Canadian or Indigenous perspective. This study focuses on a Northern Canadian community and the effects of its own municipal garbage on its environment. It focuses on how and why the infrastructure was neglected to such an extent that the dump could burn for five months, in the middle of a capital city. This qualitative research seeks to add to the growing body of knowledge in research findings in the area of environmental justice. Focusing on advocacy and participatory knowledge claims, the study draws upon theoretical perspectives that are integrated with philosophical assumptions and perspectives of racialized discourses and critical theory.³ This allows me to combine pragmatic, knowledge claims with theoretical frameworks that lean heavily on social justice roots.⁴

Environmental justice is about the injustice of an unsustainable material culture. Changes to the material culture and consumption habits of this community are in effect a version of slow violence, which is, as Rob Nixon writes in Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor, “a violence that occurs gradually and out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space, an attritional violence that is typically not viewed as violence at all.”⁵ In this sense, the dump fire wasn’t the violent act—it is the result of a longer history of institutional and structural neglect and destructive policies, made visible at last in a flaming pile of trash. In other words, in this way the structures that led to the dump

⁴ IBID.
fire and which will be discussed in this thesis were an example of “The normalized quiet of unseen power.” However, it would be incorrect to assume I’m arguing that this is simply a case of institutional failure: as most things in the North, Dumpcano was the result of intertwining causes and effects, not simply structural violence. As Nixon writes, “Slow violence, by contrast, might well include forms of structural violence, but has a wider descriptive range in calling attention, not simply to questions of agency, but to broader, more complex descriptive categories of violence enacted slowly over time.” In this way, I argue that the dump fire was the visible result of what Dr. Ian McTaggart-Cowan of the Environmental Protection Board referred to as “destruction by insignificant increment.” McTaggart-Cowan explains that once “some tolerable impact has been permitted, it becomes easier to argue for each successive small increment—small change—each one on its own perhaps minor, but in the aggregate inducing serious impact.” Nevertheless, as Aldo Leopold argues, “we can be ethical only toward what we can see.” By focusing all attention on the visible—the burning dump—what are we missing of the invisible: changes in culture towards a less sustainable future?

This wouldn’t have happened if it had been outside any other capital city in Canada. The imagined landscape of the North is an integral part of our collective Canadian identity, yet it is a location that the majority of us have never visited, or

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7 IBID, 11.
9 IBID, 125.
even imagine populated. While the Northern landscape might occupy our collective consciousness to the point that its shapes and animals are echoed on our coins, in our international signifiers and in what is thought of as quintessentially Canadian art, it remains a Terra Nullius devoid of human influence or a population affected by our actions (or in this case inactions). The North is understood as valuable for Canadian identity and sovereignty, and yet at a national level we have allowed it to languish in institutional and infrastructure neglect. The dump fire illustrates this paradox.

To understand what happened at the Iqaluit garbage dump on 2014, we cannot start simply with the day the fire began. How did the fire happen? What led to such a pile of waste in the first place, let alone what shaped the response to it (or lack thereof)? Chapter 2 of this thesis defines what shaped development in the North and led to an industrialized consumption-driven society that created enough garbage to form a flaming volcano of trash. The North has always been seen by European descendants as ‘empty’—whether literally or figuratively—and this led to a lack of long-term planning in terms of development and infrastructure, which has engendered a toxic Northern legacy. Chapter 3 will tackle the modern outcome of this legacy, looking at the dump fire itself and waste management in Iqaluit today.

1.1 Methodology

In An Arctic Man, Ernie Lyall writes that “if you come up here from the South and you stop over at some place in the North for an hour, you can write an article for a newspaper; if you stay for overnight you can write a big article for a magazine; and if
you stay for three days, you’re an expert and you can write a whole book.”

This is, of course, bullshit. One of the problems with how we’ve done researched and created policy for and about the North lies in this idea that the South can know the North. I arrived in Nunavut in November 2015. I stayed for almost a month. This was the first time I’ve ever been so far North—the farthest North I’d been prior to this trip was a month-long kayaking trip in Northern Labrador when I was in High School. There is no way, after only a few weeks, I could know the North.

But there are people there whom I met who do understand the North. I conducted a series of semi-structured interviews over the course of my stay in Iqaluit. I had originally intended to do five to six interviews. I did 14, not counting informal conversations or off-the-record talks. I accidentally found myself doing grounded theory; although my original proposal and plan had included interviews as a reaffirmation of research I’d conducted through books, archival sources and the academic cannon, once I met Northerners and heard their words my methods changed because my understanding changed. I came to the North with rather grandiose ideas about what I would find; my head packed full of Cultural Studies theory and two years worth of library reading, I thought I knew what I was going to get when I sat down for my first interview. I couldn’t have been more mistaken.

I have therefore allowed the research to guide my results; what you have before you is my interpretation of what I was told and what I saw in Iqaluit, Nunavut. The important findings, the facts and information and conclusions, in

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many ways may seem simple—they’re not. By drawing together disparate narratives I attempt to illuminate the complexities I found in Iqaluit. Nothing in this thesis will be news to many people in the North. They already understand these issues because they live them every day. Instead, this thesis is directed primarily towards Southern Canadians who will interact with the North, either as researchers, workers or policy makers. It can be read as a guide to how to do this better; there is no excuse to continue to make the mistakes of the past. To paraphrase Albert Einstein, we cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them. If we listen to the North, if we pay attention to what Northern people are telling us, we can develop as a whole nation.

I did not come to this project with nothing to contribute; there are things I know and skills I have that can be of use in the North. In my real life, I’m a journalist; I’ve spent years learning how to talk to people and more importantly, learning how to listen. My time in the North was spent listening or, as one of my supervisors put it, ‘hanging out’. Methodologically, this thesis is the product of what my conclusion concludes: what is needed is a symbiotic joining of Southern and Northern expertise to help develop Canada as a whole. Surprisingly, what started out, as a piece of work that was initially critical of Canadian nationalism became a rather nationalistic thesis. But it’s a different kind of nationalism, a nationalism for 2016 that involves a reframing of the stories we tell ourselves, an opening up of the historical narrative, to redefine who Canadians are as a people to include the multitude of stories and peoples that make up Canada today. This is perhaps influenced by my own experience of my positionality within my country and the world: I spent the five
years prior to beginning my MA work as a journalist in Doha, Qatar. While abroad, I began to see my country the way others see it, as well as gaining an understanding of my own privilege that had up until then just been part of the background. Upon returning to Canada, however, I have felt profoundly unsettled: I experience my country as both part of it, and an outsider. I think being unsettled is of immense importance, and my work reflects a drive to unsettle how Canadians—Northern, Southern, whatever—understand this country. I have also chosen a more narrative style to reflect the content of my research as well; the narrative style allows for the interconnectivity of ideas and sources that make up the fabric of the reality of the North. So this thesis is not directed at people living in the North. Instead, it can best be described as a guide to Southern people on how not to be awful when we deal with the North.

In this study I follow the Ethical Principles for the Conduct of Research in the North created by the Association of Canadian Universities for Northern Studies. After receiving clearance from the General Research Ethics Board (GREB)\textsuperscript{12} at Queen’s, I obtained a Social Sciences and Traditional Knowledge Research license from the Nunavut Research Institute to conduct research in Iqaluit.\textsuperscript{13} The data was collected through three streams: reports and scientific data relating to the case study, documents and literature review, and interviews. My interview participants were selected through snowball sampling; one person led to another. They are named, and their quotes appear as untouched and complete as I can make them:

\textsuperscript{12} See Appendix D.
\textsuperscript{13} See Appendix E.
over and over again in the North I heard that people in the North need a voice—they need to have their voices heard. But also, over and over again, that they don’t need someone else to speak for them—they are perfectly capable of speaking for themselves, thank you very much. I’ve tried my best to allow my participants to do that. Not having anyone be anonymous was also an active choice; although most academic work seems to prefer anonymity so as to protect sources from harm, in this case, that anonymity seems to be causing harm. As Mayor Madeleine Redfern told me, she’s not just ‘an Inuk woman’—she’s Madeleine. Her words are her own. Removing the subjectivity of a person and the ownership of their words has helped, I believe, to create this orientalized and easily dismissed idea about Indigenous populations and I want no part of it. My sources are named, because they are their words.

About a week into my research I realized that I had yet to interview, on the record, any Inuit participants. This was interesting, as I had done many of the ‘easy’ interviews—the people in positions of authority who technically were ‘supposed’ to talk to me. None of them happened to be Inuit and that in itself is telling. I was then faced with a dilemma: did I target Inuk participants, privileging their information and knowledge over the information and knowledge I could get from other Northerners who didn’t happen to be Inuit, or was that just reproducing a racist colonial system in new clothes? In many ways, academic strategies for including Indigenous voices in academic and professional work mirrors what Chris Rock described, in his monologue opening the 2016 Oscars, as ‘sorority racist’. He was talking about the racism produced in Hollywood by nice, liberal white people—the
kind of racism that comes not from a negative place but from a ham-fisted mishandling of our own privileged positionality. Would racially profiling my interview subjects help or harm? In the end, I bluntly asked this question of Ellen Hamilton; she laughed and introduced me to people who could help me.

Once I had made a bit of headway, I realized this topic, as all issues in the North, was much bigger than expected: I could have spent a year just hanging out in Iqaluit, talking to people, digging deeper and finding out more. Whether methodological or not, disclosing my positionality as a researcher and a person became crucial to making connections (and thus getting better interviews). I was honest about my status as, as one source jokingly put it, ‘a stupid white girl’. I was vocally self-reflexive about my concerns about how to represent and write about this community that was not my own. And through this process I stumbled across an ethical dilemma: while GREB and the academy does an excellent job of making sure I am ethical while conducting my interviews, providing transcripts and being aware of potential harm to my sources, during the analysis phase we, as an institution, fall flat. I am ethically able to take the words and experiences of those from the North and interpret them however I like. I was not comfortable with this and part of my research rationale became providing my final conclusions—my completed thesis prior to defence—to my interview participants, so they could ensure that I hadn’t just quoted them accurately but that the way I analyzed those quotations and drew conclusions from them accurately reflects the lived experience of the North. I am not from that community. I can’t fully understand that culture. But I can do my best.

This is the result.
Chapter 2

Photo by Shawn Inuksuk
2.1 Where are we going and why are we in this hand basket?

I’m sitting at my computer and I’ve just drowned: again. I’m playing
The Department of Canadian Heritage’s video game Journey into the Arctic. As part of this year’s commemoration of the Franklin expedition to find the Northwest Passage, it is a sleek pick-your-own-adventure game hosted on YouTube: you watch a video, it presents you with an option and you see if you die.

But it’s so much more than that. Journey into the Arctic is really part of a larger trend of claiming the Arctic as Canadian and establishing Canadian identity as intrinsically tied to the North—otherwise why bother spending an as yet undisclosed amount of money to get Canadians to pretend to be a sailor on one of Franklin’s two ships? What it does is illustrate not just that particular moment in history but also the underlying ideological framework inherent in the historical understanding of Canada’s Arctic, both at the time of Franklin and today: the doctrine of Terra Nullius. Terra Nullius is a broad concept with faceted definitions. I defer to Boyce Richardson, who in his work People Of Terra Nullius: Betrayal and Rebirth in Aboriginal Canada, defines Terra Nullius as “a land that is empty of people.” This was a European legal concept used upon first contact in North America to “justify their claim to own all the land, pretending that no one else had

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15 Canadian Heritage says the cost of the game will be reported in the 2015-16 Annual Report on Government of Canada Advertising Activities, which probably won’t be available until 2017.
16 Boyce Richardson, People of Terra Nullius: Betrayal and Rebirth in Aboriginal Canada (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1993), pvii.
been here first.” It’s easy to assume this attitude was a colonial product—the effect of the kind of colonizing projects of a relatively recent period in history. However, the sense of the Arctic as an empty space goes back much farther than that.

Environmental journalist Marla Cone points to ancient maps as evidence that historically, the North was literally the end of the world: “Ancient world maps didn’t even bother to recognize the Arctic. At the time of the fall of the Roman Empire, it was marked as uninhabitable, too cold to be civilized, and labeled ‘terra incognita,’ unknown land, as late as the 1600s.”

Never mind these were wide spread, general-knowledge assumptions.

Almost as soon as printing began, it included accounts of the ‘New World’ beyond Western Europe as a mythical land. Travel literature from the 16th century on included vivid descriptions, both in writing and in pictures, of “trumpet-blowing apes, singing feathered monkeys, giants and wild men.” This created an image not just of a territory unlike any experienced in Europe, but also of the intrepid explorers who dared to brave the journey. Being constructed was both the myth of the territory and the ‘discoverers’ themselves. That is how North America and the European explorers who ‘discovered’ it were understood: through this lens of spectacular fantasy.

But this is ignoring the reality of the space. Indigenous peoples have occupied the Arctic since time out of mind and continue to do so today. Numerous sources

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17 Richardson, *People of Terra Nullius*, pvii.
reference Inuit habitation of the Canadian Arctic, including Cone, who writes: “A civilization has thrived there for five thousand years, perhaps much longer . . . an estimated half a million indigenous people now inhabit the circumpolar North, and their population is steadily growing.” There is ample evidence, both oral and archaeological, for long-term habitation of the Arctic. In fact, it’s even believed to have been the site of one of the first contacts, between Viking civilizations and Indigenous populations. The concept of the New World as uninhabited isn’t new; as demonstrated it is as old as when these landmasses were first glimpsed. However, it is this doctrine of empty spaces, devoid of people that created the current conditions in the Canadian Arctic which led to the dump fire in 2014. This chapter will illustrate how this doctrine was established in the North and Northern Canada specifically, and how the tentacles of this theory continue to spread into the present day.

The first thing that must be understood is that the doctrine of Terra Nullius is not simply claiming that there are no people in a designated landmass; it’s claiming that there are no people of value. As Richardson explains, “The entire history of Europeans in North America has been built on the assumption that we are superior to the people who were here when we arrived.” This is an elementary concept, embedded so deeply into most conquering mythologies that it’s impossible to ignore yet hard to culturally pinpoint. In terms of Canada’s Aboriginal peoples, however, it can be seen in the way they were described at the time, with language that pushes these cultures towards the animalistic, as opposed to the enlightened. The

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20 Cone, Silent Snow, 6-7.
21 Richardson, People of Terra Nullius, 27-29.
worldviews and knowledge of the existing populations in Canada upon ‘discovery’ were denigrated to a population that must be saved, at all costs, and in fact from their own ignorance. As Richardson explains, this started as early as 1496, when John Cabot was commissioned by Henry VII of England to possess the lands of “heathens and infidels”22 across the Atlantic.

It’s a historical outlook that’s hard to shake; you can see this orientalising framework applied in elementary school curriculums, which, if I recall Grade 5 correctly, spent a bit of time talking about tepees and Louis Riel before baking some bannock and moving on. In my Southern Ontario Public School there didn’t seem a need to study Indigenous cultures in any way that didn’t relegate them to a primitive spectacle that had long since been surpassed by Canadian and Western culture. To such an extent that, pedagogically, how these topics were presented at least in the 1990s when I was a student, more closely resembled how ancient cultures like the Egyptians were presented; their knowledge, spirituality and beliefs not given the same cultural significance as, for example, Christian creation myths. It wasn’t just my Grade 5 class however; as Richardson points out, in 1991 “Chief Justice Allan McEachern of the British Columbia Supreme Court, after an exhaustive inquiry, concluded that before Columbus the Aboriginal nations were barbarous, primitive, and unequal to any nation of Europeans.”23

This, however, doesn’t necessarily jive with modern conceptions of identity; particularly in Canada, where many Canadians prefer to see our history as one of

22 Richardson, People of Terra Nullius, 27-29.
23 IBID, 27-29.
peace keeping, diversity and equality. Canada was the destination of the Underground Railway; a Canadian wrote the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights; and numerous Canadian Heritage Minutes help highlight this idea of Canada and Canadians as a people who could not possibly be complicit to the crimes of colonialism, even as we exist as a member of the commonwealth. This is perhaps part of the paradox itself; Canadians are at once both colonizers of the territory and people now included in Canada and the colonized, as subjects to the British Crown, without even our own Charter of Rights and Freedoms until 1982, or our own flag until 1964. Rulings like the above in 1991 help Canadians through these intellectual summersaults, by creating justifications for the past. As Richardson puts it: “One of the first ideas was that North America, legally speaking, was vacant territory, terra nullius, to which Europeans could freely take title.”\(^{24}\) If the land was free, it meant there was no wrong doing, and nothing to feel guilty or squeamish about as we paint our national historical narrative.

In some ways, perhaps the United States is better prepared for this debate; with a national identity defined by revolution, as opposed to confederation, ‘winning’ over Indigenous inhabitants is an easier pill to swallow. Canadians don’t, perhaps, want to win—instead, our national identity is built on this idea that no one ever loses in our democracy. In Canada, everyone gets a participation ribbon—at least that’s what we tell ourselves. This discomfort with the changing narrative can possibly be best summed up by popular culture, in this case, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. As Spike says in a Thanksgiving-themed episode: “You won, all right? You

\(^{24}\) Richardson, *People of Terra Nullius*, 27-29.
came in and you killed them and you took their land. That’s what conquering nations do. That’s what Caesar did, and he’s not going around saying, ‘I came, I conquered, I felt really bad about it.’ The history of the world is not people making friends. You had better weapons, and you massacred them, end of story.”

The fact that it’s something that can be addressed in the pop culture forum on either side of the border proves the cultural pervasiveness of this changing narrative of triumphant nationalism with only justified bad sides. The idea of ‘conquering’ is not one that sits well with modern audiences and it’s foolish to imagine that it didn’t have the same effect on the generations actually doing the conquering. Terra Nullius neatly circumvented this sticky ethical territory by providing an empty justification.

Whatever the nation-building taking place, however, Terra Nullius also reframes the idea of sovereignty, placing it less on an intellectual confederation—agreement, as when the Canadian provinces joined together—and instead on simply planting a flag. If the land was empty, or at least empty of anyone viewed as equals, then it could be ‘discovered.’ After all, you never hear stories about when the French for example ‘discovered’ Germany—they didn’t simply turn around one day and were surprised by what was touching them. Instead, they related to each other as sovereign equals, a distinction rarely afforded the Aboriginal peoples of North America. Instead, European rights to a territory were derived, as Richardson explains, from ‘discovery’ and could be claimed by symbolic acts, from naming

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territories, “or from a symbolic act (such as planting a cross or flag), or from effective occupation (such as creation of settlements).” This is a concept still at play today—look no further than the flag-swapping on Hans Island. It’s been part of Inuit hunting areas since at least the 14th century, but it’s claimed today by both Canada and Denmark, who regularly swap out flags (always leaving either a bottle of Danish schnapps or Canadian whisky) on the island claiming it for one nation or the other. This debate even erupted in a “Google War,” a series of online advertisements on Google that declared either Canadian or Danish sovereignty over the territory. The point: this may have evolved past simply adding names on a map or planting a flag to the virtual terrain of advertising and hash tags to claim popular support, but the theory at play is the same, from one century to the next.

Franklin was very good at this, because really he was a product of his times. His final famous expedition was actually not his first to take a turn for the worst. In 1819, he led an expedition overland from Hudson Bay to the mouth of the Coppermine River. By 1822, he had lost over half the men in his party, most from starvation. As Peter Pigott writes, “Franklin seems to have given no thought to adequate food provisioning and lost eleven of the twenty men to scurvy and starvation, his party reduced to making soup from their boots.” This of course

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26 For example, the names of islands, bays and inlets scattered around the Arctic. Richardson, *People of Terra Nullius*, 29.
gave rise to Franklin being known in the popular press as “the man who ate his boots.”

But how is that possible? There were people living in the Arctic: in fact, the recent discovery of one of Franklin’s doomed ships, the HMS Erebus by Parks Canada was made possible through “the use of both state-of-the-art technology and 19th-century Inuit oral testimony.” And Franklin’s own accounts mention that prior to chowing down on his footwear, he had encountered Aboriginal peoples on his way to the Coppermine River, however “they were only intent on looting his few remaining supplies and he named the meeting place “Pillage Point” to mark that.”

By the time he arrived in the Arctic for his final expedition, he was known for a policy of avoiding Aboriginal inhabitants.

Which was not at all surprising or odd to his compatriots. Much as Richardson (and Joss Whedon) discuss, “On arriving as settlers, our forebears had to invent language capable of describing what they were doing so that they wouldn’t feel bad about it. The Aboriginal inhabitants had to be demonized in the minds of all right-thinking men and women.” Today, this may not be apparent in the same stark, dehumanizing language as seen in accounts of the New World, or even Franklin’s journeys and interactions with the Inuit, but this same idea—that the past has to be reframed in a way that it doesn’t harm the comfortable historical narrative Southern Canadians have grown accustomed to—is still at play.

30 Pigott, From Far and Wide, 24.
32 Pigott, From Far and Wide, 24.
33 Richardson, People of Terra Nullius, 27.
As I click through *Journey to the Arctic*, after two or three videos I have yet to see any faces that aren’t white. At the same time, the over-dramatic voiceover insists that “you have been chosen to lead a mission to find the fabled Northwest Passage,” as if the passage is a wardrobe to Narnia, while describing the very real Arctic as “The labyrinth of the Arctic Archipelago.”34 The Arctic is painted as empty wilderness, and I’m beginning to suspect that’s the story line that’s going to hold true for the duration. And then: Inuit! They're cartoons, waving enthusiastically from the ice, bundled up on parkas, their sled dogs panting at their feet. You have the choice to either welcome them onto the ship, or send them away. My first time playing through, I make my choices with the full knowledge that saying ‘no’ to the Inuit is a sure way to end up eating my Birkenstocks, so I welcome them aboard. We exchange trinkets for country food and smiles all around. At no point is the history of unequal trade addressed, or the orientalized view of Aboriginal peoples happy to see Europeans even raised. The second time around, I follow Franklin’s lead and deny them access to the ship. Promptly I’m faced with narration telling me that “scurvy strikes. Maybe the Inuit could have helped.”35 You don’t say.

The next round of choices also muddles the history; you have the choice to either use European sleds to explore, or to follow the Inuit’s advice and use dog sleds. If you use European sleds, as Franklin did, you’re informed that many are injured and you are unable to make any significant discoveries. This jives with history: when Franklin did send out expeditions, either as exploration or in a

35 IBID.
desperate attempt to find help, his men slowly died, leaving a gruesome bone trail behind them. Rescue missions in years to come would find this trail, and conclude that not only had they starved, but they may have in fact resorted to cannibalism along the way. Inuit accounts of these marches across the land mass tell tales of emaciated, smelly, bearded humans suffering from scurvy struggling across the ice and given a very wide berth by the suitably disturbed Indigenous population. These accounts paint the ‘savages’ of the New World not as the Inuit, but as the unprepared Southerners, turned into physical monsters by their own hubris.

But if you pretend for a second you’re not part of the Franklin expedition, but rather Edward Parry, who mounted three expeditions to the North American Arctic between 1821 and 1825, things go differently. Parry was different because he actually adapted to Northern conditions by using Inuit knowledge, including sleds, kayaks and country food. But he didn’t just add Inuit knowledge to his repertoire: when need be, he chose Inuit ways over Southern. As Pigott mentions, this was as simple as what he wore: “his men wore fur-lined jackets rather than Portsmouth issue.”36 In Journey to the Arctic, if you follow the Inuit advice and use Indigenous technology, your friendly narrator opines, “Your mission is a great success! The knowledge you bring back will help others and eventually lead to the discovery of the Northwest Passage.” The knowledge however wasn’t about alternative world views or ways of living: the knowledge referred to is only about getting through the Arctic and accessing the resources within it. As the sun rises majestically behind your dramatic ships as they venture home, the narration continues: “You have

36 Pigott, From Far and Wide, 23.
contributed to a great legacy of Arctic Discovery and helped to define one of our most valuable treasures: the great Canadian North."

This statement encapsulates so much of what is wrong with Southern understandings and interpretations of the North. It frames the historical narrative as a celebrated voyage of discovery, a triumph of exploration, instead of an invasion. It privileges the viewpoint of the European or Southern explorers coming to the North, valorizing their experience and allowing the reader, viewer or in this case player to comfortably associate themselves with that image. And what an image: it’s a heroic, virtuous quest of mythic proportions, these tales of Arctic exploration, encapsulating values of knowledge gathering and scientific research as well as firmly planting the flag that the North is Canadian territory and always has been.

After, all, as discussed earlier, these explorers planted the flag for British—and later Canadian—sovereignty, either literally with actual flags or by naming the territories they ‘discovered’ on the maps they made. And that is where the second part of the statement underwrites a fundamental worldview, that the land itself was there for the taking and could be taken. This statement and worldview understands the landmass that would become Nunavut as something that could be owned; as territory that could be a ‘treasure’ to be claimed under Franklin and exploited today. It reinforces the idea of a Terra Nullius, a land without someone who owned that ‘treasure’ first, whose occupation of the territory would seem to declare sovereignty for the Inuit population. After all, if a flag could make an island a part of the British Empire, wouldn’t centuries of occupation logically do the same thing? To create a

\[37 \text{“Journey into the Arctic,” last modified July 3, 2015, accessed April 10, 2016.}\]
loop hole in the very rules that would be enforced to declare Canadian sovereignty over the territory to other nations, what would become Nunavut had to be an empty land, just waiting to be discovered—if it wasn’t, then Canadian nationalism is built on a very shaky foundation of injustice and inequality. This thesis will analyze these issues in greater detail. This first Chapter will specifically address how the doctrine of Terra Nullius established the foundation of industrial exploitation in the North, and how that, combined with the continuing application of Terra Nullius in several new guises, created the conditions for the dump fire in 2014.

2.2 What is Terra Nullius?

The North has always been a huge part of Canadian identity; it shapes our visualizations of our identities: from the National Anthem that declares Canada is the “true North, strong and free” to the slogan for the last Winter Olympics, telling the world that “We are Winter,” the idea of a Northern landscape has always been part of our national identity as Canadians. The tundra comprises one-fifth of the landmass that makes up Canada, but, as Thomas Berger writes, “most of us who have never seen it, and know of it simply as a land without trees, sometimes call it “the barrens.”38 When Berger released his Report of the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry in 1977, it caused a ripple of shock waves through the national consciousness. As the cover blurb on my copy states, it became “The controversial best seller that changed the attitudes of Canadians towards native land claims and

38 Berger, Northern Frontier, Northern Homeland, 34.
altered the future of the North.” The crucial distinction is that his readers, for the most part, had never seen the North. They understood it as ‘the barrens’ because that was the image presented, when an image was presented at all. In many ways the absence of representation has been just as powerful in painting the Canadian Arctic as empty as actual images of vast empty tundra.

Like many explorers before him, Berger was struck by the stark beauty of the Northern frontier he encountered. And he didn’t even go as far North as modern day Iqaluit. It’s hard to say if he could have imagined that just over 20 years later a chunk of the North would become Nunavut, the first major change to Canada’s political map in 50 years when it became Canada’s northernmost territory in 1999.

Flying into Nunavut, it is the most breathtakingly beautiful place I’ve ever been. Breathtaking because it literally does that: the air is so clean it hurts to breath. The inside of my nose freezes shut. Flying in there’s no perspective: the endless white snow and ice, the tundra, bubbling in hills and valleys beneath the plane that looks like a puffed up duvet or meringue that didn’t quite peak. There are no trees or buildings or people or fields to give it definition; it’s not flat the way the rest of Canada is flat, it’s not green and parceled into fields and cities and towns bisected by highways and roads and crosswalks. It’s just endless rolling hills that look like nothing from above but as you descend and descend you realize those aren’t hills or puffs in the duvet, they’re mountains and valleys. You can’t tell where the sea ends and the land begins; ice and rock melt into each other. It’s easy to lapse into literary hyperbole here. The wilderness of the place—even in November 2015—is stark. The

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39 Berger, *Northern Frontier, Northern Homeland*, cover.
tundra is right there, just on the other side of the hill, just across the road. Walk five minutes and you’re out of town. It feels like if you walk too far you really will be beyond the reach of civilization; not in the way we have in the South, where we flee civilization for manicured parks where there’s a port-a-potty and somewhere to charge our cellphones every ten minutes, but real wilderness, wilderness that can hurt you and swallow you whole. Iqaluit feels self contained, like an oasis in the middle of a very real wilderness that makes those unaccustomed (in this case, me), feel small.

Considering Nunavut comprises most of the Canadian Arctic Archipelago, you’d think Southerners would know more about it. One of the first written accounts of the territory appears in the accounts of Martin Frobisher from 1576, who gave his name to what is now Iqaluit, formerly called Frobisher Bay. When he returned, “Queen Elizabeth I presciently named the area he had mapped “Meta Incognita” (“of limits unknown”) Peninsula.” This wasn’t a new idea: the New World had been depicted as empty or devoid of civilization since first contact. Why should the North be any different? In fact, in the Northern landscape, with its vast land mass and comparatively small population, one could almost defend the early explorers for missing the local inhabitants.

Except, of course, they didn’t: Frobisher kidnapped locals to bring them back as display items in court. But, then again, Terra Nullius never really meant ‘empty’ in the literal sense. It’s too easy to say that the doctrine of Terra Nullius was literally

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40 Pigott, From Far and Wide, 19.
41 IBID, 19.
a ‘whoops, guess we didn’t see you there, our bad’ moment in colonial history.

Instead, it was the bureaucratic and conceptual removal of personhood, rendering the land inhabited only by animals—by an Indigenous ‘other’ that didn’t count in terms of payment, trade, or governance, any more than the squirrels, seals and polar bears would. This was a clashing of worldviews and understandings of place within the universe, with the European conceptualizations being given pride of place. The Indigenous populations being encountered were not seen as sovereign nations; John English, in his work *Politics, People and the Arctic Council*, references Pope Alexander VI’s papal bull immediately after Columbus’s first voyage, which “decreed that Christians had a right to rule over heathen savages.”

This right was founded on the idea that the kind of settlement and civilization encountered didn’t match up with what European worldviews saw as civilization, from political and social structure to, in the Arctic several hundred years later, physical settlements.

But, there were of course people who were doing something with the territory. As mentioned previously, the Canadian North has been inhabited for thousands of years. The Thule culture displaced the Dorset and while the populations were never large by European standards, they were not only able to survive in the Arctic but thrive, in large part because they lived in small, highly mobile communities. And they were everywhere. From archaeological evidence as well as oral history, it’s clear the Thule populations extended over almost all the

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43 This language around what makes a town and what makes a camp is even included in the Nunavut Lands Claim Agreement, and will be discussed in larger detail later in this thesis.
islands of the Arctic Archipelago, as far east as the Gulf of St. Lawrence and Newfoundland and that “the Inuit of today are their direct descendants.”

Today, Nunavut has a population of approximately 31,900. Although demographics are changing, especially in Iqaluit, this includes a large proportion of Inuit, spread across Inuit Nunavut, or Inuit Homeland. About 45,000 Inuit call the Canadian Arctic Home, which is “less than one-third of 1 percent of the Canadian population—spread across 53 communities.”

The North was quickly realized to be outside the habitation ability of Europeans: here were not the verdant soil or lush forests of the rest of the continent. There were resources to be extracted, but for the time being, there really wasn’t an impetus to do much with the area that would become Nunavut. Because the North never attracted settlers, it “almost always was a place through which, or by which, other European goals were achieved—a passage to the riches of the East or a place to prove manliness and courage. It became and remained, for Europe on the eve of its world empire, a sideshow.”

In fact, for a large chunk of the last century, the North hasn’t been conceptualized as anything at all. As English explains, Sir John Barrow, who originated Franklin’s voyages among others, was critical of the territories and said it was “silly” to claim these spaces “when the object is worthless . . . a barren, uninhabited country, covered in ice and snow, the only subjects of His Majesty in

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44 Berger, Northern Frontier, Northern Homeland, 42.
45 Jennifer Parks, Canada’s Arctic Sovereignty: Resources, Climate and Conflict. (Edmonton: Canadian Currents, 2010), 182.
46 English, Ice and Water, 27.
this newly-acquired dominion consisting of half-starved bears, deer, foxes, white hares and such other creatures as are commonly met with in these regions of the globe." Barrow’s statement begs the question: why claim it at all? Planting a flag for King and country in the Arctic wasn’t about claiming resources or space for settlement. It was about claiming it so no one else could. The value wasn’t in the land, it was in the conception of value, constructed by external desires, not the people actually occupying the territory. It was the epitome of Terra Nullius: the entire point was an empty space. An empty space into which we could build a national identity, a distinct culture from our colonial forbears. The emptiness of the North allowed for identity construction in the South, and the beginning of Canadian Nationalism.

2.3 Go North, Young Man

Once Frobisher got that particular train rolling, others were quick to follow. For the next several centuries, the North became a place for brave white men to test their mettle: it was a romantic, adventurous place, particularly for stern Victorians, to test out their manhood and their developing technology, which “established the Arctic as a place for heroes and for experiences beyond the imagination of those at home.” This was an extension of those medieval fantasies of what the New World was like, but this time with pictures. This last part is important as here we can see the foundation of the importance of public interest in the Arctic in terms of exploration.

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47 English, *Ice and Water*, 47.
48 IBID, 31.
and sovereignty—this will be discussed as it applies to today in later sections. In this earlier period however it’s important to point out that Arctic exploration happened at the same time as the popularity of newspapers, particularly illustrated editions, was on the rise “whose artists (before the advent of photography) drew fanciful images of what their naval explorers encountered — icebergs the size of cathedrals, ferocious giant polar bears, ships locked fast into the ice, and the elusive Eskimaux.”

Exploration also had a practical application: the first military men to arrive in the Canadian Arctic were the British. In the years following the end of the Napoleonic Wars, the British found themselves with a surplus of men and machinery, causing trouble at home. That energy had to be put somewhere before it ripped the home country apart. The North seemed like as good a place as any. As Pigott explains: “In lieu of fighting a war, exploration was an alternative — ships and crews were dispatched on what were called “Discovery Service” in the name of sovereignty, survey, and science.”

It also fit a change in sensibility. This same period saw the upswing of social movements, including abolitionism, and other social changes that would directly impact how old-school colonialism could be portrayed. At the same time, Europeans, especially the British, were tired after numerous wars both at home and abroad. Where better to wash themselves metaphorically clean than in the last ‘pristine’ place on earth?

50 IBID, 15.
51 IBID, 15.
As Pigott explains:

Venturing into the “frozen regions” was also far more enlightened than in previous centuries of exploration. The institution of slavery had just been abolished throughout the British Empire in 1834 and the national conscience could be salved as this time there were no black or brown races to exploit or enslave. Nor were there any locals to kidnap and “Christianize.” The Spanish had tainted their exploration of the New World with greed for precious metals, the destruction of native civilizations, and religious intolerance. Entering the last pristine place left in the world, the British polar explorer — devoid of imperial agenda — felt ennobled. Here he was pitted against nature itself, with a backdrop under Arctic skies where the spectral aurora borealis haunted him.52

As the rest of the world was mapped, as ancient civilizations were discovered and became old hat, the North in the popular imagination took on the mythic proportions of an uncharted world, some place new to discover, the medieval ideal of a monstrous new land reborn. The quest for the Northwest Passage took on almost Arthurian cultural significance: it played well in the penny press, and it captured the imagination to the point that governments even offered monetary rewards for the first to find it. But it was still empty. Building upon historic narratives of the New World, the North and what would become Nunavut were

52 Pigott, From Far and Wide, 18.
presented as this Arctic vastness, devoid of life, unable to sustain humanity. In fact, that was part of the appeal: this was a rugged territory where only the strong would survive.

The North was a testing ground, not just for new technology but for European dominance. If Europeans could venture into this last uncharted territory, the last ‘primordial’ area on the planet and subdue it, they, and their technology, would prove once and for all their innate superiority. This was a myth that would make the century’s changes easier to swallow. Even as abolitionism and colonial rebellion began to simmer in the colonies, here was a chance for European (a.k.a. ‘white’) superiority to be established, indisputably, once and for all, in a ‘clean’ way devoid of the messy bloodshed of war, the slave trade, or the further subjugation of colonies. Instead, this was a test of man against nature: if European might and resilience combined with superior technology could triumph, the British could declare on an intellectual level that they were truly the most evolved on the planet: after all, if they weren’t, why hadn’t anyone else conquered the Arctic?

And that, of course, was the other driving force in the Arctic exploration: claiming the territory. Much like a child who licks all the cookies so no one else can have one, the various powers of the world wanted to make sure that they laid claim to the land—even if they, at that point, had no use for it (remember this moment because someone’s going to start licking cookies again in a few hundred years, only this time the gooey centre tastes like petroleum). By 1825, there was no logical economic reason to find the Northwest Passage; a few years later in 1828 the British parliament actually repealed the incentive of £20,000 that had been offered to
encourage Arctic discovery.\textsuperscript{53} This didn’t discourage exploration; by that point, exploration for its own sake had taken on the mythic qualities of virtue needed for the creation of national identity. Arctic exploration provided a way of defining who and what people were, of entertaining and enthraling an increasingly literate public in need of unsullied heroes. And by planting those flags, creating those maps and naming those straights and islands, the British explorers “had laid the foundations for later Canadian sovereignty over the Arctic Archipelago.”\textsuperscript{54}

The Northwest Passage created the boundaries for exploration: it provided the focal point, the centre of the exploratory universe around which all other goals (be they profit, sovereignty or identity) revolved, which continues today. The golden age, however, were the years leading up to the Franklin expedition: this really laid in much of the information that was known about the region, mapping the various straights and inlets. More importantly, it’s the crux upon which our modern day sovereignty seems to be resting: the Franklin expedition is serving as the focal point for today’s popular opinion over who exactly owns what in the Arctic, redefining the expedition, Franklin, and the North as something distinctly Canadian.

\textbf{2.4 Franklin, The Man Who Had Several Very Very Bad Days}

When explorers arrived in the North, they arrived in style: with everything the age of industry could produce. As mentioned before, this was a chance for the Royal Navy to test out new theories and technologies. Expeditions in the Franklin era

\textsuperscript{53} Pigott, \textit{From Far and Wide}, 25.
\textsuperscript{54} English, \textit{Ice and Water}, 47.
included steam power, inflatable rubber boats, various (often unsuccessful) scurvy solutions, screw propellers and more.\textsuperscript{55} The extremes of the Arctic were seen as an ideal proving ground: the expeditions became technological Mary Tyler Moores. If they could make it there, they could make it anywhere.

But it wasn’t just new technology making the journey. Franklin himself was a man not keen to leave behind his home comforts. Between the trip where he ate his boots and before he got lost forever, Franklin made a second overland trip to the Beaufort Sea. George Simpson, a future Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC) governor and one who made several overland trips from Lachine, Quebec, to the Pacific coast himself, wrote at the time that the journey had been: “[b]adly planned and poorly commanded by a man who could walk no more than eight miles a day and needed his three meals” and to whom, “Tea is indispensable (sic).”\textsuperscript{56} But Franklin wasn’t alone: in 1829, John Ross mounted his own privately funded expedition to find the Northwest Passage, bringing the first steam-powered paddle-wheel ship to the Arctic. It didn’t end well: he was forced to abandon his machinery at Lord Mayor’s Bay when it proved useless against the ice.\textsuperscript{57}

And yet, when Franklin came along, people still thought bringing the South with them would be a great idea. His two ships, HMS \textit{Erebus} and HMS \textit{Terror}, were both suited for the Arctic and had been tried in the ice already. However, thus endeth the good planning. Unlike previous expeditions, which tended to hug the coastline for scientific observation (which would have allowed sailors to live off the

\textsuperscript{55} Pigott, \textit{From Far and Wide}, 16.
\textsuperscript{56} IBID, 24.
\textsuperscript{57} IBID, 26.
land if need be, or even communicate with the Indigenous inhabitants), Franklin’s trip was to be “foremost a self contained, self-sufficient deep-sea expedition.” Franklin didn’t bring any special scientific equipment or even winter clothing suitable for the Arctic. As Pigott explains, “this was a naval operation and the clothing on board (like the heavy Victorian silver in the wardroom) was more suited for Portsmouth than the polar sea.”

The ships also included the Sylvester Heating Apparatus, a central heating stove system, and, after the failure of Ross’s paddlewheels versus the ice, the single-screw propeller at the stern of each ship could be lowered and raised. The ships were also equipped with steam engines, co-opted from the railway. This all required a phenomenal amount of coal, to power the engines, heat the ship for at least nine months of the three years the voyage would take, melt snow for water and more. All this equipment—the engines, heating pipes and 200 tons of coal—took up space that could have been used for food. This use of steam would actually be a contributing factor to the ultimate failure of the expedition: trapped in ice, without enough power for the engines, the emaciated, scurvy ridden crew were forced to drag sleds across the ice in an effort to find help.

But having less food, in this case, was actually probably a good thing. While provisioning the expedition, they went with the cheapest bid: which meant they got a noxious stew of the cheapest meat and vegetables available, mixed with bone, hair

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59 IBID, 28.
60 IBID, 28.
61 IBID, 29.
and yard dirt, boiled for the least possible time, which resulted in the final product being contaminated with salmonella and clostridium perfringens. This was sealed in cans which, when found on Beechey Island in 1986, were shown to contain high degrees of arsenic, probably added to the lead to make the cans easier to seal together. Eating it was basically like spinning the wheel of what was going to kill you today, a situation which didn’t improve as the cans were frozen and thawed repeatedly over the course of the multi-year journey.

As Pigott writes, “the technological innovations that were meant to push the two ships through the ice were the very reasons they failed.” 62 No scientific surveys or discoveries reached London, the makeshift locomotive engines warped and rusted, and the fake keels meant to cut through the ice added too much weight. And, as mentioned before, the coal—used for power, heat and cooking—simply ran out. This attempt to bring the South to the North could only, as Pigott continues, end in tears:

The attempt to carry a whole community in miniature, cocooned from the local environment, resulted in the survival of not one member of that community. . . The preservation of service discipline resulted in the survivors eating the flesh of their comrades. . . The Franklin expedition proved that reliance on the latest technology, massive expenditure from the public purse,

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62 Pigott, From Far and Wide, 40.
and overconfidence by its creator (Barrow), who knew nothing of the Arctic, could only lead to disaster.63

But wait, we ask, why didn’t he just... you know... pull over and ask for help? There are Inuit accounts of watching the ships pass, as well as stories of those emaciated teams dragging themselves across the ice; in fact, the recent discovery of remnants of the expedition happened in large part because of these Inuit stories passed down through the generations. And the Inuit were not starving. They did not have scurvy. Nor were they dying of dysentery in puddles of their own filth because they were living on tainted meat. They also weren’t relying on massive quantities of coal to keep them warm and freezing in the dark holds of ships when that ran out. So why didn’t Franklin—or for that matter, basically any other expedition—just ask them what they knew? After Franklin’s experience in 1826 “with the “Esquimaux” who robbed him, all contact with them must have been rebuffed.”64 Southern technology alone wasn’t the death sentence; it was the intractable belief that nothing of value could be found within Inuit Traditional Knowledge.

This was a combo platter of Terra Nullius and Western superiority that ended in disgusting and needless death. Those attitudes that the land was ‘empty’ were reproduced in the belief that the Indigenous population could not possibly have anything of value to offer the superior Europeans: their technology would win the day and there was no need of help from the Indigenous population. It wasn’t

63 Pigott, From Far and Wide, 40.
64 IBID, 36.
just pride—it was a deep belief that the Inuit would have nothing to contribute. It wasn’t a choice over one knowledge or another; it was the idea that the Inuit, much like their territory, were empty. Franklin, and the explorers with him, of course chose poorly. Marla Cone doesn’t mince words when she describes the situation: “A century ago, hundreds of white polar explorers tried to reach the North Pole and the only ones who managed to survive were those who abandoned their modern ways and relied on the know-how of Arctic inhabitants.”

This shows that we cannot simply reproduce the South, whether in technology or ideology, in the North and hope it’s going to work out. The system, the culture, the way of life and the North itself will not allow that, and when it has been attempted, very bad things happen. The belief that reproduction of the South in the North is an option has inspired, as Berger writes, “our polices towards the people of the North, which in turn inspires our attitudes towards the Northern environment.” For Franklin, it was starving to death, huddled and freezing in a dark ship. For Iqaluit in 2014, it was watching the product of the assumption of Southern consumer-driven lifestyles burn. The takeaway point from this period of history shouldn’t be that Franklin and his ilk were adventurous explorers paving the way for Canadian idealism: it should be that “the old stories of the taming of the frontier, of the triumph of Western technology, cannot be repeated there without immense danger, for our experience in the temperate zone does not apply to the

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65 Cone, *Silent Snow*, 2
Arctic.”

But that doesn’t make for quite the same triumphant video game narrative.

2.5 What Terra Nullius Did: from Noble Savages to Wretched Indian

There are and were people in the Arctic managing to make a go of it, without the Southern technology frozen in the holds of lost ships and clutched in skeleton hands buried across the ice. As the century progressed the doctrine of Terra Nullius progressed, in the North and throughout the continent. But there were Indigenous populations throughout North America. What to do with them? As Berger put it, the overall consensus was that “it was to be the white man’s mission not only to tame the land and bring it under cultivation, but also to tame the native people and bring them within the pale of civilization.”

It’s a fairly neat PR move if you think about it: if you can’t erase people entirely, by reframing assimilation and cultural genocide as a move towards progress, it not only solves the pesky problem of the people who were already in these territories but also reaffirms European feelings of cultural superiority.

Changing sensibilities wouldn’t allow for outright murder: however, high mortality rates within social engineering projects were not unthinkable, if the end result was elimination of the percentage of Indigenous peoples who refused to fall into the assimilated line. Coupled with this was outright neglect. As Therrien and Neu put it: “Thus while Victorian sensibilities may have precluded direct annihilation, genocide through indifference or a withholding of funds seemed

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68 IBID, 128.
acceptable.” Remember this as this same idea, of social engineering on one hand and neglect on the other, will play a large role in the development of the North.

This idea, that assimilation was the best thing that could happen to the Indigenous population, continued under this new costume. Where it once was used to enable forced removals—while conveniently leaving the choicest bits of territory for the new settlers of course—now it could be used as ethical justification for cultural genocide. In fact, the end of Indigenous cultures was, as Therrien and Neu explain, often “considered an inevitable by-product of civilization, a process by which backward cultures are naturally eliminated through progress—which can’t be stopped.” This was, in effect, social Darwinism on a colonial level; there was no morality attached, but simply the natural progression from uncivilized to civilization. This as I’ve explains repains assimilationist policies not as a negative but rather as a benevolent force, guiding Indigenous cultures towards the inevitable future—allowing those doing the colonizing to sleep at night, in the face of the results of their policies. Because, after all, this makes cultural genocide or elimination “by default, accepted government policy.”

Essentially this means that the needs of the many—the sovereignty of the nation as a whole—not only will naturally eclipse Indigenous cultures but has a moral imperative to do so. Backlash from Aboriginal peoples, thus, works as affirmation of the original idea. For instance, if an Aboriginal group demands status

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69 Therrien and Neu, *Accounting for Genocide*, 105.
70 IBID, 105.
71 IBID, 3.
or protection from this hegemony, as they did after the White Paper,\textsuperscript{72} for example, “they are accused of wanting special treatment and their political identity is debased by the term “special-interest group.”\textsuperscript{73} This is leaning on the idea that Indigenous populations do not have to be dealt with as sovereign entities: in fact, as Richardson discusses, the otherness itself feeds into a logical fallacy loop that gives the colonizer carte blanche. For example, because “civilization is that quality possessed by people with civil government,”\textsuperscript{74} then a people could be termed as ‘civilized’ only when they possessed governance. But wait, we have to read the fine print. As Richardson explains, “civil government is Europe’s kind of government, Indians did not have Europe’s kind of government; therefore Indians were not civilized.”\textsuperscript{75} This is a concept that hasn’t gone away, it’s just gotten sneakier. You only have to listen to a Trump speech to see where it’s hiding. This once again both served as justification for colonization and reinforcement of superiority because “Europeans could not have been doing anything wrong—were in fact performing a noble missions—by
\textsuperscript{72} The White Paper, a.k.a the Statement of the Government of Canada on Indian Policy, was proposed in 1969 and would have abolished the Indian Act, which the Federal Government saw as discriminatory in the granting of special status as ‘Indians.’ By eliminating the legal status of ‘Indian,’ it would hypothetically generate equality and resolve many of the problems faced by Indigenous populations Canada by legally regarding Indigenous people as citizens like any other in Canada. It also proposed to abolish the Department of Indian Affairs and the Reserve system, allowing former Reserve land to become sellable property owned by Aboriginal landholders, and to terminate treaties. Many Aboriginals felt, however, that instead of creating equality, the White Paper was another attempt at cultural assimilation that would actually strip them of the benefits of their status. In 1970 the Federal Government retreated from the recommendations of the White Paper, and it was finally abandoned officially in 1973. On February 23, 2014, the Liberal Party of Canada renounced the White Paper.
\textsuperscript{73} Therrien and Neu, Accounting for Genocide, 3
\textsuperscript{74} Richardson, People of Terra Nullius, 28.
\textsuperscript{75} IBID, 28.
bringing government and civilization to the poor savages.” 76

On a similar logical loop is land use. If the overarching goal of Terra Nullius in Nunavut is enabling industry, particularly extraction industries, it stands to reason that the occupation of that physical space should be justified on the concept that the original inhabitants weren’t using the land—or at very least, using it ‘correctly’. As Berger writes: “Euro-Canadian society has refused to take native culture seriously. European institutions, values and use of land were seen as the basis of culture. Native institutions, values and language were rejected, ignored or misunderstood and—given the native people’s use of the land—the Europeans had no difficulty in supposing that native people possessed no real culture at all.” 77 This is the ultimate erasure: the culture doesn’t exist in the first place.

Because assimilation to Western life ways was conceptualized as a moral good, its opposite—refusal to abandon Indigenous life ways—was a moral ‘bad’. These policies would spawn all sorts of legislation, including the White Paper in the 1960s, that would encourage Indigenous populations to give up their own cultures in favour of Settler culture; the White Paper granted citizenship rights to Indigenous people, but only if they gave up their status (and their claims to treaties etc.). This not only was predicated on a decree of cultural relevance from above, but also indicates an internalizing of this otherness. I encountered the effects of this when, in 2008, I had the opportunity to interview survivors of the residential school in Shubenacadie, Nova Scotia. One man told me a story about how he had been struck

76 Richardson, People of Terra Nullius, 28.
77 Berger, Northern Frontier, Northern Homeland, 22.
with a ruler for looking a white person in the eye: the embedded idea that was physically beaten into these children was that their own culture wasn’t as ‘good’, and that assimilation was something they should strive for in order to survive, that “only by embracing the values, beliefs and habits of another race could they feel that they were living a decent life.”

When I was trying to understand this back in 2008, a friend who grew up on a reserve explained how her grandmother always told her the best thing she could do was marry a white man. Subsequently, maintaining traditional values, languages, land usage and living styles could be conceptualized as fulfilling and in fact creating the negative stereotypes of Indigenous culture we still see today, in depictions of the ‘lazy’ or ‘drunken’ ‘Indian’.

It’s a vicious cycle: essentially, in order to justify cultural assimilation, the assumption wasn’t simply that the culture was inferior: it was that those that participated in and were born of that culture were inherently inferior. And from that basis, it is ideologically impossible to create equality economically. And thus we have ‘The Indian Problem’: a population who was at once envisioned as the ‘noble’ savage, the Rousseau ideal of natural perfection before the corruption of inevitable civilization, a state they both morally and economically could not be allowed to remain in, and the ‘wretched’ Indian, a drain on the rest of society, never part of it, but rather a parasite feeding from a society they refused to join fully through their own intransigence. As D.C. Scott stated in his testimony regarding Bill 14, a bill

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78 Richardson, *People of Terra Nullius*, 61.
including compulsory enfranchisement and the relinquishment of Indian status in return for voting privileges from March 1920: “Our objective is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic, and there is no Indian question, and no Indian Department.”

But what does this mean for the modern day? In many ways, assimilation is something we see through sepia tinted glasses: it’s a remnant of the past, with such blatant racism something you’d cringe about, imagining that it was no longer an active part of day-to-day life. That would be erroneous, especially in the North. The North, in many ways, skipped several of these steps: Northern Canada was basically ignored once the hunt for the Northwest Passage cooled quite literally after Franklin disappeared. There were other concerns, other targets, other things to occupy colonial minds and the North wasn’t even on the radar. There were never any treaties between Canada and the Inuit of Nunavut; that alone should be an indicator of the pervasiveness of the belief in the ideas of Terra Nullius. If it wasn’t directly empty, it wasn’t full enough of people to bother. More importantly, it had no value: the land wasn’t intrinsically valuable, by the settler understanding, as the South was. You couldn’t farm it. There was no need for cities and development as there weren’t hordes of white settlers chomping at the bit to lay claim and build. Was this perhaps one of the reasons why Inuit in other, more Southern, parts of the country, like Quebec, were classed as ‘Indians’ and were under the treaty system, while those farther north were not? While there were spurts of interest—various Gold rushes—as well as intense interest during both World Wars, it wasn’t until the 1950s and the

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Cold War that any major development really happened. Even then, the entirety of the North was still visualized as an empty wasteland with no real value. Assimilation, therefore, had to serve a different master than in the South. In this, Northern assimilation was about economics—as was the South—but with a very distinct aftertaste. And it’s one that still comes as a surprise to people in the South, because, even though Canada is the True North, strong and free . . . the True North is meant to be empty.

When *Northern Frontier, Northern Homeland* was first published, it caused a sensation: it became a best seller, a neat trick for what is essentially a policy report. Berger writes within it that he wanted to convey the ‘truth of the North’ and he’s critical of this imagined idea of what the territory and the people in it. He neatly summarizes many of the complex themes I’ve been addressing:

Caught up in the idea of progress, we sought to replicate in the North life as we know it in the metropolitan centers of North America. For many years our firm belief was that in the Arctic, native people should live as we do, that they should share our values. Their own values we regarded as quaint, of merely anthropological interest. Progress meant absorption and assimilation of the native peoples. Confronted with what we convinced to be the poverty and the backwardness of the Inuit and the Dene . . . we sought to make them over into white people with brown skins.\(^\text{81}\)

\(^{81}\) Berger, *Northern Frontier, Northern Homeland*, 4.
2.6 What Terra Nullius Did: The North is Different

The history of colonialism and assimilation in Canada is complicated, but when dealing with the North, it’s vital to keep one thing if nothing else in mind: the Inuit are different. The Inuit are different, from both Southern Canadians, and from other Indigenous populations. The Inuit of Nunavut were never under the treaty system or the Indian Act in the same way other Indigenous groups in Canada were. The first real treaty with the Inuit in the Eastern Arctic was the 1993 Nunavut Land Claims Agreement, where, and remember this for later because it’s going to get important, “the Inuit explicitly assigned to Canada any sovereign rights they had acquired through those millenniums of use.”

In fact, it’s incorrect to lump Inuit culture in with a blanket ‘Aboriginal’ heading.

Janet Brewster makes me coffee with cinnamon in her kitchen, the giant bay window looking out over Frobisher Bay, while she tries to explain this to me. Her grandfather was Ernie Lyall, the Arctic Man himself: explaining things to ignorant Southerners is something she’s used to. “It’s easier for non-Indigenous societies to look at us as sort of one entity because dealing with us on a nation to nation, government to government basis is too much,” she tells me. “I feel sorry for First Nations because often they’re lumped in together, so you’re Cree, you’re Iroquois,

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you’re Dene whatever, but you’re First Nations. And they’re all distinct from each other.”83

Where do the Inuit fit in all of this? “One of the things that frustrates me about being under that Aboriginal umbrella is that when you look at Indigenous people in Canada, we’re the poor cousins, right? … We get basically the scraps that the First Nations leave at the table,” Brewster tells me. What she means is that Inuit are often ham fistedly rammed into the Aboriginal category: she tells me a story about court proceedings with elder support she attended when her aunt was murdered. “They burn sweet grass, they do all the First Nations kind of stuff,” she says. As for Inuit culture? “They had a seal skin there, which made no sense whatsoever.” When it comes to Aboriginality in Canada in general, and acknowledgment of Inuit culture specifically, it’s complicated.

As has been established, interest in the North in general, and the Baffin region specifically, wasn’t consistent—it came in waves, predicated not on Northern needs but on what was happening in other parts of the world and the country. The fact that Baffin Inuit were never included in the treaty system that governed Southern Indigenous populations is important. As the Qikiqtani Inuit Association found, while collecting testimony for the Qikiqtani Truth Commission (QTC), it meant that it left the Inuit of Iqaluit, and the officials who managed Northern affairs in their territory “in a legal fog where Inuit were sometimes treated as a special responsibility of the Crown in the same manner as First Nations peoples were, and at other times were said to have the same rights and responsibilities as any other

83 Interview with author, November 2015.
citizens." There were no Inuit in the original colonies at Confederation, but the annexation of new territories and the expansion of Canada in 1870 brought in thousands. Official rhetoric couldn’t seem to make up its mind over the next century, suggesting that Inuit in the Northwest Territories, which until 1999 included Nunavut, “were not wards of the Crown, and had the same rights as any other Canadians, but sometimes needed additional management because of their poverty and the fragility of their resources.” This was the prevalent understanding in the beginning of the 19th century, and got even stickier in 1939 when the Supreme Court decided that Inuit in Quebec were ‘Indians’ under federal protection and jurisdiction. But, just a few years later in 1951, amendments to the Indian Act “specifically exempted Inuit from that law.” This meant that, for example, in 1950 Inuit were given the right to vote in Federal Elections, while people living on First Nations reserves, some of them Inuit from Northern Quebec, did not have that right.

In the South, the treaty systems generally assigned Indigenous populations the status of child-like wards of the state. They did not have the same rights as other citizens, and at the same time, the Federal Government had a responsibility to provide for them. This provision was and is a double-edged sword: the territory, supplies etc. provided were often insufficient and at the same time, it created an  

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85 IBID, 43.  
87 IBID, 43.
intellectual segregation from the rest of the Canadian population. Indigenous people in the South were regarded by turn as burdens or exploiters of Canadian good will, and the solution to perpetual government handouts (as the treaty provisions were often understood by the rest of Canada) was assimilation. In fact the infamous White Paper promised citizen rights and other perks should Indigenous populations give up their status as Indigenous—many Aboriginal leaders at the time were critical that this was another form of cultural assimilation, based on the assumption, established as far back as the ‘discovery’ of North America that Indigenous cultures would acquiesce and be subsumed into Western (or in this case Southern) culture. This idea of cultural assimilation is predicated on an underlying idea that they would give up their culture and embrace white, or Western, values.

The North however, is different, in large part because, effectively, the North was ignored until the 1950s. Between the Franklin era and the post-war period, very little attention was paid to the North. There was in many ways, no point. Most Canadians live along the American border; even though the Northwest Territories and the Yukon are over one-third of Canada’s land mass, their population density is low.\(^{88}\) There just didn’t seem to be an economic need to make treaties with the Inuit in Canada’s Arctic. Opposition Leader George Dew probably summed this attitude up best when he stated in 1950: “It is difficult to imagine that the areas occupied by the Eskimos had a substantial land value.”\(^{89}\)

For most of Canadian history, the North was seen as being intellectually

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\(^{89}\) Qikiqtani Inuit Association, “The Official Mind of Canadian Colonialism,” 45.
valuable, as demonstrated, for sovereignty and identity reasons. However the actual products of the communities on the ground in what would become Nunavut weren’t seen as valuable enough to merit national intervention. In the South, while Indigenous groups occupied valuable territory or might get in the way of development, the Inuit of the Baffin region were seen as occupying an empty wasteland. No one else wanted it: so why bother bartering with them for it? The trade that was happening well into this century with the Inuit in what was to become Nunavut were in luxury items like fine furs and, more recently, art work. The problem with these kinds of items however is that supply and demand is unreliable. This both demonstrates and explains the balance between dependence and independence experienced by the people in the region; outside determinations of the value of their contributions and products is constantly in flux, determined by far away people in far away places, but with real, on the ground consequences.

It bears repeating: the Inuit were not consistently deemed to be wards of the Crown. In the 1950s, an era of developing social programs across the country, this was the beginning of reallocating responsibility from the federal level—which status as wards of the Crown would have given them—to the territorial and even the municipal level. Instead of being legally ‘Indians,’ with the responsibility for their needs the obligation of the Federal Government, the Inuit of Nunavut were seen as “an ethnically homogenous rural and isolated population whose needs might be met—or ignored—as they were by lower levels of government in the South.”

91 IBID, 33.
again displays that unequal grey zone. They were given status as citizens, not as wards of the state, an individualization that should have worked towards increased equality, hypothetically at least. That was, after all, one of the driving forces behind the White Paper, to remove a special status that could be understood to be causing a separation that was perpetuating inequality (especially as it was being proposed in an era when the ideas of separate but equal were coming under fire). But at the same time, the Inuit were being lumped together as one heterogeneous mass, with no acknowledgement of the differences in culture, language and identity across a vast Arctic territory. We cannot simply cry ‘racism’ and assume the lack of attention, infrastructure and support was a product of a racist colonial system. Essentially, the argument could be made they were not being ignored because they were Inuit; but that the result of that lack of support was much worse because they were Inuit. They weren’t just an isolated rural population dealing with the issues that come with that: they were a cultural in the middle of radical social change, besieged by assimilation pressures and a rapidly changing world. Much as when the dump lit itself on fire in 2014, the need was far greater than the local ability to cope.\footnote{This will be discussed in greater depth in Chapter 3.} Even today, as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) begin to reshape how Canadians understand our own history and the history of Indigenous peoples across the country, where will the Inuit fit in?

Although administrators, by the 1950s were beginning to focus more on ‘people’ programs, increasingly focusing on social infrastructure and investment for the public good, that doesn’t mean that the tentacles of Terra Nullius and
colonialism just disappeared. These attitudes just had to be reframed and rephrased, especially in the wake of popular understandings of the effects of colonialism that left a bad taste in the public's mouth. One such example is Farley Mowat's *People of the Deer*, published in 1952, which paints a shocking picture of the famine amongst the Ihalmiut in the Keewatin Region. Although the veracity of his work has been debated for decades, it sparked public interest: as celebrated Canadian author Margaret Atwood told the *Toronto Star*, “*People of the Deer* was to the support for increased autonomy among Northern peoples as Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* was to the environmental movement: a wake-up call, the spark that struck the tinder that ignited the fire from which many subsequent generations of writers and activists have lit their torches, often ignorant of where that spark came from in the first place.”93 This meant that administrators now found the expediency of previous policies or lack-there-of in the North didn’t hold political water; they had a new line to walk, now involving a spark of public interest. The reframing meant that assimilation went from a European moral mission to something that was the only option to save Indigenous populations. The public interest meant that Northern administration staff in Ottawa went from just three or four people in the 1920s to more than 300 by the 1960s.94 Their goals vacillated between two extremes: “visions that imagined Inuit, initially, as a primitive people whose way of life should be disturbed as little as possible, but later as vulnerable people who needed to be

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integrated quickly to avoid being crushed by economic development.”

What did that mean effectively? It meant that the Inuit in what would become Nunavut were at once citizens, but under a paternalistic framework. They were both independent and dependent, existing in an intellectual and bureaucratic grey zone that didn’t work for anyone. It was at once too late historically for straight up assimilation, as that didn’t fit with the emerging idea of Canada as an egalitarian and multicultural nation. In contrast to the civil rights struggles occurring at the time in the United States, this was the beginning of the Canadian national myth that we do not have a race problem North of the border. Because Inuit existed in this grey zone—at once officially independent citizens and dependent children in intellectual practice by those actually administering the North—it meant that what was done unofficially lacked a check or balance or any system to correct it. The Qikiqtani Truth Commission found that until 1970, Ottawa “made up its own rules about how to manage its responsibilities towards Inuit.” What that meant was that, even in the case of Supreme Court Decisions, senior officials and their ministers “whether confused, negligent, or simply repelled by the risks of subjecting Inuit to the Indian Act, disregarded much of the Supreme Court decision and swayed between nominal egalitarianism and excessive paternalism.”

The Inuit were granted the status of citizens but not given any of the control over their own territory that should have come with that status; they were still, effectively, if not legally, treated as wards of the state. At the same time, because

96 IBID, 32.
97 IBID, 32.
they were not officially wards of the state, they were not granted even the lip-service access to resources or support the treaty system would have legally entitled them to. There was no short end of the stick; the stick was all short ends. Despite what the legal documents—which repeatedly refer to Inuit as citizens—may indicate, the QTC was told repeatedly by retired officials that “most senior officials lacked faith in Inuit and desired to keep paternalistic structures in place almost indefinitely. Because Inuit lacked either economic or political power, Northern Affairs exercised as complete an authority over them as Indian Affairs did over First Nations peoples.”

This would be a continuing problem as First Nations people in the South began asserting their rights; the Inuit in the North once again found themselves in a tenuous grey zone. As the Qikiqtani Truth Commission found, the sense of Aboriginal rights was imagined to come from the Crown and Parliament, through treaties and legislation. The fact that Aboriginals in Southern Canada had signed away these rights in treaties—even treaties hundreds of years old—indicated that these right could be ‘returned’ to them. They were something that were codified and ‘existed’, because their removal had been documented. The Inuit had never signed away their Aboriginal rights: it became “a major obstacle to understanding that Inuit had Aboriginal rights.”

Today, Nunavut is often held up as an example of Aboriginal self-determination—the triumph of what is possible if Indigenous groups are treated with the same sovereignty considerations as, say Quebec or Labrador.

99 IBID, 44.
But, they can’t be because legally at least, they were never ‘Native’—under Canadian law they never had the same status. This is part of the grey zone Iqaluit finds itself in today.

This void would, in many ways, actually make it easier for Canada as a nation to continue to perpetuate colonial attitudes well into this century. Trapped in the void of this toxic legacy, they were indeed a people nullius; to paraphrase Hannah Arendt, the worst thing that can be done to a person is to be removed from the system. The Inuit in Canada were, in many ways, utterly outside any formalized system. As the Qikiqtani Truth Commission found, “In this view, the people must have economic opportunity and social acceptance,—they must have a real place in the new society—it is fatal for them to spend time in an in-between void.”

### 2.7 Canada’s Internal Colony

The main thrust of colonization in the North was movement and centralization. Actually, the debate about whether or not to require Inuit to centralize in Southern style communities demonstrates, once again, the paternalistic way in which they were viewed as a community. It would be hard to imagine citizens in Southern Canada having their movements, where they lived, and what they did to support themselves decided at a federal level where they did not have representation. This smacks of the paternalistic way in which Aboriginals under the treaty system were treated, however it takes on a particularly ugly twinge when you remember that this system did not apply to the North.

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Centralization wasn’t just a matter of where people lived—it utterly reshaped their livelihoods. And it too was done with two sides to the coin: on one side, to ‘elevate’ a culture thought of as primitive and on the other to extend Canada’s national plans. This was an example of the banality of evil coming home to roost in Canada’s North. Government officials who implemented centralization plans weren’t evil masterminds, scheming away in their fortress in Ottawa. Rather, they “were part of a generation that believed the future would be better than the past.”\(^{101}\) They bought in fully to a national identity that was constructed around a vision that “Canada was a decent and progressive country,”\(^{102}\) and believed that education was the only option for a better life because “what they considered to be the “primitive” life and cultural traditions of Canada’s Aboriginal groups were likely to end due to forces beyond the control of governments.”\(^{103}\) This is clearly building on the past; as the Qikiqtani Truth Commission found, “government policy was to make the North more like the South and Inuit more like Southern Canadians,”\(^{104}\) for Northerners own good. The Qikiqtani Truth Commission repeatedly found that most of these officials “convinced themselves that they were acting in the best interests of Inuit,” however their plans were often “designed and implemented without consulting Inuit” and were “frequently mismanaged or underfunded... All too often their careers, the needs of Southern Canadians, and the goal of government

\(^{102}\) IBID, 20.
\(^{103}\) IBID, 20.
\(^{104}\) IBID, 20.
efficiency came first.”  

How did this colonization work? It took several forms. First, it involved centralization in major centres. This was done not with a nod towards how it would benefit the local culture but rather the administration: the sites for these communities, for example, were often not selected based on any Inuit knowledge or perpetual habitation, but rather access to shipping and other industrial hubs for Southern economic goals. They didn’t have to provide access to game, as most traditional sites did, because “the single most important criterion for government was that they were accessible by sea or would fit into planned air routes. Inuit have suffered, and continue to suffer, from this lack of attention to their hunting needs.”

Centralizing however couldn’t happen in a vacuum. Understood by turn as disposable commodities that could be dismissed when their labour was no longer needed and some sort of social problem that the government had to solve, the Inuit felt the brunt of both governmental and societal coercion. Many Inuit chose to move from their ilagiuqunagivaktangit (Inuit settlements) because “they believed life in the settlement would prove to be a positive experience, as they were repeatedly told by government and by some Inuit already working in settlements.” The reality, however, was that the improvement and access to housing, schools and jobs that they had been explicitly promised didn’t come to fruition.

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106 IBID, 22.
Once Inuit were introduced to centralized communities, everything else had to change as well—in order to afford the housing and other resources available in the new towns, they had to enter the wage economy. Unfortunately, that left them with less time to engage in the traditional activities that had sustained the culture for centuries—like hunting. Families who moved to settlements earliest also suddenly were more ‘senior’ within the settlement economy, regardless of their former place within the community. This meant that “families led by the best hunters could be the poorest in a settlement because they had waited longer to enter wage employment or to accept benefits.”\textsuperscript{108} This isn’t just destructive on a tangible and practical level; the basis of the way people understood their relationships to each other and to their larger communities, their roles within that community, shifted.

This was made especially difficult after the killing of the \textit{qimmiit}, or dog teams. The work that precipitated the Qikiqtani Truth Commission actually began in 2000 when the Qikiqtani Inuit Association and the Mikivik Corporation called for a federal enquiry into the killing of the \textit{qimmit} (sled dogs). The QTC Final Report found that the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) shot “hundreds—perhaps thousands—of qimmiit”\textsuperscript{109} starting in the mid-1950s because “\textit{Qallunaat} (Southerner) considered the dogs to be a danger to inhabitants or feared they could spread dog diseases.”\textsuperscript{110} Inuit interviewed by the QTC spoke about how the killings were a result of ignorance on the part of officials concerning the care and handling

\textsuperscript{109} IBID, 39.
\textsuperscript{110} IBID, 39.
of qimmiit—including expecting dogs to be tied by too-short chains and fed kibble imported from the South that wasn’t sufficient to keep the dogs healthy in a rugged Northern environment. Regardless, the result was the same: families were no longer able to supplement their diets and income with the hunting the dogs made possible. As a result, “families became dependent on inadequate social assistance payments and expensive store-bought food that was not sufficiently nutritious to meet their dietary requirements.”

This wasn’t a blip: this was part of a larger trend of trying to shape the North into the image of the South. In much the same way as Franklin brought his silverware and attempted to transport London to Iqaluit, Canadian officials expected the Inuit to learn to live like they would in these new communities, instead of adapting the communities to the complicated system of kinship that had sustained Northern peoples for hundreds of years. The Ordinance that led to the killing of the qimmiit is a symptom of this ignorance—to Southerners, these were just large, wild dogs who could do damage. To the Inuit, they were so much more. In this way, the Ordinance was “completely consistent with standard government policy that Inuit must, at their own expense, accommodate newcomers’ needs and wants.”

The solution in the North wasn’t to create unique Northern communities, drawing upon the understandings of the people who inhabited the region; it was to create a Southern community North of 60. As the QTC puts it, ”The imperfect institutions of Southern Canada were transplanted to the North, without due
consideration of the different needs and traditions of those who lived there.”

Centralization was just the first step. Inuit were also moved from one region of the Arctic to another, to strengthen Canadian sovereignty. This wasn’t the first time, nor would it be the last, that Inuit occupation of territory was deemed a way to establish Canadian sovereignty. In fact, the fact that the Inuit were never included as wards of the Crown as other Indigenous groups were, and instead were always considered citizens (if citizens who needed to be ride a special, federally supervised short bus for their ‘own good’), strengthened these claims. After all, a Canadian citizen living in a place is as good as a flag, regardless on whether or not they are treated as equal to the rest of the Canadian population. Starting in 1985, the Canadian Government “began to use “Inuit use and occupancy” as a foundation for Canadian “sovereignty” in the Arctic.”

But at the same time these movements aided Canadian sovereignty, they displayed the official dismissal of Inuit culture. The moves themselves could happen “because the government generalized that all Inuit were semi-nomadic hunters who could live anywhere in the Arctic.” Just as Janet Brewster referred to, this dismissed the “subtle nuances of regional identity, differing seasons, terrain, linguistics, wildlife, geography, food preferences, technological adaptations, and survival strategies.” The forced removal of groups of Inuit to the High Arctic was, in this way, almost an experiment in social planning—to see just how far Inuit Traditional Knowledge could take them. But it can also be read as one more step

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114 English, Ice and Water, 142.
116 IBID, 16.
towards cultural assimilation; by denying the difference in culture and territory
different Inuit groups had, was this yet another example of devaluing that
difference, and by extension, Northern or Inuit culture as a whole? It was one more
step into intellectually removing Inuit culture from Canadian identity, by removing
the specificity of Inuit difference from Inuit culture itself, by removing individuals
from the land and family connections that defined that cultural difference. As one
Inuk, Elijasialak, who was involved in these relocations recalled to the QTC: “the
separation of the people was as if the government people were separating dogs.”
The individuals involved didn’t matter so much as planting human flags in the High
Arctic.

Accompanying these social experiment moves were forced removals for
treatment of disease, especially tuberculosis, to the South. Tuberculosis ran rampant
through the Canadian Arctic, and between 1953 and 1964 almost 5000 Inuit were
institutionalized in the South for health reasons. Some individuals were removed by
force from communities and shipped to the South, by institutions who mostly did
not speak their language, where they would spend years in hospital removed from
their families and communities. The QTC reports numerous stories of people trying
to dodge the CCGS C.D. Howe, the hospital ship—hiding from people offering them
health care as the removal itself was traumatic. Part of that trauma was that people
may never return—as the QTC reports, some people who returned from “Southern
sanatoriums were sent to the wrong communities instead of being sent home.”

118 IBID, 33.
And, as one Inuk interviewed by the QTC reported, if your family member died in the South you may never even be informed, let alone get access to the body for burial. As he told the QTC, “It makes me realize that we Inuit were not important enough to be given the courtesy [of being] informed about the death of our father. I began to realize that the authorities, the Qallunaat, did not value us as worthy human beings.”\textsuperscript{119}

This understanding, that Inuit culture was ‘less than’ that of Qallunaat was reinforced by education. Dusting off the same ideology that created the residential school system in Southern Canada, starting in the 1950s “the Canadian government decided that all Inuit children needed to be given a formal education so that they could be brought into mainstream Canadian society and into the new jobs that an expanding Northern economy was expected to provide.”\textsuperscript{120} Many people reported to the QTC that they felt they had no choice but to send their children to school: either because of direct intervention or the threat to their family allowances if they declined. Many families moved with their children into centralized communities in order to attend school. This was another example of trying to bring the South to the North as “In the classrooms, children were taught a curriculum that often had no relevance to life in the North. Materials such as the “Dick and Jane” reading series, for example, described a world that was utterly strange to Inuit children, and one that they would likely never experience.”\textsuperscript{121} This was all about preparing Northern children to embrace Southern norms, and take their place in the new wage

\textsuperscript{119} Qikiqtani Inuit Association, “Nuutauniq: Moves in Inuit Life,” 32.
\textsuperscript{120} Qikiqtani Inuit Association, “QTC Final Report: Achieving Saimaqatiqiingniq,” 32.
\textsuperscript{121} IBID, 34.
economy—it was, once again, the idea of assimilation as the inevitable way forward.

However, the education received in these schools, although Southern in style, never quite measured up to the standards in the South. As reported by the QTC, learning was geared towards manual labour for men and institutional or secretarial work for women. The idea wasn’t to prepare Inuk children to enter the Canadian educational and work world on the same level—instead, it was to prepare them to stay in the North, and do the work in the way that the South chose. One example is the 1964 *Qaujivaallirutissat* or *Q-Book*, a medical, educational and social guide produced by the Department of Northern Affairs in English and Inuktitut (both syllabics and Latin Script). While on the surface, the fact that the Inuit had materials provided in their own language—when in the South Indigenous languages were being actively stamped out—seems promising, but as the QTC points out, “On many occasions, the government used Inuktitut to preach Canadian values to its internal colony.”122 The Q-book was more about placing Inuit life and Inuit heritage in the past, and instructing readers on how to adapt and adopt “Canadian habits and institutions.”123 This book, a guidebook to how Southern Canada believed the North should live, includes such tidbits as how to cook macaroni. Reading it is like getting a glimpse into that intellectual grey zone; it is more informative about the people who wrote it, the paternalistic style telling the reader about their assumptions and beliefs about the intended audience. It reads like a child’s storybook, from the opening lines when it tells the reader how many continents exist, to the cartoons in

123 IBID, 52.
the margins. Yet within its pages are also all those good intentions: sections are devoted to explaining democracy, the government of Canada, and the Inuit’s place within it: repeated mention is made, for example, of the fact that “All Eskimos living in the Northwest Territories had the opportunity to vote for a man or woman to represent all the people living in the Northwest Territories, at Ottawa, in the Federal Election in June 1962.” On one hand, it’s describing the roles that Inuit could have in their own self-determination. On the other, it’s doing it in a format and tone that implies that this self-determination is not possible until the Inuit ‘grow up’ by becoming less Inuit and more Canadian. The book is a 299 treatise on the pickle both officials and Inuit found themselves in: they at once had rights, and there is, continually, this thread that the territory and the people in it will develop and thrive. The problem is how.

It cannot be forgotten, this was happening within living memory. These shifts did not occur 100 years removed from modern problems and issues. They happened in the 1950-60s, meaning that my parent’s generation would have been the first to be born in towns. My grandparents would have spent their lifetimes in a very different situation. And my older cousins may have been old enough to be assigned a disc number. From 1941 until 1978, the Government of Canada assigned Inuit in the Canadian Arctic numbers instead of names, because the Inuit naming system didn’t include surnames. The tags, made from pressed paper or leather, came with a hole so the disc could be worn around the neck like a dog tag. The numbers began with

124 *Q-book= Quajivaallirutissat*, prepared by the Welfare Division, Northern Administration Branch, Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources (1964), 40.
either an E, indicating the Eastern Arctic, or a W for the Western Arctic, as well as a number indicating which community the person was from, and their own individual number. They were the only citizens in Canada not allowed their own names. In 1968, Project Surname began replacing the numbers with Southern style names, but the effect of being numbered still remains. As Sheila Watt-Cloutier writes in her powerful book, The Right To Be Cold, “these small bits of pressed fibre or leather and the numbers stamped on them were part of the story of how our Inuit communities had been controlled and made to fit into a Southern governing structure.”

Today, she’s an environmental and human rights advocate who was nominated for the Nobel Peace Price in 2007 and is an officer of the Order of Canada. But for the early part of her life, her number was E8-352. As she remembers, “The discs remind us of a time when our Inuit communities were being forced off the land, relocated against our will, sent off to Southern schools and in so many other ways coerced into fitting into a social and political system that was not our own.”

A rapid shift of that magnitude doesn’t just shift where someone physically lives—it shifts how they live, how they view the world, how they interact with others within that world. Watt-Cloutier, as she puts it, spent the first 10 years of her life travelling by dog sled. As she writes “In a sense, Inuit of my generation have lived in both the ice age and the space age. The modern world arrived slowly in some places in the world, and quickly in others. But in the Arctic, it appeared in a single generation. . . We went from dog teams to rock ‘n’ roll and miniskirts almost

125 Sheila Watt-Cloutier, The Right to be Cold: One woman’s story of protecting her culture, the arctic and the whole planet (Toronto: The Penguin Group, 2015), 40.
126 IBID, 41.
overnight.”¹²⁷ This change had an “enormous social cost.”¹²⁸ Watts-Cloutier attributes rises in drug and alcohol abuse within Northern communities in part to this rapid social change, that redefined the traditions and ways of life of her community. As she writes, “It was evidence of a breakdown of Inuit society. It would be years, perhaps decades, before we began to talk about something that I call “the wounded hunter spirit.” . . . Decades later, I began to appreciate the historical traumas that had led to this damaged state.”¹²⁹

This was colonization at a rapid, immediate pace, and the trauma of that shift is still being felt today. In 1950, there were over one hundred ilagít nunagivaktangit used seasonally. These were referred to as ‘camps’ however by the administration, as they did not include ‘permanent’ settlements. According to the findings of the Qikkitanni Truth Commission, only settlements including permanent structures, like RCMP or HBC buildings, were considered to be permanent fixtures. This isn’t just quibbling over names: the distinction “conveys a feeling, sometimes entirely intentional, that clusters of permanent buildings occupied by Qallunaat deserved recognition in ways that the seasonal habitations of Inuit did not.”¹³⁰ This understanding didn’t go away with time either; even the Nunavut Land Claim Agreement defines residential places away from settlements as ‘outpost camps,’ demonstrating the pervasiveness and staying power of this ideological framework.

The many ‘camps’ were instead seen as an example, once again, of the nomadic,

¹²⁷ Watt-Cloutier, The Right to be Cold, xiv-41.
¹²⁸ Michael Byers, Who Owns the Arctic?: Understanding Sovereignty Disputes in the North (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2009), 13.
¹²⁹ Watt-Cloutier, The Right to be Cold, 64.
¹³⁰ Qikiqtani Inuit Association, ”The Official Mind of Canadian Colonialism,” 21.
primitive lifestyle of the Inuit. Instead of viewing the yearly movements over territory as part of the connection to those spaces, as the QTC found: “Qallunaat often mistook and continue to mistake the semi-nomadic history of Inuit as evidence of a lack of attachment to place.” In fact, the opposite was usually true, these movements resulting in “an intimate experience of place.”

By 1975, almost all of these communities were concentrated into the present twelve hamlets and one city—ten of which were chosen as sites before 1950 by the RCMP, missionaries, and trading companies, with many of these relocated families feeling “that their lives had become worse, not better.” This is a lingering trauma that haunts the communities of Nunavut to this day; it’s not colonialism in some forgotten past, it’s not cultural trauma mitigated by generations of removal. It’s something that happened swiftly, all at once, and is still a tangible part of everyday life in Iqaluit. As the QTC writes, “Qikiqtaalummiut suffered what scholars have called “domicide” (the killing of one’s home) when they left the land. For Inuit, the loss of home is more than the loss of a dwelling; it is a disruption of a critical relationship of people with the land and animals. It represents the loss of independence and replacement of a way of life.” This is particularly interesting because Nunavut itself, by its very nature and existence, seems as close to post colonial as Canada is going to get, given the political autonomy and the conception of it as an Inuit homeland. By creating Nunavut, it created a sovereign territory for a

group of people within Canada’s borders—it was a reclamation of the erasures of the past. Yet, I would argue that Nunavut is today closer to an internal colony than a post colonial success story: colonialism is, as I have shown, alive and well and ongoing.

This is something Aaju Peter is passionate about. When I meet her, she’s sewing a seal skin tie at her kitchen table. She’s an Inuk activist, with traditional tattoos arching over her face and the backs of her hands. She had them put on a few years ago for a documentary project, trying to bring back part of her culture that had been suppressed by missionaries. “I think the forced assimilation, the colonization, the imposed centralization of the communities and the killing of the dogs, the requirements that you have to have a university degree for instance to hold these positions that are of authority, you can only imagine what that does to people. It’s still a colonial system, it’s still disempower[ing] the Inuit, it’s still running as if this was a Southern community,” she says. “It’s a siege. And we are just onlookers disempowered.”

2.7 Imagined Identities

The North has always been a part of the Canadian national identity. As Prime Minister Paul Martin said in a meeting with First Ministries from the Arctic on December 14, 2004: “I don’t know how you can say you’re a Canadian unless you have a deep love for the North.” He was in the North to release the first-ever

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135 Interview with author, November 2015.
136 Pigott, From Far and Wide, 255.
jointly developed Northern Strategy, which would pump $120 million into the infrastructure of the region. During his trip, he visited the Baffin region, posing in front of snow covered mountains and icebergs, and telling locals in Pond Inlet that “One of the responsibilities of government is to protect the sovereignty of the land.” But that sovereignty has been founded not so much on what the South knows, a tangible reality, as the idea of what Southerners don’t—the North, as conceptualized in national identity, as an empty vastness. Its allegorical power isn’t in what is, but what isn’t. And while that is often a land empty of anything, it’s always imagined. Kevin Kelly, CEO of Nunavut Tourism says part of the reason the image of Canada is the North is because, whether imagined or not, they have better images. As Kelly puts it, Nunavut Tourism has spectacular images. “We have a large image bank, Nunavut tourism does. So they rely heavily on our image bank, and they’re very much using our images to portray the rest of the country… to promote the rest of the country,” he tells me. ”Which I guess in a way we’re OK with because it’s certainly bringing light to the North, but it’s certainly sending up a false sense of what people are coming over to Canada for. They’re thinking they’re going to get icebergs all the time and stuff, while going to Ontario, going to Toronto.”

But that isn’t something everyone is OK with. For instance, Madeleine Redfern, Mayor of Iqaluit. “Nunavut Tourism’s tagline is ‘undiscovered.’ It builds on that pre-existing stereotype. Undiscovered. What do you mean it’s undiscovered?” she tells me. “Ninty-nine per cent of Southern Canadians have never been up past

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137 Pigott, From Far and Wide, 255.
138 Interview with author, November 2015.
North of 60. So what they know of the North is what they read in the newspapers or from tourism ads or from national activities like the Prime Minister’s past visits. Or from a lot of very negative reporting. So it tends to be very polarized. You have this sort of stereotypical nationalistic visual iconography and propaganda that is being pumped in the South versus reality.”

She’s talking about the complexity that is the North, where the pretty picture doesn’t always line up with lived reality. But, she says, Southern perceptions aren’t seeing those complexities, instead focusing on two extremes: either this ‘undiscovered’ wilderness and icebergs in photo ops, or the negative stories about overcrowded houses, high poverty and crime rates, and food insecurity. “While there’s truth in both aspects of the polarized story, it’s a lot more complex than that,” she says. “It’s not all 100 per cent bad. It’s not all 100 per cent pristine and perfect.”

This doesn’t exactly set the stage for an accurate understanding by Southern Canadians of the North. The QTC explains that “It would be fair to say that there is limited public awareness of the recent history of the Qikiqtani region on the part of Southern Canadians.” They blame the remote geography, and the fact that “it generally receives media attention only with respect to issues that are on the agenda of Southern Canadian politicians and opinion leaders, such as Arctic sovereignty or oil and gas exploration.” In 2009, Ipsos Reid conducted The Canada’s North Poll on behalf of Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami. More than 1,000 Canadians were polled, and one in three scored a D or failed a true/false quiz about Canada’s Arctic. The average

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139 Interview with author, November 2015.
141 Ibid, 56.
The reality of the North doesn’t line up with the understandings of the South; especially in those decades of rapid cultural change in the 1950s, 60s and 70s. As the QTC found, when viewing the results of the Poll, “It follows from this that Canadians are also relatively unaware of what has been happening in the North since the 1950s. Indeed, for most, the 50s, 60s, and 70s were decades of national optimism and relative prosperity, in stark contrast to the reality lived by most Inuit.”

Part of that imagination is the concept of the Inuit themselves—seen as primordial and untouched. As discussed before, the idea of Southern cultural superiority has underpinned basically all interactions with the North. But something started to change in the 1960s. As the QTC found, “by 1960 this feeling fought with a fear that Inuit would not benefit from their exposure to modern, Southern culture. At best, by 1960 the superiority was thought of as technological rather than moral.” This illustrates the ambivalence that permeated official and public feelings in the South around the changes that were happening in the North. As mentioned before, these changes were happening in the same time period that decolonization was happening in other parts of the world; how could the public, on one hand, watch nations in Africa, Asia and South America fight for independence, and at the same time not be torn morally over recreating those same colonial institutions of assimilation and control within their own borders? This illuminates the different interests at play in the colonization of the North over time—they were

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143 IBID, 56. 
not uniform by any means. On one hand, “missionaries, traders, health workers, and other officials all wanted to consign to history’s dustbin the majority of practices and beliefs that set Inuit apart from their new neighbours.”¹⁴⁵ But on the other, there was a push to almost ‘protect’ the Inuit from the very progress that they had been pushed towards. The communities that would become Frobisher Bay, for instance, were segregated. This was to keep Inuit women from being preyed upon by servicemen, but also to keep the Inuit from being exposed to the many vices within the Southern community, including alcohol and gambling. At the same time, however, officials “found it convenient to believe that Inuit would make the same choices,”¹⁴⁶ in essence, giving way to the overwhelming ‘superiority’ of Southern ways of living in an inevitable march towards progress, “and their distinctiveness would be blurred in a common citizenship with other Canadians.”¹⁴⁷ If anything survived, it would be preserved like a bug under glass, a relic of the past to be studied by anthropologists and related to as one would an ancient religion or culture, with no bearing on the modern day.

That didn’t exactly work out as planned. Today, you hear Inuktitut throughout Iqaluit. According to the 2001 census, 85.6 per cent of Inuit speak Inuktitut as their first language, while 79.3 per cent stated it was the only or main language they spoke at home.¹⁴⁸ Inuit culture is thriving and strong, in an incredibly diverse community. Inuit culture in Iqaluit isn’t a historical object, protected in a museum,

¹⁴⁶ IBID, 58.
¹⁴⁷ IBID, 58.
with Inuktitut trotted out for ceremonial purposes only: it’s alive, it’s changing, and Inuit and Northern culture in Iqaluit is adapting to the evolving diversity of 2016. But this evolution came out of an ideological framework that assumed a vacuum that could be filled, not a blending and mixing of cultures to create a bi cultural reality.

2. 8 High Modernity

Much as the actual inhabitants of the space were imagined, the planning too was more an imagined hyper reality that actual lived experience. In February 1958, Prime Minister John Diefenbaker gave a speech at Winnipeg’s Civic Auditorium where he promised ‘a new Canada—a Canada of the North’. His intention? Northern development. He was working with language already used by Alvin Hamilton, his Minister of Northern Affairs and National Resources, and the key operative of this new Northern Vision, who described the North as a “new world to conquer” and promised that, with Diefenbaker, they would create “a nation in the Northern half of this continent truly patterned on our way of life.”

This renewed development in the region wouldn’t just consolidate the communities of Nunavut; the planning could best be described as what political scientist James C. Scott called high modernism. Scott defined high modernism as “a sweeping, rational engineering of all aspects of social life in order to improve the human condition.” The dichotomy between paternalism and independence experienced by the Inuit population of

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150 IBID, 518.
Frobisher Bay can be seen in this high modernist sense. The history of Iqaluit can be read as one of high modernism—an arena literally planned in a Southern way, but not necessarily a realistic one. According to Scott, high modernist planning is basically doomed to failure as it ignores “essential features of any real, functioning social order.”

The idea that a territory or populations could be fully monitored and managed are, according to Scott, “utopian ambitions, and therefore are ‘continually frustrated’.” But that didn’t stop the urbanization sweeping across Canada during this period. A 1957 Canadian Department of Transport (DoT) Press Release even described Frobisher as the centre of a new ‘Polar Mediterranean’: “As long ago the Mediterranean was the most important Sea in the world because the ruling nations – Rome, Carthage and Egypt – were on its shores, so today the Polar Sea is gaining importance because the three big powers of the world – Canada as a member of the Commonwealth, U.S.A. and U.S.S.R. – are facing each other over this ice- and island-filled ocean.”

In keeping with this idea, Frobisher, for a brief moment, wasn’t going to be allowed to languish and develop organically: instead, it was going to be modernized and rapidly developed into a model Arctic community. The Canadian Architect argued in November 1958 that “Frobisher Bay promises to be a town which will make all Canada – all the world, probably – think again about living and working in

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151 Farish and Lackenbauer. “High modernism in the Arctic,” 519.
152 IBID, 519
153 IBID, 529.
the North.” But, this wasn’t a plan that took into account local knowledge and realities. This Northern development plan was a literal transplant of Southern ways of living to a Northern environment; literal in that, much as if the planners were constructing a community on Mars, the layout of the proposed planned community would enable people to never actually go outside and interact with the Arctic. In 1958, The Globe and Mail outlined in an article a variety of architectural proposals for the community, all joined by covered walkways. As the article outlines, the idea was “to make it possible for life to go on entirely inside” by constructing “a tightly-planned town centre totally enclosed within a large protective dome, and surrounded by 36 apartment towers of twelve-stories each,” in a system that “could eventually be repeated endlessly to create a city in the bleak Arctic.”

This was about transporting the South North and making it as comfortable as possible for southerners to live and work there—by never actually having to interact with the North, or Northern people, at all. In much the same way as Franklin packed up his toys, loaded down with canned goods and sealed his ships away instead of interacting with the environment, this planned community if it had ever come to fruition would not have included the people who were already there.

Although conceptions of the North as empty are, as Aaju Peter says, “So 500 years ago,” in 1958 they were still providing the ideological backbone for actual

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155 Farish and Lackenbauer, “High modernism in the Arctic,” 530.
architectural plans. *Time Magazine* described it as a “new dream town,” that, with Southern amenities could provide “a means to make today’s muskeg wastelands bloom with oil derricks, grain fields, mines and forests.” Packed into this statement isn’t just the idea of transporting the South North, but the idea that there was a open, vacant ‘wasteland’ ready to be filled with these Southern wonders. It’s an example of how pervasive the idea of an empty North was, even to the people planning to develop it.

By contrast, Inuit in and around Frobisher at this point were living in self-made accommodation, often created themselves with scraps scavenged from the military and surrounding job sites. Or, they were living in places like Apex, in pre-fabricated dwellings constructed by the government for workers; either way, they were not living in some space age Arctic Jetsons environment. As the QTC found, families moving to settlements often were disappointed by the housing, as there weren’t enough built, and those that were “were often of poor quality and unsuitable for the Arctic environment.” Unsuitable to such an extent that “beginning in the 1950s, government officials had identified poor housing as a leading cause of the extraordinary rates of illness and poor chances of recovery.” Let’s check the scoreboard for a moment: in the name of fuelling industrial development with an accessible workforce, centralization brought Inuit into fabricated communities, with the lure of a higher standard of living in a Southern mode. This never came to

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156 Farish and Lackenbauer, “High modernism in the Arctic,” 530.
158 IBID, 27.
fruition and poor, over-crowded housing led to disease, which led to the removal of a huge number of community members to the South for treatment, splintering the kinship and community bonds that strengthened the culture as well as passing down the necessary knowledge to survive in the Arctic. Inuit communities rely on each family member’s contribution to survive: take away one or two and there’s no way, any more than a hunter could hunt after the RCMP shot his dogs, that that family could go back to the land. They were trapped within this new way of life. Meanwhile, the traditional life that had existed for generations was ignored in favour of transporting a bubble of Southern Ontario to the North for the benefit of Southern workers.

I bring up these aborted plans to illustrate a way in which Iqaluit has been, and continues to be, developed: in fits and starts of grandiose schemes that last the length of a contract or an election cycle. The vestiges of that can be seen scattered around Iqaluit today; from different styles of architecture to the very way houses are numbered. Street numbers in Iqaluit aren’t linear or designated by location; instead, they indicate when the building was built. Number 27 can be next to Number 5, in the same neighbourhood. To navigate the city, you have to start with the area—Legoland, The Heights, etc.—and work your way from there. This indicates that unlike other communities in Canada, this wasn’t a place where even the streets were planned in any sort of consistent fashion. In this respect, how on earth could any sustainable infrastructure ever gain a foothold?

Officials and bureaucrats in the North didn’t set out to make a mess, but, with the best intentions, they paved a road that might lead somewhere unpleasant. Jim
Lotz, one of those officials, interviewed by the QTC about his career in Northern programs, said that he “never saw any evidence of a deliberate plan to destroy the North or its people... I never came across a deliberate plan to do anything in the North.” What he saw instead was a “continuous reaction to a series of crises.” On the ground, he says, that was “a simple equation of development with resource exploitation,” compounded with a combo platter of ego, bureaucratic in-fighting within government agencies and opportunism, contrasted with “a lot of dedicated, self-less people give a great deal of themselves to help to create, in the North, a saner, more humane society than the one in the South.”

The idea wasn’t just to remake the North in the South’s image, it was, in these post colonial decades, to remake it as a South 2.0, better, faster, stronger than the South itself. They had the technology, they could rebuild it, this time fixing the problems they could see in their own communities.

This can’t be understood simply as a failure to create houses or high-tech heated walkways; the project of colonization that began with centralization had been done, this time around, with an eye towards sovereignty yes, but also towards economic development. The expectation was that “Northern development, especially oil, would pay its own costs and also solve the human problem.”

Basically, any problems created by this rapid industrialization could be fixed by leaning into that industrialization. However, neither the education nor the funding was enough to completely remake the Arctic into either a Mediterranean hub or

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160 IBID, 68.
some sort of natural-resource breadbox. There simply were not enough jobs available, not enough opportunities to replace those lost, and, “though funding levels rose, they were never adequate for the resulting experiment in social engineering.”\textsuperscript{161} What’s more, the problems of centralization have never adequately been addressed at a national level: the social problems currently ripping through Nunavut communities, as will be discussed later, cripple the ability of the community to thrive. The toxic legacy of colonialism is literally the albatross hanging around Nunavut’s neck.

This idea that the North is not planning but rather responding to a series of crisis is a theme that was at once created by this conceptualization of the area as empty—if it were full, it could not simultaneously be by turns neglected and used as a testing ground for new ideas—and has created the current environment which allowed the dump fire to happen. As the QTC found, “within a decade, the Inuit, who did not even have a federal or municipal vote at this point, received the full impact of policy, programs, and infrastructure investments that still underpin the current thirteen communities. In outline, this can be seen not as policy incoherence, but as a rapid and decisive evolution.”\textsuperscript{162}

\textbf{2.9 Letting the Waters Run to Waste: Valuing Terra Nullius}

The way land was used—or not—and how that was understood by different groups is the interesting paradox of the North. Occupation of the land has long been used to

\textsuperscript{161} Qikiqtani Inuit Association, “The Official Mind of Canadian Colonialism,” 67.
\textsuperscript{162} IBID, 19.
declare Canadian sovereignty. During the Cold War, communities were physically displaced so as to diplomatically scream ‘mine’ over whatever rock was deemed strategically important. Canada wasn’t the only country playing these games, but today a large part of the impetus behind the commemoration of Franklin’s voyage is to redefine this occupation as historically Canadian. And for most of history, Canadian sovereignty hasn’t included the Inuit inhabitants of the North as equal participants. As Prime Minister Stephen Harper first said on December 22, 2005 “Use it or lose it. . . You don’t defend national sovereignty with flags, cheap election rhetoric and advertising campaigns. You need forces on the ground, ships in the sea and proper surveillance.”163

Today there are valuable resources to be extracted from the North, and claims to be laid and contested. Seabed studies are currently being conducted to figure out which Arctic nation’s territory is connected to which hunk of ocean—and the oil that lies below. However, that’s just one piece of the sovereignty puzzle. For centuries, geographical and navigational lines have been how countries determined which parts of the Arctic belonged to whom, but these were regularly ignored in practice and when it served various interests. What is far harder to ignore is physical occupation of that territory. As Canada discovered with the DEW Line and other strategic initiatives in the North, however, is that it is virtually impossible to populate such a vast territory with ‘Canadians’. Thankfully, the Inuit of the Arctic have always been citizens—at least on paper if not in practice.

163 Pigott, From Far and Wide, 256.
But let’s back up several steps. The doctrine of Terra Nullius in its very name reveals its preoccupations and the preoccupations of those who apply it. It isn’t really about people at all, but rather, about the territory—the land, the Terra—they occupy (or don’t). And as far as Canadians were concerned “in the view of the colonial authorities, the Indians had become useless people, occupying valuable land.”\textsuperscript{164} Essentially, this was colonialism in a nutshell: there either weren’t people in the space, or if there were, they weren’t using the land ‘correctly’. To the colonizers, “the land was a resource waiting to be settled and cultivated. They believed that it was a form of private property, and that private property was linked to political responsibility.”\textsuperscript{165} As discussed previously, without the political responsibility of private, cultivated property, the assumption was not a difference in civilization, but a lack of civilization. Particularly in the case of hunter gather societies, like the Inuit, because, as missionaries phrased it, “those who come to Christ turn to agriculture.”\textsuperscript{166} By not using the land in a manner that could be deemed by European standards as occupation, Europe saw no need to deal with Indigenous occupation in the same way settlers would if, say, they were attempting to annex a chunk of France instead of Ontario.

This had huge consequences in the South, but even more so in the North, where the territory was vast, the population small, and that population required all of their mobility to exist. There was no chance of farming in the North; in fact, traditional life ways required mobility and semi-permanent or impermanent

\textsuperscript{164} Richardson, \textit{People of Terra Nullius}, 57.
\textsuperscript{165} Berger, \textit{Northern Frontier, Northern Homeland}, 127.
\textsuperscript{166} IBID, 127.
dwellings to survive. The Inuit of Canada’s Arctic have developed a culture and values that are uniquely suited to survive and thrive in this landscape—but none of these things were visible or valuable to Europeans. Thomas Berger was writing in 1977, smack in the middle of this cultural change. As he writes, “the difficulty in describing the importance of wilderness is that you cannot attach a dollar value to it or to its use and enjoyment.” While that statement is uncomfortable, this wasn’t truly harmful until extraction became the name of the game. As Berger continues, this was the evolution of subduing the Indigenous population. In the past, that meant fur trading, but “nowadays it means bringing minerals, oil and gas to market. At all times it has meant bringing the Northern native people within white religious, educational and economic institutions.”

This was the problem. You cannot separate Inuit or Indigenous culture from the physical space: in fact, it’s questionable if you can remove any culture from the physical contexts of its creation and existence without dire intellectual and spiritual consequences. But European, and now Western or capitalist culture, seems determined to give it its best shot. The biggest thing here is that, as Berger writes “oil exploration does not need local labour: it is the land, not the people who live on it, that has now become important.”

But, as we turn the corner of recent decades, it’s not all about exploration, security or oil. Climate change is radically reshaping the North, and reshaping the value of the land itself. This shines a spotlight on Canada’s claims to the Arctic in

167 Berger, *Northern Frontier, Northern Homeland*, 56.
168 IBID, 128.
169 IBID, 169.
ways that haven’t been as troublesome since the Cold War. As Parks writes in *Canada’s Arctic Sovereignty*, “Climate change is melting the Arctic, and what was once considered a stunning but useless stretch of ice North of Canada’s mainland . . . is now a beacon on everyone’s radar.”\(^{170}\) During the summer of 2007, the Northwest Passage was fully navigable for brief periods, according to the European Space Agency, for the first time in recorded history. This shouldn’t be a surprise, and yet for most Canadians, it was. After all, over a decade ago the United Nation’s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change started predicting that the Arctic could be ice-free by 2100. Now, it seems like almost every year those dates are clawed back: it’s now predicated that an ice locked Arctic will be a thing of the past as early as 2070, with some scientists clocking the start of year-round shipping through the Northwest Passage as early as 2040, with seasonal trips beginning within the next decade or less.\(^{171}\)

It’s such big business in fact that on October 5, 2009, Conservative MP Daryl Kramp introduced a motion to the House of Commons to rename the Northwest Passage the ‘Canadian Northwest Passage’. This wasn’t the first time it got a new name: in 2006, the Department of National Defence “began calling the Northwest Passage ‘the Canadian Internal Waters’—reportedly on instructions from the Department of Foreign Affairs.”\(^{172}\) Why would multiple government bodies bother (and also why was no one asking the Inuit what they would like to call the

\(^{170}\) Parks, *Canada’s Arctic Sovereignty*, 22.

\(^{171}\) IBID, 23.

Northwest Passage?). This was laying intellectual claim over it so it could never become an international canal—and so Canada can fully own all transport through it. In 2013, the Danish-owned *Nordic Orion* became the first cargo vessel to use the Northwest Passage as an international shipping route. This has consequences both for the environment and Canadian sovereignty: the coal on the ship, as the *Globe and Mail* reported at the time, would not cause much damage should there be an accident—which was not unlikely, as only about 12 per cent of Canada’s Arctic waters are charted to modern standards. But the fuel oil on board could. If Canada can lay a claim to the Northwest Passage as sovereign territory, Canada can establish the rules and hypothetically control any impact shipping may have. If the Passage is instead deemed to be an international entity, these rules become much blurrier, although any environmental impact would still be a mess that Canada—or more specifically, the communities who call the region home—will have to deal with. It is a tempting thought however; more shipping could have impacts on the way of life in the North, cutting down on costs of supplies and perhaps even creating jobs. However, these are concerns that also more firmly entrench the wage economy, pushing Indigenous communities more firmly towards an economic and lifestyle assimilation that, as I’ll discuss later in this thesis, is literally making Iqaluit burn.

How can we understand the Franklin commemoration then, in terms of declaring sovereignty? There is a drive to intellectually lay claim to the North: to

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rewrite hundreds of years of history, where Indigenous land use was reason enough to say they did not ‘count’ as people, and where, unless they adopted Southern life ways, they were not fully embraced as citizens. Now, as the Franklin video game attests, the Inuit have occupied and used that land for centuries. And, since the Inuit are Canadian, that means Canada has occupied and used that land for centuries. And no one can argue. As the ice melts, the natural resources and potential energy stored underneath becomes available, which is suddenly, at last, adding value to the land that the guys licking the cookies originally couldn’t have foreseen. As Parks writes, this means “other nations are suddenly scrutinizing Canada and its custodial track record up North. They are using its spotty record of defending its Northern interests over the years to challenge the nation’s jurisdiction in parts of the region and gain legal access to its waterways and potential wealth.”

This is, in effect, another form of Terra Nullius. The history and impact of colonialism is a major definer of modern Indigenous experience. Students across Canada should learn more about Indigenous culture than tepees and bannock, instead learning about the history of these relocations, of residential schools, and how this history got us, as a country, where we are today. The historical narrative like that displayed in the Franklin game, that repaints Canada’s relations with the Inuit in a more rosy light, essentially is attempting to reframe the historical narrative to be more palatable to today’s vision of national identity.

By claiming the Inuit of Nunavut as perpetual citizens of Canada, their occupation becomes proof of Canadian sovereignty; however it does nothing in

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174 Parks, *Canada’s Arctic Sovereignty*, 14.
terms of reconciliation or acknowledgement of the past. Far from being inclusive, this sort of orientalized rewriting of Indigenous history actually excludes the reality of that history and experience. Looping Inuit experience in with the rest of Canada’s Indigenous population does the same thing, with a slightly more liberal dress on: think Justin Trudeau’s swearing in ceremony in 2015. Theland Kicknosway, a Cree drummer, led the way into the ceremony, there was an acknowledgement that the event was occurring on Algonquin territory, and three Inuit throat singers finished it all off. And that’s great. That is far more inclusive and acknowledging than past administrations. But it’s not enough to briefly mention one or two Indigenous nations, and somehow think you’re covered. The Swampy Cree are not the same as the Rocky Cree, for instance. And nor are the Inuit. This kind of almost-there inclusion is a step forward, yes, but it’s not a fait accompli. Even as Inuit habitation is used to declare sovereignty, it really isn’t about inviting them to the table as equals and reshaping our understanding of Canadian sovereignty in the North to include those traditions. It’s still about the land, not the people. Today, it isn’t conquest or discovery that’s driving people to the Arctic, “but rather what lies beneath the water.” Fiver powers—Canada, the U.S. Russia, Denmark and Norway—are “vying for one-quarter of the world’s untapped mineral and energy reserves, which are known to lie beneath the receding Artic ice.” There are approximately 90 million

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176 Parks, Canada’s Arctic Sovereignty, 31.
177 IBID, 31.
barrels of oil and 3 billion cubic metres of natural gas up for grabs in the Arctic, much of it offshore.

The thrust is not development that includes the inhabitants of the North. Instead, it is a continuation of Franklin bringing his silverware, a little slice of the South, to the North. This is applying value to the land that does not include actual habitation, but rather the land as a commodity itself. From this understanding, the impact of the dump fire can be understood completely differently. Instead of valuing that impact for what it did to the community—the potential health hazards, the smear on a pristine wilderness and what that would do to a spiritual or emotional connection to the land, really any impact the fire had on the inhabitants of Iqaluit—the dump fire can be valued for what it did or did not do for industry.

In that sense, it really didn’t matter; the dump fire was created not by industry itself, but by the garbage created by the community in Iqaluit. The fire didn’t slow down exploration or extraction, and therefore it really didn’t have an impact. And, if we’re going to get truly Machiavellian about it, in many ways the fire might actually have aided industry—industry would be more efficient if unhampered by such worries as Aboriginal sovereignty or people who actually live there getting in the way. In many ways, industry is carrying on what colonialism backed away from: the actual removal of people to create a real Terra Nullius, empty of people, but full of resources, now freed up from such ethical quagmires and ripe for the taking. For Prime Minister Stephen Harper, and the government policies his
tenure created, 'losing it’ wasn’t even an option. As he said, “Make no mistake, this government intends to use it.”

But that use has consequences. The very things that will ‘develop’ the Arctic, bringing a different ‘quality of life’ and allowing people to earn a living, buy milk for less than $7 a litre, own a television, a car, all the standards of living that define a comfortable, Southern middle class, are also the things that are making life in the Arctic so difficult to maintain. The resources being extracted from the Arctic are the same resources now causing the Arctic to melt. As the consumption and production of this middle class lifestyle continues, the Arctic is melting: either from climate change or as the residue of those life styles—the packaging, the discarded TVs, the containers for imported food—burn.

2.10 Pop cans for everyone

If what is valued isn’t the existing ecosystem and culture, but rather a Southern lifestyle that says no other variation can be as good, as equal, or as aspired to, then there is no choice but to continue to import products and packaging that have nowhere to go but up in smoke. If there is no alternative to the Southern lifestyle, then doing anything different is wasting the land. Just as colonial lawmakers trapped Indigenous populations in this ideology that resisting assimilation was backwards or proof of their inferiority, not wanting to engage in this wage economy is seen the same way. And leaving the land alone, or using it in ways that have been

\[178\] Parks, *Canada’s Arctic Sovereignty*, 75.
sustainable for centuries, or even finding some middle ground, would be unthinkable.

The model for letting the land go to waste comes from another country: Iceland. Iceland is one of the hallmarks of ecotourism. Tourists flock there in droves each year to marvel at its pristine beauty. Its tourism industry is founded on this idea of open nature. However, the word ‘sustainability’ is a new one to the Icelandic lexicon. As Andri Snear Magnason, an Icelandic novelist writes, it’s a word that’s heard often, but is often misunderstood. As he writes, “People use it for different purposes. Sometimes I wonder whether it will take us a hundred years to understand the concept, or whether we won’t understand it until we’ve actually reduced the rights of future generations, or our own rights, to a decent life and environment.”179

Iceland was blessed with an overabundance of hydroelectricity and a tiny population. When the two combined, the whole country was almost “automatically preserved and pristine.”180 At one point, they were basically energy neutral: they produced enough environmentally sustainable energy to fuel their country without disturbing this environment. But it wasn’t enough; just as it was environmentally neutral, it wasn’t producing anything (and by anything of course I mean money). Aluminum was the ‘solution.’

Aluminum is one of the most energy intensive metals to produce. And it is used widely, for many different products. The one you may be most familiar with

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180 IBID, 114.
are single use beverage containers: pop cans. Aluminum is a massively destructive resource to create from scratch, but at the same time, it is more economical to extract and produce new cans than it is, currently, to recycle old ones. And there is a lot of it—in the United States, for example, around 800,000 tons of aluminum cans end up in landfills each year. That’s enough to remake all the cans used in the USA each year, if they were recycled. That is, of course, if, as Magnason puts it, there was a “cradle-to-cradle system for these cans. You shouldn’t need a gram of new aluminum to serve this market. If things were as they should be people would be drinking water from a faucet.” But there is more money to be made making new cans than recycling old ones, just as there is more money in selling bottled water than drinking from the tap. That’s where Iceland comes in: they had a huge amount of hydro electricity just waiting for the taking, a relatively lax industrial policy, and communities who, while sustainable energy wise, were in need of economic ‘development.’ Aluminum manufacturing requires massive amounts of electricity and so the industry has “fled from urban areas and sought out places with “stranded energy” and “still untapped resource,” names used by the industry to describe unsoiled nature.”

Industry of course didn’t market itself as industrial ruiners of all that is good: that would be a little too 19th century. In the last few decades, a reconceptualization of industry has taken place, rebranding it as ‘sustainable’. It’s why you see many companies declaring they are at least a portion ‘recycled’ or use ‘natural’

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181 Banerjee, Arctic Voices, 116.
182 IBID, 116.
ingredients. Green washing is a very effective marketing technique, as we both want our capitalist cake and to eat it too—on biodegradable, environmentally sustainable plates of course. So in Iceland, the Aluminum Company of America (ALCOA) marketed itself as good—for the country, for the economy and for the people—by redefining nature not as something that had to be preserved, but rather as something with a value that was being wasted. Alcoa is the world’s third largest producer of aluminum. Magnason describes this transition in much the same way as when Icelanders became Christians a thousand years ago. At the time, the strong poetic tradition of Iceland, based on Norse mythology, meant that “they didn’t say ‘earth’ in a poem; they said ‘the bride of Odin’.”183 Shifts in understanding and worldview created some linguistic gymnastics. As Magnason explains, “The first poets who wrote about God really struggled. The worlds collided. You couldn’t say Jesus, without saying Odin and referring to the world of the Norse gods.”184 He sees the same struggles in understanding today, this time around Alcoa’s ownership of the domain sjalbaerni.is (sustainability.is). For him, this is “is perhaps a sign that we still need to say Odin in order to say Jesus. To say nature, we need to say “bride of Alcoa”.”185 A corporation, and an environmentally destructive industry, has co-opted the very definition of sustainability: it is impossible, in this view, to talk about nature in Iceland without talking about industrialization. Nature therefore has no meaning without industry. In fact, the argument at the time was that to not

183 Banerjee, Arctic Voices, 112.
184 IBID, 112.
185 IBID, 114.
industrialize the fjords of Iceland was to “let the waters run to waste.” There is no value to the natural world, basically, if we can’t stick a dollar sign on it. And as people, eager for the jobs and development Alcoa would bring, argued in Iceland, jobs today have more value than nature that’s just sitting there, running to waste.

2.11 Let’s build a fort: fortress conservation

The concept of sustainability is not so simple. Sustainability in many Arctic regions is the ability to feed your family, make a living, and aspire to a North American or European lifestyle. This is no different than the assimilationist policies of the colonial era in Canada, only now it looks slightly less racist. The drive for sustainability often ends up with what’s known as ‘fortress conservation’: areas are essentially roped off from human interaction, in order to preserve the environment within the boundaries, an idea built on the idea that humanity can and is separate from the world around us (an idea that runs counter to many Indigenous worldviews). The 1964 Wilderness Act in the USA described wilderness as “an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain.” It’s an idea reminiscent of the German Romantics, of going ‘back to nature’ to sooth a soul ravaged by industrialization. And it’s worked remarkably effectively over the decades. In the first half of the last century, over 600 officially protected areas were created around the world. By 1960,

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186 Banerjee, Arctic Voices, 120.
that number had doubled. Today, “there are at least 110,000, with more being added every month.”\textsuperscript{188} Since 1990, the total amount of territory protected in this way has doubled and the World Parks Commission has exceeded their goal of protecting 10 per cent of the planet’s surface. Today, 12 per cent of the total land on earth, about 18.8 million square kilometres is under conservation protection.\textsuperscript{189} Of course, the ban on human intrusion doesn’t include tourists—while people who live in the area often don’t have access to these new conservation areas, especially Indigenous populations, they’re being preserved so tourists can come and enjoy the ‘purity’ of an unspoiled wilderness. I remember showing kids in Uganda a video I’d taken of an elephant in Murchison Falls National Park. The park and the elephant are Ugandan, and I’d travelled across the world to see them. But these Ugandan kids never had.

In this way, the emptiness itself is what has value: as John Terbough writes in \textit{Requiem for Nature}:

Ultimately nature and biodiversity must be conserved for their own sakes, not because they have present utilitarian values . . . Essentially all the utilitarian arguments for conserving biodiversity are built on fragile assumption that crumble under close scrutiny. Instead the fundamental arguments for conserving nature must be spiritual and aesthetic, motivated by feelings that well up from our deepest beings. What is absolute, enduring and irreplaceable is the primordial nourishment of our psyches afforded by a

\textsuperscript{188} Dowie, \textit{Conservation Refugees}, xx.
quiet walk in an ancient forest or the spectacle of a thousand snow geese against a blue sky on a crisp winter day. There are no substitutes for these things, and if they cease to exist, all the money in the world will not bring them back.\footnote{John Terborgh, \textit{Requiem for Nature}, (Washington: Island Press, 1999), 19.}

Which all sounds very pretty. I’m not arguing against conservation. I am however pointing out that conservation has to be an active choice, founded on well thought out principals, not just pretty rhetoric, to avoid sliding into McTaggart-Cowan’s ‘destruction by insignificant increment’. What about the people inhabiting those territories? As we inch our way into the new century, some of the last remaining bits of wilderness are those that up until now haven’t mattered enough to be interfered with—areas that were hard to get to, not immediately useful in the industrial sense, and so were just left to their own devices. These areas also were a handy place to dump Indigenous peoples when they were moved off of territory that colonizers deemed useful—many Indigenous groups around the globe are finding themselves squeezed out of their territories today by a new colonizing force—conservationists.

In Nunavut, the population wasn’t necessarily moved to these new territories. However, they’ve benefited from the intellectual Terra Nullius that meant Canada by and large simply ignored them for a few hundred years. Now, however, as industrial development and global warming threatens species and landscapes Southern Canadians value, suddenly the Inuit of Nunavut are finding
their traditions under attack—not from assimilationist politics, but from conservationists who find their subsistence activities questionable.

Aaju Peter takes issue with the use of the word ‘subsistence’ to describe traditional Inuit practices like hunting for food or the creation of fur clothing. I bought a pair of seal skin mittens from her the natural colour of a ringed seal, white loops against the grey. They’re trimmed with white Arctic fox that fluffs against my wrists. She stretched the skin herself, and they’re made, as good seal skin must be, by hand. And while the rest of me is shivering, my hands are sweating. There is nothing warmer than seal skin. The ban on seal skin, for instance, essentially is forcing Inuit once again into that intellectual and theoretical void. “The commercial sealing has always been done, if you look back 500 years ago, we were always trading with fur,” says Peter. “It was always commercial. How can anybody take that back? This is the foundation of our country.”

Madeleine Redfern agrees. “What, you’re going to remove people from the whole world? And why does the Arctic end up becoming effectively a development free zone? We get pilloried and discriminated against because we want to practice any aspect of our traditional culture, hunting animals and eating wildlife, but then also we’re not allowed to have mines or support oil and gas development and have effectively no economy.”

This is something that’s been talked about for decades. In *Northern Frontier*, *Northern Homeland*, Berger argues that “the animal rights activists, ethnocentric and ignorant of Northern conditions, wanting to impose their own values and
attitudes on Northern natives, have aggravated existing hardships”\footnote{Berger, \textit{Northern Frontier, Northern Homeland}, 8} by making it much harder for the Inuit to participate in the economy.

“The main thing is that things are way more complicated and complex and a lot of charities or NGOs or people struggle with the more complicated complex issues,” says Redfern. “The universal shared goal is to be able to provide for oneself, one's family, to do so responsibly.” Part of that, for her, is as she puts it: “recognizing that it is impossible to have zero impact on the environment, and how do we therefore live?”

It sounds like a community needing to educate a well-intentioned group on the realities so they can all hold hands and sing kumbayah and work towards a more sustainable future. That’s one interpretation. Another is falling back on Audre Lorde’s assertion that you cannot dismantle the master’s house with the master’s tools, and pondering why it's the responsibility of the oppressed to teach the oppressors about oppression. “I think the South needs to educate itself. It’s not our responsibility to educate the South,” says Peter. “Unfortunately we have to undo all the harm that the animal rights groups are doing.”

Many conservationists, particularly well-publicized conservationists, disagree with Peter and Redfern: they believe that humans cannot live within the environment without impacting it and that those impacts are always inherently negative. Many of these conservationists “still maintain that humans and wilderness are inherently incompatible.”\footnote{Dowie, \textit{Conservation Refugees}, xxv.} Indigenous occupation of protected areas means
that Aboriginal peoples hunting and gathering, and their supporters, become “agents in the decline of biological diversity.”\textsuperscript{193} This discounts the connection many Indigenous peoples have to the territories they live in. “We are so connected to our environment. We know that we cannot live five minutes without our environment. We cannot live, we cannot survive if we don't make sure that the animals come. That we live sustainably,” says Peter. “And I think those WWF people and other people who want to conserve actually destroy. . . they’re dislocating and destroying habitats of Indigenous peoples and their connections to the environment.”

This connection she’s talking about is a kind of Traditional Knowledge, a stewardship of the environment that comes wrapped up with many different Indigenous worldviews. The Inuit have lived in the Arctic for centuries: to survive, they had to develop a “profound understanding of their environment, and how to live successfully in that environment and with each other.”\textsuperscript{194} On the surface, knowing how to identify a male or female polar bear by its tracks might seem like an isolated skill. But unpack it and it becomes “not only the action of doing things, but also why they are done as they are . . . [it is] the integration of [an] encompassing worldview, value-based behaviour, ecological knowledge, and environmental action.”\textsuperscript{195}

In fact, this idea of Indigenous peoples as conservationists has become a part of the environmental movement. This can be positive, but it can also look like a simplified, orientalized image of Traditional Knowledge, visible in things like the

\textsuperscript{193} Dowie, \textit{Conservation Refugees}, xxv.
\textsuperscript{195} IBID, 66.
Crying Indian ad. The ad, launched on Earth Day in 1971 by Keep America Beautiful, features Iron Eyes Cody, paddling a canoe through litter and gazing at industrial landscapes as drums swell behind him. As a passing car throws trash out its window at his feet, the narrator opines “Some people have a deep abiding respects for the natural beauty that was once this country. And some people don’t. People start pollution, people can stop it,” while Iron Eyes Cody sheds a single tear. Besides shifting the responsibility for pollution away from manufacturers and onto consumers, depictions like the Crying Indian on one hand create an orientalized idea of the connection Indigenous people have with nature, while on the other glossing over the very real stake Aboriginal peoples have in conservation. Either way, not everyone is happy about Indigenous involvement in conservation. Legendary palaeontologist Richard Leaky in fact, has maintained that the issue of protected areas “has been politicized by a vociferous minority that refuses to join the mainstream.”196 He’s not alone—Steven Sanderson, president of the Wildlife Conservation Society’s, for example, has expressed beliefs that the “entire global conservation agenda had been “hijacked” by advocates for indigenous peoples, placing wildlife and biodiversity at peril.”197 When actual Traditional Knowledge runs counter to the orientalized understanding of what Indigenous people are supposed to want, many conservations don’t really know how to handle it.

Madeleine Redfern thinks many Canadians don’t know how to handle it either. “I find Canadians struggle because on one hand they want to support

196 Dowie, Conservation Refugees, xxv.
197 IBID, xxv.
Indigenous culture and that we have this ‘special relationship with nature’ and also be very sensitive about discrimination, but then there are things where you see kind of crosses the line,” says Madeleine Redfern.

One example she says is the Green Party of Canada’s view on sealing. “The Green Party policy on commercial sealing is that we don’t support commercial sealing, but we support Inuit sealing,” says Redfern. “But our sealing is commercial! Literally the Green Party candidate for Nunavut is arguing with me saying I don’t know my culture, I don’t know my reality, he’s lived up here for two years, and he’s telling me that he’s not prepared to engage with me because I’m ignorant or I’m lying. And I’m like ‘excuse me?’” In this way, many Inuit can find themselves excluded from the sustainability debate—in much the same way that it’s impossible to talk about sustainability in Iceland without talking about Alcoa, if you can’t talk about sustainability in the Canadian Arctic—a topic of crucial importance as climate change wreaks havoc and extraction industries get increasingly dangerous in their quest for harder-to-reach resources—without talking about the seal hunt, for instance, many Inuit won’t be able to find common ground with the conservationists who should be working with them.

After all, it’s hard for Southern environmentalists to reconcile Inuit Traditional Knowledge with an abiding desire to eat seal. As English writes, “What the North regarded as essential to their economic and cultural survival, Southern environmentalists attacked as cruelty or threats to endangered species.”198 Aaju Peter sees this often. She’s an outspoken activist, and has been involved in protests

198 English, Ice and Water, 10.
around the globe. "I was in Brussels when this German member of the parliament said ‘yeah the problem with us, the Europeans, is we’re in love with the animal’. Which is true. They’re in love with the animal, one animal. Or a particular animal. And then all the other ugly ones, we’ll eat them, and we’re not in love with them, so you’re making poster children of a particular thing. And by golly nobody should make money on it,” she says. “He thought it was criminal to kill animals that are free. And he had absolutely no problem with raising cows and pigs and chicken and slaughter them any which way you want. They don’t get it.”

Janet Brewster says that animals hunted in this traditional way actually taste better than a cow that’s been slaughter and shipped North wrapped in plastic. “They taste better when they’re not afraid. I can’t tell the difference when I’m eating cows and lambs and stuff like that but most definitely the caribou and other [country food] that I eat has experienced a much healthier end to its life, or even a healthier life,” she says.

Peter agrees. She blames a change in flavour on chemicals released when an animal is afraid. “You can always tell when some hunters, their catch will taste better and this is because it’s done without scaring. The animal was not afraid, the animal was calm,” she says. This means that the best hunters might not necessarily be the most prolific; instead, they’re the ones who bring back the animals that taste the best and sustain the people the best, which runs counter to the perpetual growth economic model that has dominated Western and Southern thought for centuries and is at the backbone of capitalism. Hearing them talk, there’s a sense of dignity to
the life and death of an animal, that’s hard to picture extending to factory farmed meat in the South.

But it’s not how they’re killed that shocks Southerners—it’s the idea of using products from certain creatures, like a seal, narwhale or caribou. When I return to Ontario after my field work I had a caribou steak tucked into my suitcase: I’d eaten caribou several times in Iqaluit, and on one of my last days the Country Food Store had a sign outside declaring that they had received a shipment of tuktu. When I walked in I could see a guy in the back with a chain saw, dismantling the frozen animal. The clerk at the front said to come back that evening, when it would all be packaged up. But when I tell this story to Southern friends, let alone let them pet my seal skin mittens (because even vegans can’t resist stroking the seal skin), some people react with disgust. They couldn’t possibly eat a caribou, let alone try a hunk of raw blubber, or hunt down a narwhale for dinner (which would, to my mind, be like eating a unicorn). This squeamishness seems like a result of the sanitized way most people encounter their animal products today—wrapped in cling film and with an expiration date. I have vivid memories of going with my grandfather, who had a small herd of cattle, to Quinn’s Meats in Yarker, Ontario. The cow would walk in the back part of the building and come out the front, packaged by the butchers. There was no hiding where it came from, and I can’t imagine my grandfather being put off by the idea of eating narwhale or wearing seal skin. Today though, not only are we several generations removed, for many Southerners, from actively cultivating our own food, but even from the secondary benefits of it. My mother, for example, like’s to joke her undergraduate degree was paid for with blood money: my grandfather
would kill a cow to pay her tuition. The farther we get from that understanding in the South, the harder it is to reconcile the way the North has survived for centuries.

“Save some seal for me!” says Janet Brewster when I mention this. The idea is that certain animals—generally the fluffy pretty ones—have been privileged by the conservation industry and in turn by people in the developed South. For decades, conservationists focused on what’s known as ‘flagship species’ or ‘charismatic mega fauna’ instead of all animals equally. This intellectual separation is crucial, as it allows people to still consume factory farmed meat, but feel like they are ‘part of the solution’ environmentally. After all, they bought that stuffed panda doll from the WWF. In many ways, this is part and parcel of the Southern idea that people can be separated from their environment—we are so separate from nature that we can pick and choose which parts of the eco system are ‘nature’ and which part are to be consumed. We’ve intellectually removed animals that we find delicious, like chicken, beef and pork, from the same environmental web worthy of dignity and protection as lions, tigers and pandas. It’s why so many tourists flock to the Canadian North, for example, to catch a glimpse of a polar bear. And why Northerners are so baffled by that impulse.

Brewster says she would never ever want to see a polar bear. Last summer, there were reports of a polar bear on the ice near her house. “There were two ladies walking on the beach with a small dog and I was like ‘excuse me ladies, I’m not sure if you’ve heard but there’s a polar bear wandering around town’ and the lady was like ‘we know we’re looking for it’ and I was just like ‘oh my god, get out of there!”

199 Dowie, Conservation Refugees, xi.
she tells me. “You’re just going to have to run faster than that other woman. It just astounds me that somebody would be that stupid. And if you ask any Inuk about that, you would probably hear the exact same thing: no way I want to see one.”

In many ways, within Canada this is a continuing symptom of the Southern population never really seeing or knowing the North; even though the North is used for our cultural identity and sovereignty, Southern Canadians don’t have a clear picture of this Terra Incognita. Romeyn Stevenson, a City Council member and principal of Inuksuk High School in Iqaluit, sees this privileging of one species over another as an example of this misunderstanding. “It’s easier to place more importance on those animals than on ones that might be in their backyard or might be on their dining room table. It’s far easier to say ‘oh that poor little seal’ and the nearly extinct majestic polar bear because you’re never going to encounter them because you never go near those places.”

People are a part of the world, not apart from it—it’s impossible to remove people from the ecological map and preserve it somehow free of human impulse because people are part of that ecology. This is an essential part to understand the difference in worldviews that needs to be understood. It’s not simply enough to force Inuit worldviews and ways of knowing into a Western or Southern framework, by decrying that their way of understand the world is like a religion. That is just forcing a fundamentally different way of understanding the world into a box we can understand, into our own framework and paradigm. One very simple way to understand the fundamental shift in worldview is through the relationship with

200 Interview with author, November 2015.
animals. People are not removed from their environment; it’s a circle, a web, not a hierarchy that places humanity at the top. As English describes in *Ice and Water*, “There was a relationship between the human and animal worlds that are essential in a hunting society: animals and humans equally possess souls.”\(^{201}\) In that framework, it’s perfectly understandable that someone could respect an animal and love nature, and still wear the fluffy skin of a seal or eat whale. Pragmatism—that eating and wearing animal products are more ecologically sustainable and more adapted to the area—does not mean a disrespect for those creatures that is often implied by animal rights activists. Quite the contrary.

For proof that people are part of this intricate web, look no further than what happens when fortress conservation succeeds and kicks people out of these protected environments. Colloquial antidotes from around the globe show that when Indigenous populations are removed, it’s like cutting any other species out of the complex natural web that governs ecological balance. The removal of people, in this case, can be just as devastating to the environment as the insertion.

“Without a doubt Inuit are conservationists,” says Brewster. “I think that people have a hard time understanding that our knowledge is based on hundreds and hundreds of years of observation and on very real and kind of immeasurable impact of an oral society and oral knowledge. Just because it wasn’t written down doesn’t mean that it’s any less valid. You know that game telephone? I can almost guarantee you that if it were a group of Inuit playing it that the message would come back just fine.”

She’s talking about the role Inuit have in maintaining the balance of the region, a region that is, although beautiful, stark and not exactly easy to live in. This knowledge wasn’t codified or taught by an institution in a way that was understood and thus accepted by Southern institutions, and so it has often been dismissed as lacking in scientific rigor or even accuracy. Knowledge was passed down through doing: learning to hunt wasn’t just about learning to shoot a gun, but about learning how to maintain the delicate balance of the environment to make sure there was something to hunt next year, and the year after, for instance. In a lot of ways, Inuit Traditional Knowledge is utterly interdisciplinary and intertextual—and those are concepts the academy is only just starting to wrap their heads around. I spent over a year reading books and reports to retrieve data that many Northerners know without reports or citations. This knowledge is crucial to how Northerners have managed to survive in the North—and it’s knowledge that has to be experienced to be understood. Knowledge in this way is a verb, not a noun. The balance in the North is crucial; everything, from plants to animals to people must stay within that balance if they’re all going to survive.

It’s a balance that when tampered with can end badly. For example, in the 1950s, the Canadian government began enforcing game laws in the Qikiqtani region, which “addressed Southern concerns about preserving and conserving species, rather than Northern realities.” The locals, of course, were not asked to contribute their knowledge. The fear was that, with the intrusion of Southern technology like guns or snowmobiles, the balance would be off—and that the Inuit...
would behave exactly like Southerners, when given the opportunity, and overhunt the area. The Canadian Wildlife Service didn't have sufficient information about game populations, for instance, to come to these conclusions. But they still developed “laws with strict limits or prohibitions on the types and number of animals that could be taken, and restrictions on the dates when they could be hunted.”

This echoes how conservationists have fixated on certain charismatic mega fauna like seals, without any real understanding of whether that species needed conservation or not. “In the 60s and 70s when Greenpeace was going against sealing, there was 1.5 million harp seals. And now we have 10 million. So I don’t understand what we’re trying to conserve,” says Peter. “In our own tradition you actually have to control the number of the species. Because when there are too many of it that’s also not conservation. That’s endangering the species itself. And now these 10 million harp seals are eating 10 million tons of fish. It’s destruction.”

In this way, the goal of conservation wasn't just conserving the animal and organic biodiversity; it was about preserving an imagined primordial Inuit past, trapped like a bug under cultural glass. “Without a doubt not only in Canada but world wide [there is] a tendency by many European Western cultures to stereotype and freeze Indigenous culture. And we see that being used against us all the time. ‘You’re not a real Inuk, you’re not a real Indigenous person because you don’t live in a teepee’ or it’s not traditional if you hunt with a gun or a boat with a motor. And yet every other culture in this world is allowed to evolve, and does!” says Madeleine Qikiqtani Inuit Association, “QTC Final Report: Achieving Saimaqatiqinqniq,” 37.
Redfern. "You don’t say to a German ‘well you’re not a real German because you’re not wearing lederhosen’ and ‘you know you’re not a real Japanese because you’re not a geisha’, ‘you’re not a real American because you’re not a cowboy’, you know? What people fail to understand and appreciate is that Inuit have always adapted, you’ve had to. And so which point in time are we supposed to freeze? In my grandmother’s time period? In my great great great grandmother’s time period? Which?”

This echoes paternalistic attitudes that have dominated federal interaction with the North since before confederation. Just as Franklin refused to adopt Northern survival techniques that may have kept him from eating his boots (thought we forgot about that didn’t you Franklin?), today conservations, by condemning and banning things like the seal hunt, almost seem to be forcing Northerners to acquiesce to this idea that Southern technology is superior. And by its superiority, its impact should be feared in a way that ‘traditional’ technologies should not—the imagined traditions are almost quaint and vaguely adorable, while the newest Southern technology and thought is dangerous, and only to be handled by those trained and experienced enough to understand that danger. Which is actually very silly. “We were always evolving and adapting. We were technologists,” says Redfern. “The kayak is a form of amazing technological feat. The waterproof kamiks, the seal skin boots, the igloo, an architect would tell you that an igloo is a phenomenal piece of architectural development.” One day during my stay in Iqaluit I hiked up a cliff in Apex, and watched over the frozen sea a group of hunters on snow mobiles heading out. Just as a reluctance to accept Southern life ways in the past condemned
Northerners, it does so today as well—if Northerners want to hold onto traditional life ways, then clearly there is only one acceptable definition of what that can be: an imagined past that has never changed, ever.

Northerners however feel a bit differently. “It makes sense that you should be wearing seal skin mitts here,” says Laakkuluk Williamson Bathory, a poet, artist and performer with roots in both Greenland and Iqaluit. She tells me you can always tell people who’ve been in the North for a while because they’re the ones wearing fur, and packing their babies in the hood of amauti’s—traditional parkas where the baby is carried on the mother’s back in a cozy hood. “We actually feel sorry for kids that are put in sleds and strollers here because obviously you’ll be cold.” She says this is one of the fine lines between appropriation and appreciation, that actually seems to echo the incredibly adaptive nature of Inuit culture. Inuit culture is nothing if not pragmatic. “Of course you can wear an amauti here if you’re non-Inuk—your baby will be safer. It makes much more sense then. But if you’re going to take the pattern from someone and use it to profit, then you are appropriating.”

This idea of what a ‘real’ Inuk is is something that requires that balance, while at the same time being deeply influenced by this reluctance on the part of Southern Canadians to intellectually allow the orientalized image of Northern peoples to evolve. In fact, this idea of balance can be seen in the changes today in Iqaluit. Iqaluit is an incredibly diverse community, situated in the middle of a Territory that is primarily Indigenous. And yet, because of a willingness to embrace change and a pragmatism to adapt that has kept the Inuit alive in this region for centuries, the

204 Interview with author, November 2015.
community itself—the people—is thriving.

“There is no other community in Nunavut like Iqaluit,” says Redfern. “There’s no other community like Iqaluit that has our history or our status, nor our opportunities, nor our challenges, nor our problems. And the reality is that the backdrop is the creation of the Territory because of the signing of the Land Claims Agreement and a desire by Inuit to have effectively an Inuit homeland. And for Nunavut to be as unique in the Canadian mosaic, the way that Quebec is. But what we see 20 years after signing the Land Claims, 16 years after the creation of the Territory with Iqaluit as its capital is that a lot of the original vision for Nunavut and Iqaluit has not panned out the way that a lot of Inuit had hoped for.”

2.12 Industrializing the North

The North has long been a site of industry. It wasn’t the breadbasket, or the manufacturing centre, or the urban sprawl locus in the same way other parts of the country have been. Instead, the North has been valuable for what it can do for the South. First, in the sense of a trade route: it was never the North itself that had value, but rather its position as a conduit to valuable things. Now, even as the Northwest Passage begins to melt and be open for the first time, the North is still not valued for itself, for the reality of the North and the people who call it home, but rather for the resources that can be removed from it. While before the value was as a point of transition to transport goods and people from one site of value to another, now, the value is transporting things from the North. The North is a space not to be inhabited: instead, it’s a source of goods to be removed to fuel the South, then returned to the
North at quadruple the price, to continue the cycle so more goods can be extracted and sent South. As Therrien and Neu explain in Accounting for Genocide, “The information age is in reality a continuation of the industrial age under a new moniker, an even deeper advance of the economic imperialism into Indigenous territories—an advance whose end can only be the complete elimination of the cultures still living in those “resource rich” territories.”

The benefit of this extraction is not reaped by the communities from which the resources are acquired. Although there is a lot of fancy talk about job creation and development, that is not the goal of extraction. Extraction economies are the opposite of development: extractive industries benefit if there aren’t organized and developed communities with their own powerful goals and values working nearby. The reason for this is of course that extractive industries are incredibly disruptive and damaging in both the short and long term. The environmental impact of these activities is not restricted to the place and time in which they are situated, and so these industries could be seen as perpetrators of slow violence. The tentacles of industry extend far deeper than that. This is something that Traditional Knowledge intrinsically understands. With the theoretical framework of interconnectivity (that everything is connected to everything else in a circular web), Indigenous Knowledge tells us that you cannot dam a river or drill for oil and only impact the people, land and animals directly around that site. Many industrial capitalists would acknowledge that there is impact far beyond the site itself—but that those impacts are the cost of doing business, and the result are worth it. Heavy industry affects the

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Therrien and Neu, Accounting for Genocide, 8.
animals not just directly in the path of the industry, but those who pass through it—the migratory routes of birds, sea animals and land animals are disrupted, not just by the physical presence of equipment but by things as subtle as the vibrations from trucks and other heavy machinery. In turn, the organisms that use those animals for food are also affected, including humans. What these industries do to the communities around them also has an impact, which in the case of Nunavut resulted in a much larger amount of garbage, produced by a change in life ways that resulted from this industrial development, which created the dump fire.

This shouldn’t be a surprise. It’s been happening for years, and has been well reported. Even before Thomas Berger wrote about the Mackenzie Valley pipeline, there was evidence that industrial development in Indigenous territory was a very bad idea. Just ask the Lubicon. They were recognized as a distinct society and promised a reserve in the 1930s, but by the 1950s that territory was found to have oil: and therefore a reserve could not be allowed to happen. By the 1960s, 23 wells were planned in Lubicon territory (which had never been officially ceded of course). The number of wells continued to grow, eventually reaching 50 wells. In order to support those wells, the bush had to be cleared and roads and infrastructure for the many workers constructed and maintained. All this activity created noise pollution, disrupted ecosystems, and created garbage both from the workers and from the clear-cutting of trees and debris from the construction and mining process itself that had to be dealt with by the community, mainly through burning. All of this got in

206 Therrien and Neu, Accounting for Genocide, 147.
207 Hold on for future sections to find out why that is a terrible idea.
the way of the actual lives of the people living there. Trapping returns decreased, from “than $5000 per trapper to less than $400.” Since this was one of the main income sources, welfare dependence among the Lubicon rose from 10 per cent in 1980 to 95 per cent in 1993. All at the same time that an estimated million dollars worth of oil was being extracted from their land.

The lesson learned by industrialists, however, was not the necessity of halting such disruptive activities. Instead, it was that if this was going to happen, Terra Nullius would have to be dusted off and reapplied. But, in the modern period, there was nowhere to move people. Ironically, the areas where, in the first waves of colonialism, many Indigenous groups had been shoved, are now “perceived as resource-rich territories in an increasingly resource -poor world.” Between industry and conservation, there are very few ‘empty’ places left. Which means colonization has now been rebranded as economic development. The distinction here is actually between settler colonialism and industrial colonialism. As mentioned before, while old style colonialism targeted claiming the land itself, that system was also very much extractive and made use of the human and material resources of the colonies to expand the wealth of the metropolis, as in the case of whale hunting in the Arctic. With the rise of industrialization, this process just became more destructive and efficient: industrial colonialism values the resources within the land— which makes an interesting case of Nunavut, which is often held up as an example of a sovereign Indigenous territory within Canada. Technically, it’s

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208 Therrien and Neu, *Accounting for Genocide*, 147.
209 IBID, 147.
210 IBID, 141.
one of the few places where the Indigenous population theoretically has control and power over their territory as a unique entity that is held on the same intellectual level as other provinces and territories, instead of as a reserve or special interest group. That protects the land itself. However, what about the resources within the land and sea?

Oil may have been the name of the game in past decades and while that still continues to be a major concern, in the next 50 years it will be combined with that old style transport once again. On the heels of the Harper Government’s $1 billion investment in the Pacific Gateway Initiative comes the Arctic Gateway Initiative. Byers, in *Who Owns the Arctic?* describes the plan as claiming to “develop the most efficient and secure transportation corridors possible between North America and Asia.”  

This Arctic Gateway Initiative first started making headlines in 2007. Canada has the longest coastline of any country, most of it in the Arctic, and while it has, up until now, been mostly locked in with what’s known as multi-year ice—ice that is created and added to year after year—thanks to climate change now huge swathes of it are opening up each year, either completely, or with a relatively thin layer of single-year ice which can be broken through. And the Northwest Passage is once again the crown jewel of arctic development, a 7,000 kilometre shortcut from New Jersey to Shanghai. Climate change also handily lengthens the shipping year; ships can stay out longer without fear of being locked into the ice. The Arctic Gateway Initiative would include all-season roads, deep-water ports in places like the Mackenzie River (yes, Berger’s Mackenzie River), Bathurst Inlet and Iqaluit,

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211 Byers, *Who Owns the Arctic?*, 86.
turning the Arctic into hubs of trade and transport. Or, dare I say it, a Polar Mediterranean.

But at what cost? Berger probably wouldn’t be onboard, considering in 1977 he wrote: “For many, the advance of industry and technology to the margins of the globe represents a kind of manifest destiny for industrial man. For others, it represents an unacceptable threat to the future of the biosphere itself.”212 And for others still it’s not a place for extraction or shipping. Iqaluit is not a port city whose main job is industry. It’s a homeland. And to develop it, Northerners will have to be onboard. Will it be developed as it has been, with infrastructure created for specific industrial or military installations, or will the community itself, and the people who live there, finally have access to sustainable infrastructure into the future? This is actually not a new question. Several decades ago, Berger brought it up in Northern Frontier, Northern Homeland, writing: “The choice we make will decide whether the North is to be primarily a frontier for industry or a homeland for its peoples. We shall have the choice only once. Any attempt to beg the question that now faces us, to suggest that choice has already been made or need never be made will be an inexcusable evasion of responsibility.”213

It would seem, in the last 40 years, that Canada has chosen the former. To achieve the goals of plans like the Arctic Gateway and the industrialization that came before it, it was necessary not just to assimilate the Indigenous population in the format of old-style colonialism, but to do so into an economic system. No longer

212 Berger, Northern Frontier, Northern Homeland, 13.
213 IBID, 33.
are signifiers of assimilation religion or values: now it’s the ability to participate in a wage economy. It’s almost more insidious, as assimilation is no longer constructed as an active choice (or even a coerced choice) but rather as an inevitability. In this way, the conceptualization of assimilation as a forgone conclusion is re-expressed.

There is no option but the Southern economy. Instead of leaving the ‘bad’ choice of maintaining traditional life ways, there is now just a surface understanding that these traditions are still in place, while underneath life ways are being irreversibly changed in order to fuel industry. These changes in life ways are what led to a more consumer driven society, which led to more garbage, which led to the dump fire. This economic assimilation is just as dangerous. It’s fuelled by the same rhetoric of assimilation that previous instances of cultural assimilation were based on.

Economic assimilation starts with education. Much education in the North is fuelled by a desire to feed that industry. Schools are funded by industry; scholarships and students are groomed for jobs within industry. It’s no surprise that many students from the Arctic strive for jobs within those industries, since those are the jobs that will allow them to remain in their communities and develop their communities. The stakes for Indigenous communities are clear however, and include the outcomes of Watt-Cloutier’s ‘wounded hunter spirit’. These results are often viewed in the same way a resistance to cultural assimilation was in the past: as almost moral failings or proof of inferiority. Only in recent years, with the work of the TRC and the QTC, is it becoming clear to non-Indigenous Canadians that many of these visible outcomes are actually the result of this economic severing from traditional life ways and connections to the land. Again, this is a form of Terra
Nullius: this time, a complete transformation not of culture, but of the very model of life. By targeting the economy, the ability to survive, assimilation wasn’t a forgone conclusion: it was the only possible conclusion other than actual eradication.

In 2016, there is no going back to a time before this economic assimilation, because the North is nearly impossible to live in without it. Prices for groceries in Canada’s North are the highest in the country: everything, from housing to transport to construction to buying a loaf of bread costs more because it all has to be imported from the South. Once again we see the raw materials being extracted from the North, shipped to the South where they are manufactured, the benefits of this more advanced process being reaped not by the Northerners but by the people of the South, then shipped back North at quadruple the price. For example, in Nunavut, according to a 2003 report by Canada’s Northern Contaminants Program, “store-bought food for a family of four would cost $240 per week, or $12,500 (U.S.) per year—an amount unaffordable for nearly everyone there, as the average annual family income is under $35,000.”214 There are numerous blogs and websites dedicated to tracking the astronomical prices of basic food items in the North, far out of line with their Southern counterparts (even if you now need a bank loan to buy a cauliflower).

And thanks to industrialization, there is literally little other choice: enter, the Arctic Paradox, or ‘why you shouldn’t eat anything in Nunavut ever that doesn’t come wrapped in plastic.’

214 Cone, Silent Snow, 81.
2.13 The Artic Paradox

Country food, or traditional food sources from the land, “is nutritionally rich and culturally important.” And, as the Government of Nunavut's Framework for Action on Nutrition notes, “Inuit traditional foods have outstanding nutritional value and continued reliance on food from the land can help improve food security by providing a higher-quality diet at lower cost.” This is the diet that has allowed people in the North to survive for thousands of years. There’s a reason Inuit don’t get scurvy, even if they can’t grow lettuce. It is possible to get “virtually every nutrient their bodies need—including riboflavin, thiamin, and niacin, and the antioxidant vitamins A, C, E, and selenium—from their native foods.” So why aren’t people relying on these food sources as a cheap and high quality alternative to expensive imports? Because doing so may be dangerous, even deadly. As the QTC reports,

Living beings, including Inuit and Arctic land and marine mammals, have some of the world’s highest levels of exposure to mercury and other toxic chemicals, including DDT and PCBs. These contaminants accumulate in the fat of animals at the top of the food chain, which are then consumed by Inuit. Normal freeze-and-thaw cycles release toxins gathered in annual snow

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217 Cone, Silent Snow, 50.
accumulations into the same waters where Inuit hunt and fish. Resource development carries further environmental risks that Inuit are working to understand and manage.\textsuperscript{218}

This means that people living in the Arctic have some of the highest toxicity loads in the world. The Conference Board of Canada, in their 2004 report *Infrastructure Planning for Nunavut’s Communities* found that “many of the threats to Nunavut’s environment—global warming and contaminants—originate from other areas but hit the Nunavut eco-system hard.”\textsuperscript{219} The report references the Northern Contaminants Program, which found mercury levels were increasing in lake sediments in the territory South of 80 degrees, and “levels of mercury and other heavy metals are expected to increase in the Canadian Arctic Ocean through climate change.”\textsuperscript{220} What does this mean for people living there? As the Conference Board reports, because certain contaminants take much longer to dissipate in the North than in Southern environments, these contaminants are able to concentrate in the food chain and end up in the bodies of *Nunavummiut* (a resident of Nunavut). The report found that in the Baffin and Kivalliq regions, “more than one quarter of the population is taking in levels of mercury through country food that are above that level known to be safe.”\textsuperscript{221}

\textsuperscript{220} IBID, 11.
\textsuperscript{221} IBID, 13.
This is happening in a region that is not producing or in many cases even consuming the products that create this pollution. As environmental journalist Marla Cone writes in her book, *Silent Snow*, “Arctic people and animals are hundreds of miles from any significant source of pollution, living in one of the most desolate spots on the planet, yet, paradoxically, they are among the planet’s most contaminated living organisms.”²²² The Arctic is usually painted as a place of pristine beauty, wide-open spaces of untouched land, unspoiled by the industrialized world. Iqaluit certainly looks that way from the air; it’s a wide-open space with skies that seem to go on forever. It’s strikingly beautiful, and makes you feel small and connected to the land, the reality of it, in a way that doesn’t happen in the South. In the South, it’s possible to ignore the connection to the wild—in Nunavut, the wild is everywhere, inescapable. But much of it is also toxic. In centuries past, colonizers brought diseases like smallpox to the North: today, the South doesn’t have to go anywhere near the North to harm people’s health. As Cone writes, “Inuit in remote areas of Greenland carry more mercury and PCBs in their bodies than anyone else on Earth, and the Canadian Inuit in nearby Nunavik and the territory of Nunavut aren’t far behind.”²²³

The bodies of Arctic women carry about 10 times more pesticides and industrial chemicals than do those of Southern women. About two thirds of the PCBs that make it to the Arctic, washed up on air currents and water currents, stay there.

²²² Cone, *Silent Snow*, 43.
²²³ IBID, 43.
This adds up to between 46 and 57 tons added to the eco system every year.\footnote{224} Which is troublesome because “these compounds are slow to break down in frigid temperatures, so they endure in the ice for decades, even centuries.”\footnote{225} Because of freeze-thaw cycles, these chemicals tend to accumulate along the ice edges—right in the path of plants and animals. In an Arctic environment, growth is slow. It’s steady. It takes time, enough time for these pollutants to build up, increasing in potency as they make their way up the food chain. “They warn us Inuit not to eat things like the fat from higher apex predators whether that’s whales or caribou or polar bears or seal livers if you’re pregnant because the toxin levels are magnified,” says Redfern.

Today, around 200 different toxic pesticides and industrial compounds have been found inside Arctic people around the globe, including the Dirty Dozen—legacy pollutants such as PCB’s, DDT, Mirex, Dieldrin and Chlordane that may have gone out of use in the South, but are still hanging around the Arctic. But the list isn’t over: in addition to the above, “mercury is on the rise in many animals of the Arctic, and so are a variety of new contaminants, such as brominated flame retardants, widely applied to plastics and foam, and perfluorinated acids, formerly used in Scotchgard and still used in making Teflon.”\footnote{226} Unlike PCBs, DDT and brominated flame retardants accumulate in fat, as Redfern mentioned—which is a problem because the fat has traditionally been a delicacy and an important source of nutrients for Northerners. But mercury and perfluororinated chemicals build up in protein-based...
tissues such as the liver.\textsuperscript{227} This makes virtually every part of many of the animals traditionally consumed toxic.

Data from the Baffin region in the late 1990s showed that the Inuit were exceeding tolerable daily intake levels for these contaminants. Canadian health agencies were stymied as to what to do about it, especially when it came to nursing mothers in remote Arctic communities. To tell people not to eat beluga, for instance, would be to run the risk of increased rates of heart disease, cancer and malnutrition because they’d be missing out on nutrients, as well as healthy fatty acids.\textsuperscript{228} But to do nothing was to risk the effects of contamination. As Cone writes in \textit{Silent Snow}, “If the agency were to adhere to its own national policies, it would have to issue warnings to the Inuit to stop eating their traditional foods. But public health officials had never encountered a problem like this before, where the contaminated foods were so vital to a society’s health, culture, and economy.”\textsuperscript{229} The government of Canada had a choice: advise people not to nurse their babies and carry on eating the available food they had always eaten, which raised concerns about child welfare, malnutrition and even starvation. Or, they could stay silent, and just let people in the Arctic carry on, without telling them these practices could be dangerous. As Cone explains, “If they ignored their own toxic guidelines when it came to the Inuit, wouldn’t that be discriminatory? Could they follow one health policy for white

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\footnote{\textsuperscript{227} Cone, \textit{Silent Snow}, 23.}
\footnote{\textsuperscript{228} IBID, 201.}
\footnote{\textsuperscript{229} IBID, 116.}
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people and another for the Inuit? And if they were going to ignore the guidelines whenever they were too difficult to implement, why have them at all?”

There are no Inuktitut words for chemical or contaminant—there didn’t have to be. To explain what was happening faced barriers of language and culture that just seemed insurmountable. The Government of Canada failed to stick their landing; they stumbled on what to do with a population whose food could kill them, and how to accurately explain that to Northerners. In 1997, Public Health officials and Inuit leaders decided to just shut up, and tell people that “the benefits of the native diet outweigh the risks. Don’t worry, they said. Just keep doing what you are doing. Eat your foods.” There is no good solution when the choice is malnutrition or toxins.

The problem is that country food doesn’t just nourish the body; for Arctic peoples it nourishes the soul. Food, from its acquisition through hunting and gathering to its preparation and consumption within communities is a way to cement important community and familial ties, as well as pass down culture and Traditional Knowledge. As many people told me in the North, hunting isn’t just about coming home with a seal or a caribou; it’s about teaching practical knowledge, like migration patterns and animal husbandry, as well as culturally necessary ways of seeing the world and a person’s place within it. As Janet Brewster tells me, “There’s nothing sadder than an Inuk that hasn’t been able to have inuksiutinik (country food). Sometimes I can see on Facebook or wherever someone say ‘I wish I

230 Cone, Silent Snow, 116.
231 IBID, 113.
232 IBID, 113.
had seal meat’ and a couple of days later from down South they’ll say ‘oh thank you so much someone sent it down’. That’s a really important aspect of living life as an Inuk, living and sharing food.”

Hunting and gathering to get country food is how knowledge of the land and conservation is passed down from generation to generation, as previously discussed; being on the land is fundamental to sustaining the culture. Sharing the fruits of this labour is fundamental to community structure and unity. Take away the seal or the caribou, and how will the culture survive? “It means that you’re not only sustaining yourself with organic free range local meat but you’re also consuming a spiritual practice where you see that you have a soul and that’s connected to your family. And that the animals have soul and that you’re ingesting these souls in order to nourish yourself, not just physically but also culturally,” says Laakkuluk Williamson Bathory. She laughs when I ask if there’s such a thing as a vegan Inuk. “How can a seal that’s been hunted by your family or your good friend be more dangerous than a piece of pork from who knows where with who knows what going through its veins? There’s a huge industry that’s covering all of that up because it’s so profitable to keep that meat on the shelves in the stores. For example you’re not supposed to eat seal liver because of the levels of heavy metals in it, and that’s actually the food that is always given to pregnant women.” She pauses. Her toddler daughter is playing with her iPhone, and threatening to throw it. “I haven’t eaten seal liver in so long because I’m breast feeding still. And all that stuff, I slough it off to my children.”
It’s why even if you disregard the packaging and environmental impact of shipping in all those products, and the inevitability of what’s going to happen to all the waste a more consumer driven society will create, this sort of economic change is disastrous. To put it in context, a single whale can provide 60,000 pounds of food or more. To import that amount of food would bankrupt many families. The cycle of assimilation is complete, not by an exterior force, but by the need to survive. What had been an arduously slow process of assimilation in the South that took centuries to draw Indigenous communities closer to the settler economy happened in a matter of decades in the North. And it exploded spectacularly.

Nunavut stands with all the cards in its hands. Nunavut has access to vast oil resources and has connections to territory that is currently being disputed by multiple countries. They also have the Northwest Passage: what once brought explorers to their shores now will soon be open—and Canada is coming. This could be a major boon for Canadian shipping and the Canadian economy, but to reap those rewards it has to be the Canadian Northwest Passage. While all this is going on one hand, the tourism and conservation industry is kicking into high gear, fuelled by pictures of starving polar bears and climate change to act. Floods of tourists, for example, are ready to pay to see it before it’s gone—this sort of ‘last chance’ tourism is expanding across the globe, including the Arctic. But success can’t be found through assimilation. As Daniel Wildcat, director of the American Indian studies program and the Haskell Environmental Research Studies Center at Haskell Indian Nations University, wrote, “If we, Native peoples, exercise self-determination to improve our lives by simply adopting the definitions, models, and activities that
define the dominant culture and society surrounding us, we are likely to find ourselves enacting self-termination.”

This chapter has established that just as Franklin and his ilk attempted to transport the South North in the holds of their ships, and died because of it, modern day industrialists transport Southern life ways, in the form of consumption and a wage economy, North. And it is literally bursting into flames. Industrialization of the North came from this history of exploration and exploitation based on Terra Nullius. This doctrine allowed for the assimilation of Indigenous peoples, because they were not valued and their culture was not valued, which has translated into this adoption of consumption patterns and life ways that are simply untenable in the North. The Inuit of Nunavut have found themselves trapped between two worlds—culturally and legally. They were never under the treaty system, and yet were treated as second-class citizens. They are expected to excel both as Inuit and also within the industrialized wage economy if they want to survive. These changes to life ways created the dump fire, and Canada’s failure to adapt technology to the North let it burn.

Mayor Madeleine Redfern and unremediated garbage.
3.1 Turtles and trash

The sun is starting to set as Madeleine Redfern, Mayor of Iqaluit, tells me to get out of the car. She’s taken me on a tour of the city, and we’ve quite literally come to the end of the road. There are sled dogs tied up on either side, and they start to howl as we park and crunch across the snow. She pauses, pointing to pokey bits of metal sticking out of the ground, urging me to be careful as I take pictures.

“Heavy machinery, metals, old vehicles and then those barrels that are supposed to be shipped out of the community . . . This is completely an area that is random stuff,” she tells me. We walk to the top of a cliff overlooking the water: the sun is setting, glinting off the snow, but dotting the cliff, all the way down to the bottom, is garbage. The first thing that crosses my mind is turtles. In the South, I’ve heard the story many times from people from several Indigenous groups that the world is built on a turtle’s back: when asked what’s under the turtle, the response is ‘it’s turtles, all the way down’. Standing on top of that cliff, looking down on the sea and the snow, all I could think is that in the South, it may be turtles all the way down. But in the North, it’s garbage.

These are the remnants of Crystal Two, a USAF station constructed in 1941-42. Code-named Chaplet or Izoc, Crystal Two was the North Atlantic wing of the Air Transport Command, an air base established by the United States military during the second world war at the head of Frobisher Bay. One hundred and forty-four enlisted men and 12 officers were stationed at Crystal Two, and it included a 25-bed hospital (exceeding the medical services available in the Baffin Region at the time).
and two paved runways that serviced frequent aircrafts, as well as ships from the US Army and Navy. In the mid-1950s, military involvement continued in the area with the construction of the DEW Line across the Arctic, and Frobisher Bay (as Iqaluit was known at the time) continued to be a strategic hub of operations. “The Canadian government bought the air base from the USAF for about $6.8 million in 1944 (equivalent to $91 million in 2013), with the RCAF taking over the few requirements for air-base operations.”

Crystal Two was the moment Frobisher Bay went from being a mostly-ignored-except-for-a-few-missionaries-and-the-Hudson’s-Bay-Company area to big news. This was, in many ways, the moment that everything began to change in Iqaluit.

“A lot of these contaminated sites or abandoned dump areas are from that time period because when the Americans left they effectively pushed a lot of their building materials, trucks, equipment, off of the cliff areas. And buried it,” Redfern tells me. “The unfortunate thing is in about the early 2000s the American and Canadian government negotiated a deal [that] effectively America gave Canada $1 million dollars in used armament goods in exchange for eliminating their liability regarding the old DEW Line sites. So a million dollars of used things like boots, we’re not even talking about arms.”

The road to the dump is actually one of the old American runways. When these areas are remediated, they’re supposed to be turned over from federal jurisdiction to municipal. The Federal Government has a list of contaminated Distant Qikiqtani Inuit Association, “Iqaluit,” Qikiqtani Truth Commission: Community Histories 1950-1975 (Iqaluit: Inhabit Media Inc, April 2014), 24.
Early Warning Line (DEW Line) sites, built in the 1950s, throughout the Territory that they’ve invested in to clean up. Sixty-three sites were built, mostly by the United States according to an international agreement. Forty-two DEW Line sites are within Canadian territory, 15 within Nunavut.\textsuperscript{235} They were decommissioned in the 1960s, with half the sites operating under the Department of National Defense (DND) until 1993, the other the responsibility of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada. And they’re a mess. According to the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces, “the sites were operated using practices and materials accepted by the environmental standards of the time. The environmental standards of today are not those of yesterday—they are much more rigorous in accordance with current environmental knowledge and are entrenched in federal, territorial, and provincial law.”\textsuperscript{236} The DND began investigating the sites in 1989, and started cleaning up two of the sites in 1996. This involved demolition of existing infrastructure, the remediation of chemically contaminated soils and landfill sites, the construction of new engineered landfills, and finally shipping contaminated soil and debris to the South for disposal. The sites included soil contaminated with hydrocarbons, the product of oil and gas, as well as polychlorinated biphenyl’s (PCBs), lead and other heavy metals. The idea was to reduce the risk to the communities around the sites and to prevent contamination of


\textsuperscript{236} IBID.
the food chain and environment. Clean-up of the sites was completed in 2014, with a 25-year monitoring program, at a cost of $575 million. On March 7, 2014, just three months before Iqaluit’s dump, which had its beginnings in the DEW Line era, would burst into flames, the Department of National Defense announced that the “largest environmental clean-up in Canada’s history is now finished.” The clean-up remediated 21 former radar stations across Canada’s Arctic, and as well as demolition of infrastructure and removal of contaminated soils, included, as Federal Treasury Board president Tony Clement told CBC, “stabilizing of landfill sites and the construction of new and innovatively engineered landfills designed to stand the test of time.” None of this touched Iqaluit.

“One of them actually was Resolution Island, which is just down the bay,” says Redfern. “But because Iqaluit wasn’t a DEW Line site, it’s not on that list.” Iqaluit was the hub, servicing and providing access to the DEW Line as well as military installations and operations that predate the DEW Line, and yet it is not on the list to receive federal support to clean it up.

The cliff we’re looking at is just one of many unremediated dump sites scattered around Iqaluit. “I think there are about seven or eight, maybe more,” says Redfern as she drives me to another spot in town. Just outside Iqaluit is an area known as Upper Base, originally part of the American military installation (the section that was closer to modern day Iqaluit was known as Lower Base). I’m

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237 Remember this, because these same themes are going to be coming up a lot later.
239 IBID.
240 See Appendix C for map of some of the sites.
awestruck with how pretty it is, the twilight lit city, the snowy peaks, the bay at my front and the tundra at my back. Madeleine points out the smooth spot where barrels of toxic waste are buried, just outside the city, hidden in what looks like a barren, beautiful landscape.

“That turns out to be an area of buried toxins and materials. I was horrified to learn from a community member that they along with some other community representatives had been asked by the government if they wanted the toxins to be shipped out or was it OK to bury it,” she says. “And that's what happens when you have sometimes community members who are simply too uneducated and unaware, and you’re going ‘why would you ever accept to have it buried? Like what did you get in lieu of having it buried? What was the trade off in where it was buried versus having it shipped out?’ And once you start asking those questions, by far people tend to shut down. Because they get a bit embarrassed or defensive. Because they agreed to a decision with nothing in return.”

It’s about then that I start to realize this issue is much bigger than one burning dump. Welcome to Iqaluit.

**3.2 The Scoop on Trash**

North Americans produce a lot of garbage. As journalist Heather Rogers explains in *Gone Tomorrow: The Hidden Life of Garbage*, “In 2003 Americans threw out almost 500 billion pounds of paper, glass, plastic, wood, food, metal, clothing, dead electronics and other refuse. Recent figures show that every American discards over
1,600 pounds of rubbish a year—more than 4.5 pounds per person per day. “241
This works out to approximately 1,642.5 pounds of trash per person per year, or
745 kilograms. As Rogers explains, “over the past generation our mountains of
waste have doubled.”242 Canada does slightly better, but not by much. According to a
report prepared in 2014 by Giroux Environmental Consulting on waste in Canada, in
2010, nationally, 25 million tons of non-hazardous residential and non-residential
waste was sent to disposal in Canada. Per capita, each person in Canada disposes of
729 kg of waste each year according to 2010 statistics.243 In a ranking of
Organization for Economic Cooperation and Develop (OECD) countries by the
Conference Board of Canada, Canada came in last, 17th out of 17.244

Where is all this waste going? Most of it is being buried, out of sight and out
of mind, by “creating every-more effective depositories for refuse.”245 The more
efficient our sanitation engineers and their landfills become, the better they are at
“what has become an ongoing aim in the profession: disappearing garbage.”246
Garbage in this case isn’t seen as something that is recoverable or should be
recoverable; in fact, the way we intellectually think about trash has been changing
over time. In earlier centuries, garbage was seen as a renewable resource:

241 Heather Rogers, Gone Tomorrow: The Hidden Life of Garbage (New York: New
242 IBID, 2.
243 Laurie Giroux, State of Waste Management in Canada, prepared by Giroux
Environmental Consulting in association with Duncan Bury Consulting, Rene Drolet
Consulting Services, and Ecoworks Consulting, prepared for Canadian Council of
244 IBID, 6.
245 Rogers, Gone Tomorrow, 61.
246 IBID, 61.
something that could be picked over for all potential use. Clothing would be repaired and restyled until it was so worn out it would be turned into rags, for use around the house, before finally being sold to a rag picker for industrial use, for example. And, as many homes were heated and lit by fireplaces, wastes would be burned, the ashes once again collected for use as fertilizer. The ability to create trash then, to discard unwanted items instead of finding new purposes for them was “directly proportionate to the health of the economy; the fewer resources people had, the fewer substances they regarded as garbage.”247 This is something Elizabeth Royte discovered when, during the research for her book Garbage Land: On the Secret Trail of Trash, she sorted and weighed her own garbage, to see what she was really throwing out. “Rooting through my garbage,” she writes, “I wondered briefly which items I’d keep if I had to live off of this waste. Then I realized I wouldn’t have bought most of this stuff in the first place, or thrown most of it out, had I been in that position.”248

This is actually something that makes sense to many Inuit communities. Jamesee Moulton grew up in Iqaluit. He’s watched the community, and it’s trash, change over time. “Traditionally Inuit encampments or little settlements or tribes or whatever you would like to refer to them as did not generate waste. Because they lived solely off the land. You don’t waste that caribou skin because that caribou skin is what keeps you warm for the winter. You don’t waste those caribou bones because those are what you make your tools out of. You don’t waste that caribou

247 Rogers, Gone Tomorrow, 99.
liver because that’s valuable protein and nourishment for your family OK? Nothing went to waste because they were living off the land,” he says.249 He has to check the title on his door to figure out what his official role is the day I sit down with him—he’s the Pollution Prevention Program Specialist with the Government of Nunavut, as well as acting as Environmental Compliance Manager and the Director of Environmental Protection. “Then you start getting settlements and people from the South coming up with their packaged goods and all of a sudden you start generating waste. This tin can is no good to anyone now that it doesn’t have any beans in it. What are you going to do with it? You’re going to leave it in the garbage dump.”

That’s not to say however that there was some sort of mythical time ‘before’, when Nunavut was completely sustainable. “People say that Iqaluit never generated waste. Well yeah, Iqaluit has always generated waste because you’ve had people bringing up goods form the South,” says Moulton. “From the day you stop living off the land and start relying on Southern goods you are generating waste because they come packaged. Packaged for preservation, no matter what you’re talking about, whether it’s a knife or a plate or a bowl of beans.”

Everything had a use. But today, that’s changed. As Richard Wright, editor of House & Garden wrote in the 1930s: “saving and thrift would be the worst sort of citizenship today. . . . To maintain prosperity we must keep the machines working, for when machines are functioning men can labour and earn wages.”250

249 Interview with author, November 2015.
Consumption itself, once seen as decadent, indulgent and dangerous enough to crumble empires, has become not just a virtue but a cornerstone of modern society. To be a good member of society, you must consume, because consumption is what keeps society running. Therefore, as Wright writes, “the good citizen does not repair the old; he buys anew. The shoes that crack are to be thrown away. Don’t patch them. When the car gets crotchety, haul it to the town’s dump.”

But if the machines must run for prosperity to reign, there must be a reason. There must be a market for all that production. As Wright continues, “To maintain prosperity we must keep those machines going, always we must be prepared to consume their enormous production.”

Depriving the machine of a consumer, by reusing an item, was not a virtue but rather akin to a crime against the economy—and by extension, against the nation founded on that economy. Informed directly and indirectly by this ethos, improved waste-handling methods and technologies actually engineered scavenging out.

Dumps began to be places where you couldn’t go; more importantly, you shouldn’t want to go. Things rescued from dumps weren’t, intellectually and culturally, being reclaimed or recycled—they were somehow dirty and inferior to buying a product new. Which is a shame, because, as Ellen Hamilton, a long-term resident of the North explains, it not only was a way to keep many things out of the garbage stream but could also result in some amazing finds. “There is definitely people who want to go to the dump and get things. I know I have a table in Kingston,

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252 IBID, 48.
my beautiful table, that I got from the dump here in Iqaluit. It was built for the Queen during her visit, and it’s made of cherry. It was so big and at the time nobody’s houses were big enough for this table, so they brought it to the dump,” she says. “We went with our Ski-Doo and brought it back. And when we moved South we brought it with us on the sealift, and it’s in our house now, this beautiful cherry table built for Queen Elizabeth. And it was going to be burned.” She tells me that was the old days however: today, there are fences and garbage piled high and people aren’t allowed to access the dump in the same way. “There should be a place where you can put the stuff that could be used again, and we don’t even have that separation,” says Hamilton.253

This idea of using scavenging or trading as a way of keeping waste out of the dump while simultaneously reducing consumption is a popular one in Iqaluit. I’m told on one of my first days that I have to check out the popular Facebook group, Iqaluit Sell/Swap. In March of 2016, it had 19,154 members254 and is one of the busiest Iqaluit sites, where members can post looking to buy or sell everything from country food and hand-made mittens and boots to appliance and building materials. There’s also a second-hand store in the city that’s popular. The drive to keep things out of the waste stream exists within the community. The options to do so are what’s lacking.

Trash isn’t just trash: it’s the embodiment of the end of consumer culture, the final product of the cycle of production. As Rogers explains, “trash is the visible

253 Interview with author, November 2015.
interface between everyday life and the deep, often abstract horrors of ecological crisis. Through waste we can read the logic of industrial society’s relationship to nature and human labour.”

In piles of garbage are mixed production, consumption, values and ways of understandings. That’s certainly true in the Iqaluit dump, where the products of the last 70 years of cultural change and history end up. As Rogers puts it, “in garbage we find material proof that there is no plan for stewarding the earth, that resources are not being conserved, that waste and destruction are the necessary analogues of consumer society.256

3.3 Consume or the communists win

Around the same time Iqaluit’s dump got its first bag of trash, in the years just after World War II, a shift in the way North Americans understood commodities began to occur. Consumption became not just a symbol of success and wealth, but an activity in and of itself. What’s more, being able to consume began to be considered a ‘right’; the definition of necessity began to change. This was in large part a product of consumer driven industrialization. In the 1950s, many consumers already had everything they needed, so how could they be compelled to continue to buy more? The answer was something Rogers refers to in Gone Tomorrow: The Hidden Life of Garbage as ‘built-in obsolescence’. As she explains, “Producers began making commodities that intentionally wore out faster than was technologically necessary. And because of unprecedented production efficiencies, these commodities were

255 Rogers, Gone Tomorrow, 3.
256 IBID, 3.
becoming cheaper to replace than they were to repair.” About a year ago, the refrigerator in my apartment started sounding like the TARDIS about to take off, and ceased to be cold (you had one job, fridge). When I called the manufacturer, they told me to throw it away—it wasn’t worth it, for them, to send someone to repair a refrigerator that had cost my landlady under $500. Better to just throw it away and get it replaced, which they’d do for free. I couldn’t argue with that, and I wanted ice cubes, so my fridge went to the dump. Another example is the perpetual tiny changes made to electronics: by changing the charger for an iPod or cell phone, the old ones—and the handsets that need them—become obsolete. When my perfectly functional Blackberry was only five years old, its battery started to die: I couldn’t buy a battery to replace it, as the sizes had been changed. Instead, my whole phone transformed into trash. Although this may have started as a way for manufacturers to get consumers to buy more, more frequently, the result was more items being relegated to the garbage heap.

Phones are a good example: your old iPhone might still be working, but really, only a luddite would have a iPhone 5 when they could have the newest 6, after all. Having the latest tech has become an expression of self, which isn’t necessarily a problem. . . except the old one ends up in the dump. Victor Lebow, a mid-century marketing consultant, explains that: “Our enormously productive economy demands that we make consumption our way of life, that we convert the buying and use of goods into rituals, that we seek our spiritual satisfactions, our ego satisfactions, in consumption . . . . We need things consumed, burned up, worn out,

\[257\]Rogers, *Gone Tomorrow*, 104.
replaced and discarded at an every increasing pace.” This was a shift that led to our anxiety-driven consumption patterns of today; advertising and marketing convinces us that without certain products, we are lost. Our social status is connected to our ability to consume, and consume visibly. ‘Success’ is something that can be quantified: now, by posting things like ‘haul’ videos on YouTube, where shoppers gleefully pontificate over their latest purchases. There are thousands of these videos online, and the headline of a 2010 NPR article says it all: “‘Haul Videos:’ The Ultimate in Materialistic PG Porn?” As Rogers explains, “This kind of advertising connected social status and human value with the ability to consume.”

Haul videos are an excellent example of how it’s not what you’re consuming that provides this status, but the act of consumption itself. Many of the videos don’t feature high end or luxury brands; instead, shoppers dole out advice on bargain brands and high-street ‘dupes’ for pricey alternatives. In fact, some haul channels are specifically geared towards celebrating the conquest of a ‘deal’. This same voyeuristic compulsion to consume also created TV programs like TLC’s Extreme Couponing, where shoppers arrive at grocery stores with binders full of coupons in order to get hundreds of dollars of ‘free’ products. The highlight of the show? When the mini-marts hidden in people’s garages, spare bedrooms and pantries are displayed, stacked with hundreds of toothbrushes, dozens of boxes of cereal, and enough Gatorade to hydrate the world. Although there is an element of judgment to

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258 Rogers, Gone Tomorrow, 114.
260 Rogers, Gone Tomorrow, 125.
programs like these, the fact remains: culturally, savvy shoppers are considered successful and the ability to purchase, to ‘hunt’ a deal, is linked to their value within society. As Rogers puts it, “such marketing segregated consumption from the labour process, helping to construct an individual who was hailed in the marketplace not as a worker, but as a consumer.” Agency, in this case, is displayed not by individual thought or action, but by our consumption choices and consumption itself.

Instead of looking to industry as the cause of our problems, our angst, our ills, we look to them for solutions. Consumption has become an activity, the foundation of our social bonds and interactions, going to the mall the format, the place for community. For proof of this pervasiveness, look no further than Instagram, with its proliferation of hipsters living #authentic. In a constructed world full of manufactured experiences and carefully curated realities, authenticity is now a precious commodity: and it’s for sale. As Paul Mullins, a professor in the Department of Anthropology at Indiana University-Purdue University and author of The Archaeology of Consumer Culture wrote on his blog, “Indeed, any suburban youth can now consume punk, goth, or hippie style in mall chain stores that sell pre-torn jeans, mass-manufactured tie-dye shirts, or black nail polish alongside music that fits those commodified subcultural subjectivities.” This quest for the authentic in a store repaints producers as creators of culture, Urban Outfitters, Hot Topic and Forever 21 as the genuine creator of cultural norms and trends instead of just fast fashion reproducers. It repaints producers in much the same way as green

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261 Rogers, Gone Tomorrow, 125.
washing repaints polluters as eco-friendly. It’s actually a fairly neat marketing trick, to convince a population that what they really need isn’t a reused t-shirt from a thrift store, but rather a brand new t-shirt made to look vintage, while the actual vintage shirt authentically ends up in the trash.

Where did that lead us? To today, where 75 per cent of the global resources are consumed by the 25 per cent of the population living in industrialized countries. This does not mean, however, that the rest of the world just lives on 25 per cent of global resources: instead, globally, we are consuming about 1.4 planet’s worth of bio-capacity resources annually. And, as the example of the Canadian North and many Canadian Aboriginal Reserves proves, this doesn’t mean that that 75 per cent is shared equally across the entire consuming population. Annie Leonard, in her documentary and accompanying book The Story of Stuff: How Our Obsession with Stuff is Trashing the Planet, Our Communities and Our Health—and a Vision for Change, explains that this only works because the earth has been around longer than we have, and has had a chance to build up a surplus. But as she writes, “now the extra is running out. It’s as though a household saved income for years before ramping up its spending. It could spend more than it earned for some time, eating away at the savings, but eventually there’s nothing left. That’s what is happening with the planet.” And still, the ideal of the American Dream, where everyone can have two cars, a giant house, TVs in every room, and a refrigerator in Harvest Gold is

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264 Ibid, 40.
touted as the measure of ‘success’—even though if all countries consumed at the same rate as the United States, we’d require five planets to sustain us.\textsuperscript{265}

The problem is when this Southern ideal about consumption as a virtue is imported to the North, where the results have nowhere to go but into a giant pile that keeps lighting itself on fire. Ironically, just as you couldn’t say Jesus without saying Odin, the word ‘consumption’ comes pre-packaged with these disastrous results. As Lennox explains, “The word “consume” originally meant to destroy, as by fire or disease, to squander, to use up... That means that a consumer society is a society of destroyers and squanderers. No thank you.”\textsuperscript{266} Consumption often goes hand in hand with the idea of development; being able to consume, and consuming widely, is seen as a hallmark of having ‘made it’ as a society. It’s something to aspire to, not something to approach cautiously, even in areas of the world where rampant consumption—and the trash it leaves behind—can’t be as hidden as neatly as in the Southern part of Canada. Development implies things getting better; but often, development comes hand in hand with, as Lennox puts it, "a fossil-fuel-intensive, toxics-laden, consumption driven economy." So, an American city, even with, as Lennox explains “higher rates of environmental degradation, social inequality and stress,”\textsuperscript{267} can still be seen as more ‘developed’ than a city in another country, who might not have those problems, but also doesn’t have the same buying power.

How did this happen? Surely no one ever thought buying new stuff and throwing out old stuff was ever logical—it makes no sense if you really think about

\textsuperscript{265} Leonard, \textit{The Story of Stuff}, 40.
\textsuperscript{266} IBID, xxix.
\textsuperscript{267} IBID, xxxi.
it, to waste money on things you don’t need. However, we have had decades of programming designed to teach us that in fact we do need these things, because the value isn’t in the thing itself, but rather the aura of the thing, the thing-ness of the thing is what matters. As Leonard explains, companies shell out big bucks on advertising, “often not to advertise details of any actual product, but to maintain the image they want consumers to identify with their brand.”

This is one more step in the rapid cultural change that occurred in Nunavut when communities consolidated; once people begin to believe they didn’t just want new items, they needed them, the system becomes self-propagating. If you absolutely have to have the newest iPod, you are going to have to be part of the wage economy in order to acquire money to get it. And that’s going to mean you’re going to need new ways of finding employment, and since you have money now, new standards of living are quickly going to follow.

This problem was compounded by Southern workers expecting, very much like Franklin, to have a Southern style of life in the North—with it comes the same sort of products, activities and consumption patterns they would have access to in Toronto or Montreal. As Leonard opines, “We are a society of consumers, we’re told. We shrug and nod and accept this as a fundamental truth. It’s just human nature, is more or less what we tell ourselves.” In 2005, personal consumption expenditures were in excess of $24 trillion dollars in the United States. But the flip side of this consumption is the garbage produced to make space: for instance, as

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269 IBID, 145.
Leonard points out, Americans acquired on average 52 new pieces of clothing in 2002, and threw out about 1.3 pounds of textiles a week.\footnote{Leonard, The Story of Stuff, 146.} It’s a cycle—fast fashion requires clothing, produced as quickly and cheaply as possible, that doesn’t last and cannot be repaired. The idea is that instead of sewing a button back on a blouse, or repairing a rip in a pair of pants, you’d just buy a new pair. This, for example, makes a virtue out of producers using cheaper materials and shoddier construction methods. If we only pay $5 for a shirt, we don’t expect it to last, and it seems ‘easy’ to just buy another one then attempt to repair fabric that itself is so synthetic and cheaply made that it physically cannot be repaired. We accept this as the new standard or expectation—after all, you get what you pay for. In fact, many retailers, like H&M, build their brands around this constant replenishment, that requires shoppers to visit at least weekly to ‘see what’s new’.\footnote{For more on this topic, see Elizabeth Cline, Overdressed: The Shockingly High Cost of Cheap Fashion (New York: Portfolio, 2012).} The value isn’t determined by quality or need but rather by newness.

But it’s not just America: this consumption is a worldwide phenomenon. Leonard reports that according to the United Nations, in 2003 across the globe people spent $18 billion on cosmetics and the USA and Europe spent $17 billion on pet food: in 2004–05 for example, Americans paid $100 billion for shoes, jewellery, and watches. Contrast that to where that money could have gone. Reproductive health care for all women would have cost just $12 billion, while eliminating hunger
worldwide would have cost $19 billion. And providing clean drinking water for the globe would have cost $10 billion.272 But hey, now you have a watch.

This is the standard. And many people in the North want it. "Iqaluit [is] a very bureaucratic community. To have that kind of job gives you all sorts of status as well as a very high income in some cases. There's some families where they have double incomes that are over $115,000 a year each, right? So they feel the need to not only display their wealth but also be bi-cultural, where you have to have the nicest TVs, the nicest gear, beautiful kitchens and what not, but also sustain boats and igloos," says Laakkuluk Williamson Bathory. In this way, it's not replacing one culture with another, as earlier planners may have anticipated the death of Inuit or traditional Northern cultures. Instead, people are, as Williamson Bathory says, expected to be bi-cultural, and as she puts it, "display how successful they are in both cultures. The reality for the community is that you do have to be successful bi-culturally. And because it is such a dynamic place to live in, Inuit can't be one or the other. Inuit are everything!"

And why not? After all, this is a city in Canada; it's hypocritical to expect *Iqalummiut* (resident of Iqaluit) to not have access to, for example, a Tim Horton’s just because they don’t have the infrastructure to support the trash. "We’re like any other place in Canada, we're supposed to be consumers, right? We're supposed to be climbing into this wonderful world of things all around us," says Williamson Bathory. Arguments along those lines tend to get racist fast—it reinforces the continuing idea that people in the North are neither one thing, nor the other. They

are not imagined Indigenous people, continuing to live some sort of imagined lifestyle perfectly in tune with the colours of the wind and the world around them. But nor are they ‘allowed’ to live the way the rest of the citizens of Canada do. The paradox is a trap. Once again, Northerners are expected to be more, to be both at the same time.

All that consumption isn’t making people any happier. Leonard argues in *The Story of Stuff* that it is not possessions, but relationships with those around us that have the most impact on our happiness. Money cannot buy happiness, after all—but the pursuit of it, as Leonard explains, might be causing us unhappiness: “Yet because we’re working more than ever before to afford and maintain all this Stuff, we’re spending more time alone and less time with family, with friends, with neighbours.”273 For a society like traditional ones in the North, built on close-knit community and familial bonds, this is troubling. As the QTC explains in their final report, “Today we have excessive possessions and we are not happy with our lives and we struggle with life when we have all the conveniences now.”274

This is a problem and will continue to be a problem across the country: the North, and Iqaluit, is just the canary in this particular garbage filled coal mine, telling us that this kind of consumption is not sustainable and cannot be sustained. “There is no one solution. But definitely if people wanted less, then we’d have less to throw out,” says Williamson Bathory. “What I’m trying to say is that every community across Canada is facing this. That people should want less.”

3.4 A burning sensation

Approximately 97 per cent of waste not diverted by recycling, composting or recovery ends up in the almost 2,000 landfills in Canada—about 24, 111, 546 tons.\(^{275}\) The Giroux Report, *State of Waste Management in Canada*, found that across the country “most provinces have been moving towards regionalization of landfill facilities over the past 10-20 years—closing smaller, older, unlined facilities and using fewer, larger, lined facilities constructed to meet improved environmental standards.”\(^{276}\)

But not Nunavut. The Iqaluit city dump is just that: a dump. It’s not a landfill as there’s nothing filling anything—it’s a mountain of trash that slowly accumulated over years. The current site originally opened in 1995 was meant to be operational for five years, a stop gap until another site could be prepared.\(^{277}\) But the Municipality never produced the solid waste management plan they promised—a study was released in 1998, but it was rejected by the Northwest Territories Water Board. Instead, the dump continued to accept trash until it caught on fire. And, even today, a year later, it’s accepting garbage. An enlargement in 2001 kept the garbage rolling in for 15 years after it was meant to be closed, at a rate of approximately 26 tons of garbage every day.\(^{278}\) And until a community lawsuit put a stop to it in 2002, the dump kept pace with the growing city by regular open-air burns.

\(^{276}\) IBID, 63.
\(^{278}\) IBID.
To Jamesee Moulton, that meant when the dump fire started, it reminded him of growing up in Iqaluit: “It’s funny because the year of the dump fire, one of my friends who was living in Ottawa, when he landed and got off the plane, I was like ‘oh what do you think of our beautiful smell?’ And he like ‘well, smells like my childhood’. And soon as he said that it clicked and I was like holy shit, that is what it smelled like as a kid growing up here.”

Even though across Canada incineration and open burning has fast fallen out of favour, with most provinces and territories moving to other means of disposal as the environmental and community ramifications of open burning come to light, almost all the communities in Nunavut practice regular open burns. The Giroux Report found that as of 2014, “There are no MSW incinerators in Nunavut. With the exception of Iqaluit, Rankin Inlet, and Repulse Bay, all other communities in Nunavut practice open burning of waste (even though Nunavut has a policy that only non-treated wood, paper, and cardboard are acceptable for open burning).”

Today, the burning is back in Iqaluit—huge mounds of cardboard and paper are collected for incineration in the Iqaluit dump. But it’s not a solution, any more than it was in 1995: it’s a stop-gap extending the life of a dump that wouldn’t pass regulations in another part of the country.

“Open burning of garbage should not be done. Open burning of unsegregated garbage should not be a waste management solution,” says Moulton. But, despite the history of open burning, he says people were still shocked when the dump itself caught fire on its own in 2014. “People weren’t expecting it. It’s been 15 years since

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they were open burning here in town. Public perception has changed . . . I would say that perception had changed about the acceptability of dump smoke.” That’s in Iqaluit. In the rest of the communities in Nunavut, where open burning of unsegregated trash is a regular and condoned activity, he says that perception is slower to change. “Some of the communities get dump smoke very very regularly, just because of the location. They do their best to only burn on days when the wind is blowing away from town, but that’s only so effective. So it happens, and it’s sort of accepted. It’s ‘well we’ve been doing it that way for 60 years, what’s wrong with it? If you haven’t been in a community that has sort of set that as an unacceptable practice, well then it’s still a perfectly acceptable practice.”

3.5 What lies beneath: would Northern dumps meet Southern standards?

This isn’t a situation unique to Iqaluit; most dumps in Nunavut aren’t operating at Southern standards. Each community has its own solid waste disposal facility because there isn’t the infrastructure to connect these communities across such a vast geographic region—according to the Giroux Report, there is no road access currently between communities—and consolidate the dumps. More troubling still however, the Giroux Report found that “Approximately half of all communities in Nunavut are operating historical dump facilities that were not initially designed by an engineer, and there are no supporting engineering designs or operation and maintenance plans for the facility.” Which means at least half the dumps in Nunavut would not meet Southern standards full stop. And considering that there is

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280 Giroux, State of Waste Management in Canada, 111.
limited to no waste separation in any of the communities, even at dumps that aren’t historical toxic stews, even a newer dump isn’t exactly a sanitary situation.

Iqaluit’s dump is one of those historic sites. Matthew Hamp is the current Director of Public Works for the City of Iqaluit. He came onboard after the dump fire. “I don’t think it [the dump] was ever planned. I think it was kind of like the military was here, picked a place that was a natural depression in the ground and said ‘throw garbage there’,” he says.\(^{281}\) The dump, as far as he knows, just sort of developed over time. In many ways, perhaps this was even considered as part of the development of the area; landfills were, around the mid-century mark, viewed in Southern circles as a useful way to make ‘waste’ land into something useful. The Jamaica Bay area, for instance, was considered a reclamation of useless land in New York when it was packed full of trash. As Rogers explains in *Gone Tomorrow*, packing the earth full of trash was a practice that took off in the 1930s and 1940s as “engineers created trash-based real estate from previously unoccupied tracts across the country. As such, the sanitary landfill not only remade wasting, it also remade modern landscapes.”\(^{282}\)

The dump in Iqaluit certainly has remade the landscape; sitting in Janet Brewster’s house, you can look out across the water and just see the peaks of it across the skyline. “That is not actually tundra, that’s not the outcrop, that’s the dump,” she says, pointing at her view. “Often people will stand here and say ‘oh my god you have such a beautiful view’ and I don’t want to say to them ‘there’s the

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281 Interview with author, November 2015.
282 Rogers, *Gone Tomorrow*, 89.
Despite the fact that dump technology has advanced significantly in the South, including an increased interest in liners, monitoring systems for wastewater and airborne emissions and other features to help make dumps at least a little more ecologically sustainable, the Iqaluit dump has nothing of the sort. In what are known as ‘sanitary landfills,’ trash is sealed in cells, on top of a liner that acts like a giant bladder intended to catch leachate—literally garbage juice—and rainwater contaminated by the garbage. In fact, in the 1980s the US Environmental Protection Agency adopted what was known as a dry tomb model for landfills, in order to keep out that liquid. As Elizabeth Royte writes in Garbage Land, "Dry garbage, engineers knew, was inert, quiet, and calm." Garbage allowed to stay wet when it was interred, however, “would generate leachate for thousands of years: the dumps of the Roman Empire, more than two thousand years old, are still leaching today.”

And so the standard for landfills, starting in the 1980s, entailed “liners that protected groundwater from leaking garbage juice; collection pipes to funnel this juice into treatment plants; methane-collection pipes to vacuum the gases created by biodegrading organic material.” Even after the landfill was closed, it would be protected with “some sort of plastic layer that would act like an umbrella and keep rainwater from percolating through the waste.” I couldn’t find anyone who could definitively tell me if the Iqaluit dump was lined. Most people suspected the majority of it—the historic dump—certainly wasn’t. It’s important to remember the

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283 Royte, Garbage Land, 57.
284 IBID, 57.
285 IBID, 57.
286 IBID, 57.
distinction; the dump in Iqaluit is not anything like a sanitary landfill, and doesn’t include even the basic technology that is used in Southern waste management facilities.

This matters because leachate, for instance, can be incredibly toxic. As Royte writes in *Garbage Land*, researchers at Texas A&M University found that leachate produced in landfills that contain only municipal waste, like the one in Iqaluit, and the leachate from landfills that contain hazardous waste, is “chemically identical.” And that’s based on American studies of landfills that had even a rudimentary effort at waste separation. As Royte writes, “Liquefied parsley stems and mucus-filled tissues are gross, but leachate from residential garbage has some far nastier characteristics.” She writes that it can contain pathogens from organic waste, as well as metals and acids, motor oil, and solvents from “ordinary compounds used in the home.” In fact, even with separation, some of the really toxic stuff still ends up in municipal landfills, either in the products themselves—like old nail polish—or in the containers they come in. For example, many plastic bottles, used for everything from household cleaners to shampoo, contain dicyclohexyl phthalate, “a plasticizer that’s suspected of disrupting the endocrine system and harming the liver.” According to the University of Arizona’s Garbage Project, a study by

288 IBID, 58.
289 IBID, 59.
290 IBID, 59.
archaeologists to study our garbage, about "1 percent by weight of all household
garbage could be considered hazardous by EPA standards."

According to a 2011 Arktis Solutions Report, the last time such statistics
were readily available, Nunavut disposes of about 27,308 tons of residential waste a
year. That’s spread across the Territory’s 25 landfills currently operating. Most of
them are rapidly falling into decline, just like the Iqaluit dump. Of the Solid Waste
Facilities in the 14 Nunavut communities studied by Arktis Solutions, 50 per cent
had an incomplete or non-functioning gate, and 30 per cent had no gate or fence at
all, meaning that anyone could access the dump and dump whatever they wanted,
even if there was an organized separation, which, again, there isn’t. Even if they do
have fences and gates, as the Arktis Solutions Report points out “None of the SWFs
lock their gates and therefore uncontrolled access can occur.” Of the sites visited,
30 per cent did not have any warning or instruction signs about proper waste
separation and disposal, while of the sites that did have signage, 50 per cent were
damaged or missing components. All but two practiced open burning of municipal
solid waste. None of the sites visited collect or treat leachate. The volume of waste
is about 55 per cent higher than the value reported in relevant literature—and even
so, Arktis Solutions is quick to point out that their higher number is still a

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292 Arktis Solutions, Report on Current State of Solid Waste Management and Facilities
in Nunavut and Cost-Benefit Analysis of Selected Solid Waste Management
Approaches, submitted to the Government of Nunavut Community and Government
Services, March 30, 2011.
293 IBID, 10.
294 IBID, 10.
“conservative estimate.” The Arktis Solutions report found that “Most current facilities started operation several decades ago and are likely approaching or exceeded their initial planned design life of about 20 to 40 years.” The newest facilities opened in the 1990s, two decades ago, in Qikiqtarjuag, Pond Inlet, Clyde River, Baker Lake, Kugluktuk and Gjoa Haven.

As for the Iqaluit dump, Dr. Tony Sperling, president of Sperling Hansen Associates, an engineering consultancy specialized in solid waste management brought in to advise on the fire, told VICE Canada that the Iqaluit dump was “one of the worst examples of landfill operations in North America right now... Maybe one of the worst in North and South America.” Building a sanitary landfill in the Arctic is tricky. In a paper for the Canadian Water Resources Journal, Glenda Samuelson found that “Solid waste management is complicated by exposed bedrock which makes the construction of sanitary landfills difficult.” She also points out that standards and monitoring protocols are essential for Arctic dumpsites “in order to reduce potential impacts to the coastal environment.” It’s difficult, but it’s not impossible to do it better than what is being done today. It wouldn’t exactly be hard to vault over that low standard.

296 IBID, 17.
297 Peter Worden, “The Iqaluit Landfill “Dumpcano” has been burning for eight weeks?” VICE Canada, July 24, 2014, accessed on September 19, 2014.
299 IBID, 336.
A start would be just figuring out what’s down there. The dump sprang out of historic landfill areas from the military era in Iqaluit. In 1941, Frobisher Bay was chosen as the site for the United States Air Force base. It was meant to be a stop over on the way to Europe. After World War II, control switched to the Canadian government, and Iqaluit was a staging ground for the DEW Line sites being constructed across the Arctic. Between then and today, Iqaluit grew into the largest community in Nunavut, today with a population nearing 8,000 and growing. As the Conference Board of Canada reported in 2004, “Nunavut has one of the fastest growing populations in the country. This population increase has and will continue to place enormous strain on Nunavut’s infrastructure and ultimately the health and wellbeing of residents.” But the dump hasn’t kept pace. Originally, Jamesee Moulton assumes it actually was a landfill, not just a pile of trash that even after the fire is three storeys tall. “It was initially a storey or two below grade, when they first built it. That’s obviously since been lost because of how high it’s been piled since,” he says. Because of the nature of the original dump—the time period and nature of when it was first started by the military—there probably wasn’t any thought to making it a sanitary landfill. The fact that I can’t get a straight answer on something as simple as whether or not the dump has a liner, from anyone or any report I could find, is telling: people just don’t know. “If there was a liner it didn’t line the entire dump site,” says Moulton. “I think there must have been some sort of liner put in the initial dug out part, because I know there is a build up of leachate come melt season

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that they end up draining into the sitting pond and then decanting through a filter, but it’s a limited liner if that.”

This is part of the problem of the lack of institutional memory in Iqaluit. Just as people in the Franklin era came to the North on short-term missions of discovery, today Iqaluit is still seen by many as a career stepping stone, a transient place to cut their teeth. Planners think in terms of the length of their contracts; many come up with grandiose schemes to ‘fix’ Northern problems. It’s a reiteration of the Victorian idea of the frontier as a proving ground not just for adventurous leadership but for Southern technology. The North is, in many ways, still treated as a place to ‘test’—now the test is new Southern ideas that will ‘fix’ the North. While the energy of young Canadians going North can be exhilarating, what happens when that energy only lasts as long as their contracts or an election cycle? Many people I spoke with in Iqaluit, both Southern and Northern, talked about the two sides to this issue—while the community can benefit from the expertise, knowledge and enthusiasm of Southern transplants, many people were critical of transient workers who were in the North more for themselves (and what their positions there could do for their resumes). When I first arrived, there were posters all over town advising people of the new rules about voluntary separation of trash.\footnote{See Appendix B.} Cardboard and paper are to be separately disposed of so that they can be burned. At the bottom of each poster is the name and number of the Director of Public Works—the posters only went up a few months prior, but by the time I arrive, there is a different Director of Public Works answering the phone. Matthew Hamp is the new Director of Public Works,
starting a new job with a legacy behind him and only a box of metaphorical band aids to try to fix the past while still progressing forwards.

“I think it was just a combination of capacity and simply not knowing. And my understanding of the history of the city is that at least in the last 10 years there’s been a big fluctuation of people coming through at the management level, so if you’ve got really high turnover rate at the management level, people aren’t paying attention, and the guys at the operational level are doing the best that they know how to do," says Hamp.

A 2001 report by Engineer Ken Johnson found just that, that landfills in and around Iqaluit, whether the official city dump or the unremediated sites dotting the area, were created not with long term sustainability in mind but rather convenience and cost. As Johnson found, “The history of waste management in Iqaluit has evolved no differently than most remote communities, with convenience and low cost being the original criteria for waste management systems.”

Johnson found in his report that landfills in colder regions like the Arctic fall into four types—depression, embankment, mound and excavation. The first two, depression and embankment are “landfills developed from convenience rather than design.” The mound and excavation types, he writes, “represent engineered landfills that cold region communities now strive to construct and maintain.”

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303 IBID, 126.
304 IBID, 126.
convenience and cost also explains why the Iqaluit site—which represents a depression type—is unlined. As Johnson’s report explains, “The lining of community landfills in cold regions with an engineered material has never been undertaken and is unlikely to be undertaken in the foreseeable future given the added cost and the limited community capital budgets.”

Hamp can’t tell me for certain if the basic standard of having a liner on the dump exists or not. However he knows what’s planned for the future—and it isn’t a liner either. In the early 2000s, there was an expansion made on the dump, he tells me, and the only lined part is a berm on the south end. But it’s not a liner as would be understood in the South—it’s permafrost. “It relies on permafrost generally to keep things from leaching into the ground, which is actually remarkably effective,” says Hamp. “Even during the dump fire when the contractor was digging through and dousing the fire, they actually hit permafrost very soon. It wasn’t that far into the pile that it was just frozen solid.” At one point in the past there had been a mid term closure of the dump, which involved a soil cap being spread over the material. Matthew tells me that’s what the contractors hit. “And underneath that there’s still more garbage but there’s a couple feet thick of soil,” says Hamp.

The idea of relying on permafrost as some sort of natural containment is not without its detractors. Remember the unremediated dump sites around Iqaluit? Madeleine Redfern was critical of excuses that the permafrost around these sites may in any way detract from their ability to contaminate the community. “We’ve seen barrels where you can actually see the residual contents leaching out of the

barrels,” she says. It’s a concern not just with dumps, but with mining operations in
the territory as well. “There’s been some mining proposals to have effectively lakes
and or sort of man made pooled containers where they’ve suggested that
permafrost will act as that barrier,” Redfern tells me. “Well, if you look at the
accident that happened out in B.C. last year, where the man-made reservoir
breached, it didn’t work, so there is rightly so a whole bunch of Inuit and
communities and hunters who are saying ‘well you can’t rely on the permafrost as a
stable and solid container’.” She’s talking about the Mount Polley mine disaster: on
August 4, 2014, the copper and gold mine tailings pond, owned by Imperial Metals-
owned Mount Polley, breached, releasing 25 million cubic metres of contaminated
water and mining waste. According to an independent investigation, the breach was
caused by a design flaw which, as reported by the CBC, “failed to take into account
the complexity of the instability of underlying glacial and pre-glacial layers under
the retaining wall.”306 And if the unremediated sites and mines can’t rely on
permafrost, why would you count on the current, or even a new dump, to do so?

3.6 Everybody in the pool: what’s in the dump

Up until the fire, there was no separation of trash, no official recycling programs or
diversion programs. Everything just went into the dump. “The reason the dump fire
happened, the reason the dump got to that state, was that we were collecting all
forms of garbage without any form of separation and piling it into a big pile and not

doing [anything] else with it,” says Romeyn Stevenson. He was deputy Mayor of Iqaluit during the fire. “We didn’t have any landfill activities that would stop a fire, and without those activities it’s inevitable, it’s guaranteed to have a fire.”

Cameron DeLong, manager of Parks Facilities and Operations with Nunavut Territorial Parks puts a finer point on it: “Batteries, diapers, you name it. Anything that anyone could produce as far as waste was concerned at all levels was there. Is there,” he says. 307

Garbage in Iqaluit wasn’t sorted. It wasn’t put in separate piles. It was just all dumped in a big heap. “As far as I know, pretty well everything was going into the same pile, and there wasn’t really a heck of a lot of action happening, and there was certainly no interim cover happening, so you just had a big mass of waste with a lot of air pockets in it and mattresses thrown in, that sort of thing. So it just created the conditions that were ideal for starting a fire,” says Matthew Hamp.

Nunavut is the only jurisdiction in the country that does not do any monitoring at all of community disposal activity. This is true across the Territory, not just in Iqaluit. According to the Giroux Report, “In Nunavut, only one solid waste disposal facility restricts access and has an attendant, which leaves all other community solid waste facilities accessible by public or private sectors who can dump any materials at all.” 308 This means that even if the City of Iqaluit or the Territory had official separation regulations in place—and it bears repeating, they

307 Interview with author, November 2015.
308 Giroux, State of Waste Management in Canada, 141.
do not—there is very little to stop people from dumping whatever they like into the trash.

There are no statistics available for Nunavut and few even for other regions of the North but many people in Iqaluit feel like they produce more garbage than they would in the South. Romeyn Stevenson, disagrees. “Having dealt with two or three consultants very intensively looking at our garbage, I don’t think so. We have a fairly normal amount of garbage, people produce a regular amount of garbage,” he says. But because there is no diversion, more of the waste that’s produced ends up in garbage bags, and eventually, the dump.

The difference is in the North you can’t escape your trash. Northmart, one of the main grocery stores in Iqaluit, ships its packing crates and cardboard boxes back on the empty ships that deliver goods to Iqaluit, but most everything else that comes into the community—and as a hub city, that means quite a lot of things that are coming into the Territory as a whole—ends up staying in Iqaluit. “We get the crates from the sealift; we get all the boxes from shipping that oftentimes you wouldn’t see necessarily in the dump down South,” says Matthew Hamp.

In this way, Iqaluit might actually be responsible for the disposal of more trash. “Like if Wal-Mart gets shipped a whole bunch of boxes, they take everything out of the boxes, put it on the shelves, and then deal with that waste there, as opposed to going to the landfill,” says Hamp. That means not just the pop can an individual may have purchased, but the plastic and cardboard it came wrapped in, and all the packaging to ship it, all ends up in the dump. That’s a lot of packaging—over 30 per cent of municipal waste in the United States, for instance, is
packaging. This is true across the globe, however in Nunavut there is no escaping it, no hiding from it. The products and the packaging they came in have no where to go but your own backyard.

This doesn’t surprise Jamesee Moulton. “We’ve always had very high generation rates for waste because of where we live and the nature of where we live. Everything comes up here packaged and double packaged and triple packed. So there’s a lot of packing waste that comes into this dump,” he says. “Everybody every summer gets all their sealift crates, things come in big wooden boxes with boxes inside of them, with plastic wrap and what have you.” And once it’s time to take out the trash, it all ends up in the same bag. “That means bleaches, chemicals, everything is going in there with no segregation, so it’s all ultimately put in a dump, run over with a compacter, and the next day’s garbage is just placed on top of it,” says Moulton.

In a community where almost everything is imported, that’s a lot of garbage. “There’s just more crap. Everything is more packaging, there’s more plastic, and I think that’s the big issue,” says Ellen Hamilton. But she’s not heaping all the blame for the heap on private consumers. “Most of the stuff that was really toxic in that dump was from the Government of Nunavut, that’s where they dump all their computers, that’s where they dump all their crap, and all of their staff and all of their employees are users of that dump. There are computers getting thrown away regularly. So they’re getting burnt with everything else. And all of the office supplies once they’re declared redundant they put them in the dump,” she says. “So the fact

309 Rogers, Gone Tomorrow, 5.
that they just sat back and waited for the little town, the little city to deal with something that was everybody's problem was very annoying.”

It’s a diverse community; I ate shwarma at a shop owned by a Lebanese man and took taxis driven by drivers from Eritrea. They just opened their first mosque, and the grocery store is packed with Filipino brands, right next to Pilot Biscuits and Coffee Crisp bars. Many of those people have arrived in just the last few years; reports from the late 1990s put the population as hovering around 4,000. Today it’s almost doubled. And with that bigger, diverse population comes a lot of stuff.

Anubha Momin is one of those relative newcomers to Iqaluit. She’s been in Iqaluit just over three years and runs the popular blog *Finding True North*. “We have to get everything pretty much shipped up here. All of our food gets flown up here unless you’re lucky enough to eat country food, and that all comes in a lot of packaging,” she says. “Most people, if you want to get something for your house, you’re going to have to go to Amazon, we don’t have anywhere else, we don’t have a Wal-Mart, we don’t have a Home Depot. We have social stratification here, so this doesn’t hold for everybody, but people who work for the government and have steady jobs live a consumer lifestyle similar to what you would live in Ottawa, but we don’t have any stores here so everything is being shipped up. And we don’t have any way to recycle those Amazon cardboard boxes, so they’re just being burned.”

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310 Interview with author, November 2015.
3.7 Captain Planet needs a reality check: Recycling

Between 2008 and 2010, the amount of waste from private and public waste disposal facilities actually decreased by 4 per cent. The most populous provinces—Ontario, Quebec, Alberta and British Columbia—disposed of the most, while Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia and Saskatchewan had the highest increases in total waste disposed over the same period.311 How did they manage that? Diversion. In the rest of the country, there are numerous options for household waste—there’s recycling programs, composting programs and energy reclamation programs. Statistics Canada actually found that between 2000 and 2010, the total amount of waste sent to recycling or organic processing facilities, instead of the dump, increased by 33 per cent.312 When the options exist, they are effective in reducing the amount of waste that ends up buried or burned.

For example, consider beverage containers, one waste stream that, as discussed earlier, is actually one of the most widely used and prevalent. According to the Giroux Report, in the residential sector Canadian provinces (not including territories) collect approximately 73-75 per cent of aluminum cans, 80-83 per cent of non-refillable glass, and 58-62 per cent of polyethylene terephthalate (PET) plastic beverage bottles. You can return wine and liquor bottles in Ontario, and there is a deposit return system in many other provinces operated through the beer industry. Although only British Columbia and Manitoba operate Extended Producer

312 IBID, 36.
Responsibility (EPR) programs for beverages, municipal Blue Box recycling programs take care of much of the products in Ontario, and other provinces operate a product stewardship model. These efforts mean that “in total, including all the other container types, such as other plastic bottles, juice boxes, table top containers, pouches, and bi-metal cans, Canadian provinces collected approximately 67% of all the non-refillable beverage containers sold in 2010.”\textsuperscript{313} Including a 98 per cent return rate for refillable beer bottles this brings the total beverage container collection in Canada up to 72 per cent—double that of the United States.

Nunavut and Iqaluit, however, have none of these options. Before the fire, there was virtually no recycling, with the exception of a few small-scale collection efforts for aluminum cans and liquor bottles. There have been short-term efforts in the past, like a blue bag recycling program, but many community members were skeptical about how effectively managed they were. “The blue bag recycling program ran for a couple of years but the city just mismanaged it terribly,” says Jim Little,\textsuperscript{314} who’s been in the North for decades. He has also been described as “Iqaluit’s muck-pile maverick.”\textsuperscript{315} If you’re talking about any kind of waste management, from the dump and sewage and waste water to composting, Jim’s name comes up. He’s the founder of Iqaluit’s first and only composting program under the non-profit organization the Bill Mackenzie Humanitarian Society, which ran from 2004 until 2013—when his truck broke down. The program was so

\textsuperscript{313} Giroux, State of Waste Management in Canada, 40.
\textsuperscript{314} Interview with author, November 2015.
popular that tales of the needed part for his 1989 GMC flatbed, which he used to collect compost from over 100 homes in Iqaluit, was big news. He’s critical of past city efforts. “They just didn’t put any effort into it. They didn’t want it to work,” he says. “And then they cancelled it. It was just a lie. Because everything was going to the dump.” But, according to Jim Little, it was a lie that allowed people to get the satisfaction of recycling, which begs the question: if these efforts weren’t happening, would it have motivated people to try something that might?

The last effort ended in 2010, when, as CBC North reports, the Territory-wide recycling program ended because it was deemed to be too costly by the Territorial Government. CBC reported that “Officials say it is too expensive to collect and ship bottles, cans and other recyclables out of Nunavut, which doesn’t have highways and therefore has items shipped in and out by air and sea lift.” This was the end of a three-year pilot program that allowed residents of Iqaluit and Rankin Inlet to drop off their beverage containers at depots, where they were sorted and shipped to recycling facilities in the South. When these projects ended, all recyclables in the Territory ended up in local landfills instead.

After the dump fire started, more steps were put in place, but the limited scale speaks more to the long-term problems than it does to a solution, as a blog

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post on *Finding True North* explains. You can recycle your Styrofoam containers by donating them to Alianait and Naca Children’s art programming. You can drop beer cans, wine bottles and liquor bottles off at Northern Collectables Recycling Centre every Saturday for your deposit, or drop your pop cans in a single Co-op seacan near Baffin Gas Bar, where Artic Cooperatives Ltd will recycle them and donate the proceeds to non-profit groups throughout Nunavut. And students collect out-dated phonebooks every spring to raise money for their schools through Northwestel’s Directory Recycling Program. End of official list. All other efforts are private, whether it’s donating used furniture and clothing to rummage sales and charity organizations, or, as one commenter wrote on the above-mentioned blog post, by storing your recyclables and bringing them South in your suitcase on your next holiday. Are there any other major cities, let alone capital cities, in Canada where physically moving your empty milk containers and plastic bags in your personal luggage is considered an acceptable waste management solution?

According to the 2011 report from Arktis Solutions, using the Government of Nunavut costing data, the cost per person each year for garbage disposal is $145.90. However, based on information collected during site visits, Arktis Solutions estimates that Nunavut spends about $173.20 per person per year on garbage disposal. Comparatively, according to the report compiled by Giroux Environmental in 2010, “local governments Canada-wide spent an average of $15 per person on the operation of disposal facilities, $5 per person on the operation of

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recycling facilities, and $2 per person on the operation of organics processing facilities,"\textsuperscript{320} for a total of $22 per person, for waste disposal that includes diversion. As the Giroux Environmental Consulting report states: “There is a relationship between money spent by governments and the proportion of waste that is ultimately diverted from disposal.”\textsuperscript{321}

Nationally, the average expenditure for diversion was $86 per person in 2010, resulting in 236 kilograms of waste diverted per person—provinces like Nova Scotia and British Columbia exceeded that national average, and diverted more waste from landfills. On the other end of the spectrum, Saskatchewan and Manitoba had the lowest per capita expenditures on waste diversion in 2010, and subsequently had the lowest diversion rates. Investment makes diversion happen—without it, the only option is to bury or burn the trash. And let’s not forget the costs of landfilling don’t just apply for operating and tipping fees during its lifetime: a landfill is a lifetime commitment. The Giroux Environmental Consulting report also found that local government expenditures across the country for waste increased by 12 per cent between 2008 and 2010, up to $2.9 billion. That increase was the result of increased costs for collection and transportation, as well as operation fees for disposal and processing facilities and tipping fees. But the biggest increases “were in contributions to landfill post closure and maintenance funds,” which rose 60 per cent to reach $93 million.\textsuperscript{322}

\textsuperscript{320} Giroux, \textit{State of Waste Management in Canada}, 29.
\textsuperscript{321} IBID, 30.
\textsuperscript{322} IBID, 29.
Those are figures skewed by Southern costs. In Canada’s North, where everything from equipment to labour has to be shipped in and out, the cost of logistics and labour typically doubles. Dr. Tony Sperling president of Sperling Hansen Associates, who designs landfills, told VICE Canada that he thought “Iqaluit spends less than half the amount it should on solid waste management.” Currently, Iqaluit invests around $40 per ton, which is comparable to a larger landfill in the South, but because of the increased costs associated with the North, that $40 per ton doesn’t go very far.323 In Nunavut, shipping cardboard for recycling doesn’t make financial sense—if it costs $500 per ton to ship cardboard to Southern facilities, but you can only net $400 from the effort, that trash has no place to go but the landfill. Where it waits, like a forgotten time bomb, for a spark.

The solution for many people is to either simply throw their cans away, find alternatives like the above mentioned small recycling programs, or carry your recyclables to the South. “Now, there’s the added benefit that if you pack two suitcases full of aluminum cans, you get the money when you’re down South, and that money goes towards whatever you’re going to pack in your suitcase on the way back up,” says Jamesee Moulton. “Because nobody goes South with two full suitcases. Everybody does shopping when they’re South. I don’t care if it’s a trip to Wal-Mart or one small trip to the grocery store, everybody comes back bringing something back.”

When these options have been made available, even on small and limited scales, people in the North have jumped on them. People in Iqaluit understand the

323 Worden, “The Iqaluit Landfill “Dumpcano” has been burning for eight weeks?”
need to separate their waste; this is not a case of an uninterested or uniformed population. To the contrary, they're simply not being given the same opportunity to do something to protect the environment and community they live in that citizens in the South often take for granted. “There was some misguided beliefs, even within the city, that the population of Iqaluit wouldn’t get onboard with proper waste management techniques. I 100 per cent disagree. People want to help with their garbage, people want it to be better,” says Romeyn Stevenson. He says that even though it might seem like effort to separate your recyclables or separate out your organic waste for composting, it’s worth it. “It actually makes your garbage a lot easier. Yes, you have to have two containers but it makes your garbage so much cleaner and nicer. It’s all around better. Right now I hate that I’m not composting. Every time I throw something in the garbage I think ‘ugh’.”

In addition to being a member of the City Council, Stevenson is the principal of Inuksuk High School. He’s seen the young people of the community take a leadership role in doing what they can to keep their community clean. “We have a Green Club here at the school. We’re actively involved in taking those pop cans out of the garbage, we recycle our pop cans here at the school, we’re filling a sea-container. We’re going to ship it off with recycled cans at some point. That’s just an in-house school program sponsored by the Co-op,” he says. “I have people always ask ‘can we bring our cans to the school’ because nobody likes to put that can in the garbage because aluminum is a resource. So our teenagers are into that.” This is part of the Arctic Co-operatives Limited program, created in 2011 with a $40,000 donation, to recycle beverage containers in 23 communities in Nunavut. Community
groups often use it as a fundraising effort—for each full shipping container, the group receives $1,500. Since 2011, 19 sea containers have been shipped out of the Territory to be recycled—that’s approximately 750,000 cans.324

Jamesee Moulton has seen a similarly active response to the annual community clean up each spring. He and his colleague David Oberg help organize the efforts to clean up as the snow melts and the litter around town becomes visible. “It’s the funnest day ever because we have a big community clean up,” says Oberg. “I’d like to see the ways people get engaged on community clean up days all year round.” People want alternatives in Iqaluit. They want to recycle and separate their waste. It’s a matter not of drive but opportunity.

And, much like the Arctic Co-op program is funnelling funds back into the community, recycling can be an economic opportunity as well. As the Giroux Report found, “depots provide an opportunity for economic benefit in remote and Northern locations. For example, in the Northwest Territories the beverage container program provided 12 full time jobs and 35 part-time jobs at depots and processing centers in 2011-2012.”325 In a community that’s hurting for jobs, this could be an opportunity to get away from the extraction industry and provide sustainable employment. The pilot-project that ended recycling in 2010 was one such opportunity. Brian Hellwig, who operated the Iqaluit Depot, told CBC North that the recycling program generated $350 when it started in 2007, but grew—he told CBC that in August, 2010 alone, it had made $8,000, much of which ended up back in the

324 Giroux, State of Waste Management in Canada, 111-112.
325 IBID, 41.
community. As he said: "There were a lot of charity groups that were using it as fundraisers. There were a lot of individual people who would use it just for extra money. I mean, it put money into the community."  

"There’s the saying if you build it they will come. If you build recycling plants up here in Iqaluit, people will recycle. People want to recycle. You know everybody sees it on TV, everybody sees all the commercials and ads for recycling, manage your waste properly, people do want a recycling program. And there have been quite a few attempts to offer that," says Moulton. "But that’s just the tip of the iceberg as far as waste diversion and proper management goes."

Money is one of the main hurdles for recycling, no matter where you go. As mentioned earlier, if new materials cost less, “manufacturers are under no obligation to buy recycled materials.” Furthermore, unlike solid waste management departments (i.e. landfills), recycling programs are often expected to pay for themselves, and in many cases, are actually expected to be profitable. For municipalities with finite resources like Iqaluit, which has more logistical issues surrounding any sort of waste management to begin with, recycling can be seen as an unprofitable drain on resources that simply don’t exist. The Government of Nunavut scraped the recycling program in 2010, after their final assessment of the pilot project concluded that it would cost $18 million to continue and expand the program, plus another $750,000 a year for operations and maintenance. Much of this, as mentioned before, can be attributed to the lack of existing infrastructure.

326 “Nunavut ends recycling program,” CBC News.
327 Rogers, Gone Tomorrow, 179.
328 “Nunavut ends recycling program,” CBC News.
This is a territory with few roads— even accessing the sites themselves can be difficult. As the 2001 report by Ken Johnson found, “distance to a site becomes a significant factor from the onset given that the capital cost of an access road may exceed $250,000 per kilometre, and that operation and maintenance costs in the winter would be very expensive as well.”

Without a recycling centre in the Territory, everything has to be shipped out by air or sealift which drastically raises the price. This is exasperated by the fact that there are no landfill tipping fees in Nunavut, which promotes free disposal rather than costly diversion. This means that “In the absence of provincial or territorial or federal direction (e.g. funding incentive structures, regulatory requirements) some municipalities and ICI waste generators may landfill rather than recycle.” And if no private company is willing to step up and invest, programs fall by the way side. In the United States, about 80 per cent of products are used once and then discarded—more and more people rely on the convenience of disposable items. As Rogers explains in Gone Tomorrow:

After the turn of the century, the nature of what people threw away also changed in significant ways as manufacturers began marketing mass-produced disposable goods for the first time. The paper industry conjured disposable products to sell as alternatives for already existing or more durable items: new rolls of toilet paper as a substitute for waste paper like

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329 Johnson, Landuse Planning and Waste Management in Iqaluit, Nunavut, 134.
330 IBID, 134.
the pages of the Sears, Roebuck catalogue; paper cups (the now ubiquitous Dixie cup) in public drinking basins displaced shared cups; and paper straws supplanted the products organic namesake, straw. . . there’s no question many of these products brought greater comfort and cleanliness to their users, but they also brought more trash. 331

Even as I write this, I’m sipping from a disposable paper coffee cup. Which wouldn’t be so bad if it wasn’t encased in a cardboard sleeve to keep me from burning my fingers, topped with a plastic lid, and if I hadn’t thrown away the wrapper from my sugar packet and my plastic stir stick before drinking. I could have brought my coffee from home, made in the glass, reusable stove top percolator that used to belong to my grandmother, and trucked it to my office in a reusable travel mug, but the disposable seemed easier. All of this ends up in the trash. Even in areas where there are recycling programs, like the USA, where there are more than 9,000 curb side recycling programs, as Rogers explains “even if the dutiful separate their metal from glass, much of it still ends up at the landfill or incinerator, having found no buyer on the other end.” 332 Recycling is conceptualized as a forgone conclusion, an ‘of course we’ll do this’ logical good. However in practice, it’s a business, and if it can’t make a profit, it just doesn’t happen. As mentioned before, if it’s cheaper to use virgin materials, manufactures are under no obligation to use recycled alternatives.

In fact, as Rogers writes, “U.S. producers are not required to use reprocessed

331 Rogers, Gone Tomorrow, 65.
332 IBID, 6.
materials even though most manufacturers now stamp their containers with the eco-friendly recycling symbol.”\(^{333}\)

For example, in the USA, only about 5 per cent of all plastic is recycled. Even then, plastic is much harder to recycle than the public has been led to believe because of the mixed nature of formulas and the fact that companies aren’t required to label their products with the exact composition. In fact, since these formulas are generally proprietary, many companies wouldn’t even consider doing it voluntarily. In order for such items to be effectively recycled they would have to be taken back by the company who made them. But even then, after only a few times through the system (each change, by the way, releasing chemicals and other toxins), plastics degrade, and end up buried or burnt regardless. Which each trip through the system, the plastic degrades—that yogurt cup you dropped in the recycling bin, since it isn’t going straight back to the manufacturer, isn’t going to be made into a new yogurt cup in a closed loop. Instead, as Rogers writes in *Gone Tomorrow*, “The most common type of plastic reprocessing in the United States uses recovered resins to produce new commodities that are usually not recyclable themselves like fleece, car bumpers and synthetic lumber.”\(^ {334}\) And once these items wear out, that’s it, end of story—they have to be buried or burned. Contrarily, plastics are one of the most heavily marketed products as ‘recyclable’—many people view them as a more sustainable alternative. Marketers understand this, and capitalize upon it: for example, in 2010 H&M launched a line including garments made from recycled

\(^{333}\) Rogers, *Gone Tomorrow*, 6.  
\(^{334}\) IBID, 177.
polyester, and since then has expanded to include items made from recycled polyamide and plastic. It sounds like a good idea... or is it another justification for buying yet another piece of clothing? Plastic is basically, as Royte calls it in *Garbage Land*, “Satan’s resin” and it’s everywhere— clever marketing for the last 50 years has convinced consumers that without a thin layer of plastic, for example, freshness cannot be guaranteed. Sometimes that might be true, but the line between excess packaging and health and safety is a thin one.

The process through which waste is remade is known as down cycling. The thing to remember is that everything, except for some metals, “lose their molecular integrity during reprocessing, eventually rendering them unusable.” This is the problem with recycling: most consumers think it’s a simple process of taking one item, melting it down, and making another. It’s clever marketing and green washing, but only partially true. Materials degrade each time they are recycled, meaning there is a finite number of times each product can go through the system before it has to be burned or buried. Just as was discussed with plastic, paper and glass also lose molecular integrity, which affect the workability and durability, each time they’re reprocessed. Plastic as well, even when it is recycled, requires “a huge proportion of virgin resin” to be mixed with the recycled, weakened plastic to make it usable. Not to mention, synthetic products cannot be recycled if they’re

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337 Rogers, *Gone Tomorrow*, 177.
338 IBID, 177.
contaminated, which means even a tiny amount of another resin, “say a stray laundry detergent cap mixed with milk jugs, can mean the whole lot gets trashed.”

Currently, aluminum is the only item in our waste stream that is profitable—and therefore regularly—recycled. But that’s only, as discussed before, when it’s more profitable to recycle old metal rather than making new. In fact, as several European countries have found, one of the most effective diversion tactics is to require manufacturers to accept their products back for return, and handle their disposal themselves. This creates two effects almost instantly: it makes recycling much easier, as manufacturers know exactly what is included in each product, and return efforts create a closed system. If by law manufactures have to take back their products, they may as well use them instead of raw material.

It also encourages manufactures to cut down on the amount and type of packaging they’re using in the first place, as well as the amount of industrial waste—far greater, despite vigorous marketing campaigns designed to present the real threat to the environment as the consumer litter-bug instead of the industrial factory—left over from the production process. This is a process known as light-weighting, which makes “intense resource efficiency a design goal.” However, this takes infrastructure, initial financing and will. And, as disposables are cheaper, that doesn’t come from industry itself. As Rogers explains, “The underlying idea is to persuade companies to generate less from the start. If they have to pay to handle

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339 Rogers, Gone Tomorrow, 177.
340 IBID, 14.
and treat these wastes, the logic goes, producers will ultimately choose to create fewer disposables.”\textsuperscript{342}

Recycling, in this way, should not be seen as a benign solution, but rather part of the system itself. And, unfortunately for the last few decades, it’s been used as the band-aid to keep the machine running, a solution to a problem that should never have been created in the first place, as “recycling continued to treat wastes after they were created.”\textsuperscript{343} In this way, recycling created its own myth that allowed consumption, as discussed previously, to continue. People aren’t stupid; eventually we’re going to start feeling bad about just tossing things away. However, give us a successful myth that our waste isn’t really waste, and suddenly consumption, once again, becomes a good thing. By choosing to consume products that can be recycled, we come to believe we’re actually helping the planet! Just as Jim Little made me wonder if the abortive attempts at separation and recycling in Iqaluit distracted people from finding real solutions, recycling in general “has also functioned in cultural terms to divert public attention away from stronger reforms.”\textsuperscript{344} But more importantly, the idea that our consumption was benign, or even beneficial, if the items we discarded could be recycled, normalized unsustainable cultural habits. This tells the public that “even in the act of discarding one could be environmentally responsible; tossing the empty bottle, the once-used piece of paper, or the cereal box into a special bin took the guilt out of so much wasting.”\textsuperscript{345}

\textsuperscript{342} Rogers, \textit{Gone Tomorrow}, 218.
\textsuperscript{343} IBID, 157.
\textsuperscript{344} IBID, 157.
\textsuperscript{345} IBID, 157.
In many ways, these inefficiencies are a waste: not just of resources, but of money. American landfill records weren’t kept until 1972, but since then, it’s estimated that more than a trillion aluminum cans have ended up buried instead of recycled. That metal would be worth $21 billion. In 2004, as Annie Leonard points out, more than 800,000 tons of cans ended up in American landfills, with 300,000 tons being buried around the globe. As Worldwatch so eloquently put it, “that’s like five smelters pouring their entire annual output—a million tons of metal—straight into a hole in the ground.” When I drove into the Iqaluit dump, one of the most striking features wasn’t the giant pile of trash—it was the mountain of old cars, rusting away in a heap on the side. Jamesee Moulton tells me cars don’t last as long in the North as they do in the South. “They die quicker and they don’t go anywhere,” says Moulton. “I went to a presentation about end-of-life vehicles February 2011 in Toronto and I can’t tell you the number of presenters that got up in front of the group and said ‘people want your scrap vehicles, we need to make them work for it and prove they’re going to be managing it properly’. But when it was my turn to get up there I was like ‘so uh I hear that everybody wants these scrap vehicles, I can show you where there are 2,000 right now, and you can have them, I’ll give them to you for one penny, but you’ve got to come get them’. Did I have anyone wanting them? No. Because they know the price associated with coming up here. The transportation is very cost prohibitive.” If there was an efficient way to cash in on this money that’s literally being buried and burned, could it be

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347 IBID, 67.
348 IBID, 67.
used to support new, more sustainable waste solutions? As mentioned before, even if there is careful recycling and separation, if a market can’t be found for recyclable materials, they end up as garbage. And because there is no way to recycle in Nunavut, any raw recyclables shipped South just aren’t worth the cost to get them to market.

But, despite these problems, having the option of recycling is better than nothing. Since the fire, there have been some small changes in Iqaluit. There is now a voluntary paper diversion program, where paper and cardboard is separated from the waste stream and instead incinerated on site at the dump. However, during my stay in Nunavut, although I saw many signs and posters around town explaining the new measures and visited the giant stack of cardboard at the dump, in the building I was staying there were no separate bins at the garbage shoot. This, according to some residents, is not unusual. “I just am assuming that they’re dumping everything there, and there’s no separation,” says Ellen Hamilton. She works at Nunavut Arctic College, and she set up bins in her office to collect paper. “But I’m not convinced that the College actually puts the paper and cardboard out to a separate pick up. Nobody gets really told about it, and when I talk to people around here, they didn’t know about it. Their instructors didn’t know. So I know they’re throwing out paper into the garbage. I’m pretty sure all over the GN they’re throwing out paper.”

3.8 A dirty alternative: the death of compost in Iqaluit

That giant pile of cardboard at the dump is actually sitting on one of the only diversion programs in Iqaluit that seemed to be having an impact before the fire. Jim
Little's compost program kept tons of organic waste out of the waste stream, and was incredibly popular with the local community. Iqaluit’s first and only composting program served around 100 households under the non-profit organization the Bill Mackenzie Humanitarian Society since 2004. Jim Little ran the program largely out of his own pocket; membership to the program cost just $25 per year. That just about covered the gas for his truck, which he used to pick up and transport the trash to the compost pad he constructed near the dump. Using a relatively low tech method called ‘windrow composting’, he managed to provide Class-A compost to Iqaluit, and more importantly prove that not only was composting possible in the Arctic but also that the community was interested and eager to get onboard. He tells me he estimates that his composting program diverted about 30 per cent of the waste those households would normally have sent to the dump. That’s in line with the rest of Canada: the Giroux Report found that food and yard waste makes up approximately 40 per cent of residential waste, with paper (which can also be composted) making up another 26 per cent of municipal waste. This is one of the reasons composting programs have seen an upswing across the country— the Giroux Report estimates that between 2000 and 2010, diversion thanks to access to curbside and backyard composting programs increased 125 per cent. As the Giroux Report states “Investments in composting programs (either high or low tech) provide “the biggest bang for the buck” in terms of opportunities to significantly increase diversion in any community.”\textsuperscript{349} Relatively low-tech windrow composting and programs like Little’s are actually, according to the Report, viable options in

remote communities where it wouldn’t be cost effective to transport organic waste long distances and represent “a significant opportunity to lower disposal quantities,” and “produce valuable compost.” It’s such an opportunity that the Giroux Report recommends that jurisdictions implement landfill bans on organics that could be composted and “provide infrastructure support where needed in small, remote or northern communities.”

Iqaluit had Jim Little, a private citizen with volunteers, community support and his truck, providing that infrastructure. But during the fire, the Municipality, in an effort to not add additional combustibles to the blaze, asked for the use of Jim Little’s site near the dump to store cardboard and paper. He agreed—after all, his town was on fire.

“Basically what they said was ‘can we use your compost site to store our combustibles until the fire gets out, and then we’ll give the site back to you?’ That was a year ago last August, and I said ‘well yeah, of course’. It’s an emergency, we’ve got to. But they moved in and they never moved out,” says Jim Little.

Almost a year later, the paper and cardboard is still there, burying the pad and equipment he’d installed for composting, and the program is long gone. “They weren’t gentle about it. They destroyed a lot of our stuff,” he says. He was left with a pile of cardboard on top of his equipment, which meant even if he could find another site to set up and continue the program, his supplies were no more. His voice strains while he talks about this: he cares so much about his community and helping to

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351 IBID, 9.
“We had those containers, we had crates of wood pellets, we’re in the tens of thousands of dollars of damages. And it wasn’t until a year later that we actually got confirmation that they’re not moving out, that they’re not ever going to give us this back. It was just demonized us. They made us into villains as if we were on that lot illegally, we had no right to be there, they had every right to kick us off, blah blah blah. It’s just really sad,” he says. “They just destroyed stuff, I mean what right did they have to do that? . . . I don’t get it.”

This is an example of the way waste management in Iqaluit actually reflects bigger trends from the history of Canada’s relationship with the North. The plan was no plan—instead, the city was reacting to a crisis in the best way they could at the time, once again creating a situation where instead of long term, sustainable solutions like a municipal composting program, they’re literally putting out the immediate fires of the day. Jim Little blames this in part on a reliance on Southern consultants and expertise, at the expense of using that expertise in conjunction with Northern-specific planning. “Always from the South. They thought they did [understand the North], they all think they do, they all have this big super ego, they’re being well paid, they just think they know it all. And a lot of times the elected people? They put their faith in these people. And they spend fortunes on hiring consultants,” says Jim Little. “There’s not a lot of vision and the vision isn’t there a lot of times because there isn’t a lot of background experience within the people that are being elected. They rely heavily on engineers and consultants to tell them. They have not been exposed to the extremes of construction in the Arctic, a whole body of thought around that that could be brought to the table. Now if I were the Mayor I
would say ‘all right we are going to hire a consultant to answer this question’ not ‘hey give us a design for a new subdivision’. I would ask very specific questions.”

3.9 Environmental Racism: a green kind of awful

This reflects the Terra-Nullius-limbo people in the North continue to live in. In Southern Canada, as the Giroux Report states, “there is a significant gap between First Nation reserves and Canadian communities elsewhere in the degree to which waste regulations protect the environment. The existing Indian Reserve Waste Disposal Regulations 1978, are out-of-date and do not reflect the complexity of modern waste management systems.” Additionally, according to the Giroux Report, on more than 3,000 waste sites in 614 First Nation Reserves across the country, the Federal Government is not enforcing waste management regulations to the same degree provinces do on non-Federal (and by that read non-filled-with-Indigenous-populations) lands. This is environmental racism.

Across the world, waste disposal sites are more likely to be located in low income areas, or in areas dominated by people of colour. In the United States, numerous studies have shown that “communities populated by low income groups and people of color are exposed to higher levels of pollution than the rest of the nation.” What does that mean for landfills? It means that solid waste facilities are generally located in areas that aren’t ‘worth’ anything; the value of the land, and the people who live near it, are determined to be lower by planners and policy makers,

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as well as populations who insist such facilities cannot be located in their areas. As Royte notes in *Garbage Land*, “Garbage follows a strict class topography. It concentrates on the margins, and it tumbles downhill to settle in places of least resistance, among the poor and the disenfranchised.”

354 Put another way, "trash is dumped, metaphorically, upon trash." What’s more, the political clout of the populations in those areas isn’t given as much weight as that of other groups; if you tried to locate a garbage dump in a more affluent neighbourhood, for example, the political ramifications of ‘not in my backyard’ (NIMBY) politics could be serious. In 2006, then-Ontario Energy Minister Dwight Duncan told *CanWest News Service* “It’s no longer NIMBY. For some people it’s NOPE, not on planet Earth, it’s BANANA, build absolutely nothing anywhere.”

356 He was talking about energy sources and transmission lines, but the same feeling extends to trash.

People in more affluent areas don’t want to see their garbage after they are finished with it. “So as long as everything gets picked up at the curb and goes away, they’d rather not know where it goes or what it’s causing a problem. I think that’s a human, or at least a Canadian, type of instinct,” says Romeyn Stevenson. “And they don’t want to smell it. I was in Toronto during one of the garbage strikes and they were piling garbage, just literally piling it in downtown core parks. People are all shocked because they see their garbage for the first time again. Nobody wants to see their garbage again. But sometimes you have to, to wake yourself up and see what’s happening.”

355 IBID, 40.
356 Parks, *Canada’s Arctic Sovereignty*, 218.
But in Toronto and cities like it, they have the political and financial capital to make it disappear. Rogers cites an industry study from 1984 that found "All socioeconomic groupings tend to resent the nearby siting of major facilities, but middle and upper socioeconomic status possess better resources to effectuate their opposition." But it has to go somewhere—in some cases, that means shipping it across state and national borders. Much waste is even shipped overseas, where piles of everything from plastic bags to incredibly toxic waste are growing in developing countries that are the least likely to be able to do anything about it. And the production that has to fuel the constant consumption that is filling those dumps is also leaving behind its remnants, in the form of industrial waste. As Leonard notes,

More remains to be done to keep America from being divided into liveable communities, where the environment is relatively clean; and “sacrifice zones,” where residents are exposed to the toxic by-products of a production process that keep goods artificially cheap and corporate profits rising. Many Americans do not realize [this is] part of the reason they are able to buy goods so cheaply. We’re happy to take the products; we just don’t want the mess. That’s what is happening. And that is not okay.\(^{358}\)

But it’s not just about power, politics and affluence. Melissa Checker followed the trail of environmental racism in Hyde Park, a predominately African

\(^{357}\) Rogers, Gone Tomorrow, 197.  
\(^{358}\) Leonard, The Story of Stuff, 89.
American neighbourhood in Augusta, Georgia, surrounded by nine polluting industries in her book *Polluted Promises: Environmental Racism and the Search for Justice in a Southern Town*. As she explains, “Race, numerous studies tell us, is the most potent variable in predicting where hazardous waste facilities are located—more powerful than poverty, land values, or homeownership. Three out of every five African Americans and Hispanics and roughly 50 percent of Asian/Pacific Islanders and Native Americans live in communities containing at least one uncontrolled toxic waste site.” And, I would argue that an unregulated, unmaintained, unremediated dump site, even if it’s mostly full of plastic bags, milk jugs and Coke cans, can be considered long term hazardous waste. If for no other reason than when the bleach bottles mix with old newspapers, batteries and more, they tend to light themselves on fire, as they did in Iqaluit.

Similar infrastructure problems exist throughout Canada on and near First Nations Reserves. Waste cannot be seen in a vacuum. Waste is part of larger, systemic problems that affects other major infrastructure issues, like water. According to Health Canada, on January 16, 2016, for example, there were 135 Drinking Water Advisories, put in place to advise about contamination, in effect in 86 First Nation Communities across the country, excluding British Columbia. Although there are multiple types and can affect, as Health Canada points out, as little as one building, many are more serious. For instance, Neskantaga First Nation

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in Ontario has had the longest running water advisory in the county, for the last 20 years. According to the *CBC*, “two-thirds of all First Nation communities in Canada have been under at least one drinking water advisory at some point in the last decade.” Many First Nations Reserves across Canada also struggle with the same issues of waste management that Nunavut does, including wide spread open burning. The 2004 *Final Report on the Survey of Garbage Disposal/ Burning in First Nation Communities in Ontario* for the Chiefs of Ontario and Environment Canada-Ontario Region found that “uncontrolled burning of domestic-type trash, particularly in barrels and landfills, is a major source of chlorinated dioxins and furans and other toxic pollutants to the environment . . . Dioxins and furans have been linked to numerous adverse health effects such as; cancer, weakened immune system, reproductive disorders, allergies and asthma, skin diseases, etc.” When the survey asked respondents if there was open burning in their communities, 63 per cent said ‘yes’. But the final report notes there was a problem with the methodology—many people responded ‘no’, because the garbage was only burned at the dump. The report suggests that if the question had been clearer, the result would have been higher than 63 per cent.

It’s clear that, as the Giroux Report puts it, “some of the waste management challenges faced by Northern and remote communities are very similar to those

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faced on First Nation reserves.” But Iqaluit isn’t a Reserve; it isn’t Federal land. As mentioned earlier, the Inuit were never wards of the Crown under the Indian Act. It is the capital and most populous city in the Territory; it should have a standard of solid waste management comparable to other major cities and capitals in Canada. For that matter, all communities in Canada, whether on a Reserve or not, should have access to the same high standard of waste management infrastructure as the rest of Canada. After all, to paraphrase Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, it’s 2016.

Once again, Iqallummiut are trapped between citizenry and paternalism, between the responsibilities of being citizens of Canada (and thus responsible for their own waste at the municipal and territorial level instead of the federal) and inheriting a toxic legacy that no municipality in Canada could fight their way out of. Once again, Iqaluit is left grasping nothing but short straws. “You have to peel back the layers before you say ‘only in the North would a dump fire last five months’. But peel back, like how did that pile get so big? Why isn’t there the expertise or equipment to be able to put such a big fire out, and you get down to the issues of there not being enough communication between people,” says Laakkuluk Williamson Bathory. “I’m sure the garbage piles are way bigger in like Calgary or Toronto for example, there must be huge dumps. So if those went on fire it would be a huge controversy. And it was here too, it’s all about proportion. But there isn’t the infrastructure to deal with the material in a dump in the first place, and there isn’t the infrastructure to deal with the fire in the second place, and those are Northern problems.”
Williamson Bathory is an artist and performs traditional mask dances. One such performance focused on garbage in the North. At the Northern Scene Festival, she performed a piece all about Northerner’s relationship with ravens. “One of our themes was garbage strewn all over the stage, and it turned into a clown act where the ravens ended up choking on it and we had to resuscitate them,” she says. “In Inuktitut there is a saying ‘if the raven ever turns white’, which is like ‘if pigs fly’. So we had a white raven come in as an almost translucent character that carefully swept back all the garbage, and there was like this meditation on whose responsibility it is in the first place to make sure the environment around us is clean.”

Ellen Hamilton agrees. She takes it one step further—not only would the dump not be the way it is if Iqaluit were below the tree line, the fire wouldn’t have lasted as long either. “I think this city has unique characteristics that make it really really vital. It’s vital strategically for defense of this country, it’s vital for tourism, this is an isolated place but it’s the capital city of this entire Territory. And so it’s really important everything’s functioning well here or it reflects very badly on our country,” she says. “They wouldn’t have everybody in Toronto having to breathe that all summer long. They should have dealt with it. We were a capital city that could not breathe for months.”

3.10 Burn baby burn, dump fire inferno

On July 3, 2014, Shawn Innuksuk posted a photo of his partner, Julie Alivaktuk, to Facebook. This wouldn’t be unusual, except she’s standing in front of a giant dump
fire. Julie’s face is covered with a mask, one hand cupping her pregnant belly, the other thrust towards the camera, palm spread. Across her hand, the symbol for the Inuktitut word *taima* is scrawled in black marker. It means ‘enough, stop, that’s it.’

At that point the fire in Iqaluit’s city dump had been burning for 44 days, since May 20, 2014. It would take another two and a half months until it was extinguished on September 16, 2014, 178 days after it officially burst into flames. The official fire may be dated at May 20, but thermal imaging revealed the four-storey pile of trash started heating up deep inside in January of 2014.

But some people speculate it may have been continually burning, under the surface, since it lit itself on fire in 2010. “I mean the possibility for speculation is endless. There’s no way of someone proving you wrong at this point—there’s not the study going into it, people aren’t asking the hard questions, people are satisfied with the easy answers,” says Jamesee Moulton. He says he thinks that’s one of the reasons the fire wasn’t put out superficially and quickly by the local fire department. “I’m just trying to think how I’m going to answer this without getting myself in trouble. Have I heard from many of the firefighters that they would have been able to put out the fire if they’d wanted to? Yes. But it was the call of the fire chief, who had seen five or six dump fires since December. He made the executive decision that even if they did extinguish the fire, it would have put out the flames on the surface, fire would have retreated back into the pile, just to be exposed at a later point at a different pile.” That 2010 fire took 36 days and approximately three million litres of water to put out. Comparatively, the Hagersville Tire Fire in Ontario, the fire most
people in the South point to when they want to discuss burning trash, only burned for 17 days. 364

Finding out when exactly the fire started is just not financially viable. “To ensure that this pile alone isn’t on fire you need to pull that apart,” says Moulton. “And then you look at the other financial requirements of the Territory and you say ‘yeah so for 10 million dollars we can confirm that that pile that’s not doing anything right now, that’s perfectly fine as far as everybody is concerned, we can prove that that’s still OK’ or that we should be concerned about it, but right now we also need to build a new 30 million dollar school in Cape Dorset because it just burnt down so where’s the money going to go?”

Dumpcano, as the fire was nicknamed by Iqaluit’s fire chief, was one of the world’s most Northern dump fires, smoldering away in a landscape past the tree line that has grown increasingly fragile. The giant pile of trash was 40 metres deep and 160 metres across (or put another way, over 4-storeys tall). When the fire began, the mountain of trash was as wide as a football field and as high as 17 metres on one side, with temperatures reaching 2000 degrees Celsius inside. 365 And it was born of spontaneous combustion. Less than five per cent of dump fires just spontaneously ignite, but the Iqaluit dump managed to do it, and spent the summer billowing smoke across the capitol of Nunavut.

Janet Brewster has a house just across the water from the dump. During the fire, she says she was mostly worried about her kids, both of whom are asthmatic.

364 Worden, “The Iqaluit Landfill “Dumpcano” has been burning for eight weeks?”
She calls her son Miles *ita* boy, which means ‘outside’ in Inuktitut. “During the fire, he was really at that age where it was now safe for him to be outside around the house without me out there with him. It was kind of a liberating summer for him because he could come and go. That’s what you do when you’re a little kid right? You take off for the day in the summer, you come in when you’re hungry or when you’ve scraped your knee, that kind of thing. It builds skills in all sorts of ways and it contributes to a good and healthy lifestyle right?” she says. But during the fire, that wasn’t possible. “I had to turn my air exchange system off, because it was sucking in the polluted air. So we had to keep our windows closed in the middle of summer after having gone through an entire winter with the windows closed. Your house needs to breath! And Miles, his asthma was really really really bad,” she says. “So he’s wheezing and coughing and wheezing and coughing and wheezing and coughing and you just want your kid to go through a day where he feels good. I would relent and he would go out to play and I could smell it off him.” For a small city surrounded by wide-open spaces and used to clean ocean breezes, this was, as Janet Brewster puts it, hugely different.

Ellen Hamilton agrees. Her son Shawn took the picture that initially got me interested in the dump fire. She arrived back in Iqaluit about half way through the fire. “We could see the smoke from the plane. Then we landed, we get out and immediately we smelt it,” she says. “It was difficult to breathe, you could smell it, it reeked, your eyes would burn, you could see the smoke in the air. And we get up to our house and yeah, sure enough, this beautiful view we have over the Arctic ocean was completely obscured by this dump just burning in front of you.” She says she,
and many people like her, took to carrying something with her to cover her mouth and nose. “If you were going from the bank to across the street you would cover your mouth sometimes, you just couldn’t breath. It depended on which way the wind was blowing,” she says. For Hamilton, this was particularly troubling as her grandson was born in the middle of the fire. “[The doctor] kept saying that ‘this is ridiculous, I don’t feel this is safe for patients’,” she says. “The baby was born with asthma. The baby does have asthma. And one worries about that.”

During the fire, the Government of Nunavut, working with Environment Canada and Health Canada put out warnings that people with heart and lung disease, children, the elderly, pregnant women and women who may become pregnant should limit their exposure to the smoke, as exposure to dioxins and furans can decrease the fertility of male offspring. On July 31, 2014, a bulletin put out by the Government of Nunavut advised citizens that “When the smoke is blowing in your direction, you should minimize your exposure by staying indoors as much as possible. Keep your doors and windows closed, and set air exchangers to recirculate indoor air or turn them off. If the smoke is still getting into your home, you should consider going to a family member or friend’s house in another part of the city where there is less smoke. If you have to go outside, limit physical activity.”366 The bulletin warned that people should watch for “wheezing, shortness of breath, tightness in your chest, light headedness and dizziness”367 and told people that the smoke could be irritating to eyes, nose throat, and may cause nausea. By

367 IBID, 3.
August 29, the Government of Nunavut issued a Public Health Advisory, addressing these fears directly, advising that “People with heart or lung disease, asthma, the elderly, children, pregnant women and women who may become pregnant should limit their exposure to dump fire smoke. This can be done by staying indoors with the doors and windows closed, and with air exchangers set to recirculate indoor air or turned off. Reduce or reschedule outdoor physical activity. People should seek medical attention if they have symptoms such as trouble breathing or tightness in the chest.” In order to keep vulnerable people from having to leave their homes and potentially expose themselves to smoke, as the Globe and Mail reported on June 6, 200 students from two different schools were sent home, their schools closed.

Romeyn Stevenson, principal of Inuksuk High School as well as a member of the City Council heard a lot of these concerns. “There was lots of concern about health issues,” he says. “Every time the wind blew towards town there was concern about immediate health issues with the smoke coming into people's houses.” He says they had to turn off the air handling in buildings like the High School. “But even when the wind was blowing the other way, there were concerns about what was being put into our environmental and what was long term coming into the community,” he says. “In that part the Government of Nunavut and the Government of Canada were very helpful. We had monitoring systems set up throughout the system . . . we were given feedback on what was being put into the air and what was

causing health wise, if it was causing anything. The Chief Medical Officer for Nunavut was very involved, daily, always involved in the process of disseminating information. But people were concerned. People were concerned all the time. It was gross, it was disgusting, and it left sort of a pallor on the city for how people felt about being in town.”

This feeling that the communication between the various government and monitoring bodies was well done is shared by Anubha Momin. “I don’t think that we were left in the dark as citizens, but I think there just wasn’t a lot of knowledge about what happened, or what could be done. So we weren’t necessarily getting regular updates, but I think that was because the city didn’t have anything to say,” she says. But, she does take issue with how the warning for women of childbearing age was handled. “I think there wasn’t enough information given when they made that statement. It kind of sounded really scary. I don’t know if in any other capital city in Canada you could have had a warning that said ‘all women of child bearing age should stay inside’ without some kind of uproar or federal involvement or something, I couldn’t believe that. I can’t imagine that a dump fire would burn for months on end in Toronto.”

The big concern was how potentially toxic the smoke could be. This was something the government was aware of: after all, this was prime season for outdoor activities, including things like fishing and berry picking, that were now being done under a cloud of dump smoke. It was such a public concern that the issue of berry picking safety was addressed in the August 29 Public Health Advisory: “Berry picking season has begun. Any smoke that falls on berries remains on the
surface but doesn’t get inside the berry. To be careful, wash the berries before you eat them."³⁷⁰

The air quality in Iqaluit was monitored by the Government of Nunavut in partnership with Environment Canada, monitoring pollutants through the National Air Pollution Surveillance Network (NAPS). Using equipment that measures ozone and nitrogen oxides, as well as additional air quality monitoring equipment delivered by Environment Canada and Health Canada in June, the air was tested at four locations around Iqaluit. The equipment measured particulate matter in the 2.5 micron range, ozone, nitrogen oxides, sulphur oxides, associated metals, volatile organic compounds (VOCs), polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), dioxins/furans and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) but not the chemical compounds released by the dump fire. A report prepared by the Water and Air Quality Bureau of Health Canada released on August 4, 2014 summarizes data collected between June 14 and August 4 on several hundred compounds that may have short-term or long-term health effects. This report, like many others, compares the data collected on air quality in Iqaluit to Ontario standards, which the Report describes as “very conservative.” Of particular interest were dioxin and furan samples, which “consists of 17 separate compounds that are weighted with Toxic Equivalent Factors from the World Health Organization to generate Toxic Equivalency Quotients (TEQ) to compare with the standard.”³⁷¹

Throughout the fire, the various monitoring agencies assured people that the smoke was safe. According to the bulletin put out by the Government of Nunavut on July 31, 2014, “The smoke contains a mixture of chemicals and fine particles, depending on what is burning and the burn temperature at the time. Typically, the dump holds materials such as plastic, wood, metal, paper, cardboard, food and electronics.”

In the bulletin, the Government assured citizens that the “data collected in Iqaluit has shown that air pollution concentrations are generally low in Iqaluit and most pollutants are present at values well below available guidelines/standards. Short-term peaks in particulate matter air pollution tend to occur when the wind is still or coming directly from the landfill site.” The data found that in twelve 24-hour samples analyzed for dioxins/furans, the mean sample concentration in Iqaluit was 0.2 pg TEQ/m³ which exceeds the Ontario Ambient Air Quality Standard of 0.1 pg TEQ/m³. The government advised that this meant that generally “the levels in Iqaluit are generally low and do not pose a threat to human health.”

The August 4 report from Health Canada concurred, finding that between June 14 and August 4, “Criteria air pollution concentrations Criteria air pollution concentrations (PM$_{2.5}$, NO$_2$, SO$_2$, O$_3$, CO) in Iqaluit have been low since air monitoring began and do not require an emergency response or pose a threat to public health.”

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373 IBID, 1.
374 IBID, 2.
375 Health Canada, Water and Air Quality Bureau, Air Pollution Concentrations in Iqaluit, Nunavut (June 14-Aug 4, 2014), 2.
present, but at concentrations below health standards—even peaks in the hourly average of PM$_{2.5}$ concentrations, for example, when the wind was blowing from the dump, weren’t considered particularly high. The Health Canada Report found that the median hourly-average of PM$_{2.5}$ levels was 4.00 μg/m$^3$, but these hourly peaks reached values as high as 90 μg/m$^3$. The Report compares these to levels of the same compounds in the Northwest Territories during forest fires between July 8-9, which reached 170 μg/m$^3$. Health Canada determined that these were acceptable levels, but added the caveat that the spikes could impact sensitive populations like asthmatics, even if the 24-hour average values were below existing standards.\(^{376}\) Similarly, Health Canada found that median 24-hour concentrations of VOCs and PAHs were also below Health Canada Reference concentrations. Not everything was below that standard however: 24-hour average concentrations for benzene and benzo(a)pyrene were highest closest to dump, and, as the Health Canada report states, “on occasion concentrations at this site have exceeded typical values observed in Canada (i.e. greater than the 90th percentile).”\(^{377}\) It might be a good time to mention that the dump is barely outside of Iqaluit: it’s just a few kilometres from downtown. Health Canada advised however that short-term elevations in benzene and benzo(a)pyrene “pose a negligible health risk as long-term exposures (e.g. over many years) are most relevant to human health.”\(^{378}\) Similarly, although ambient

\(^{376}\) Health Canada, Water and Air Quality Bureau, *Air Pollution Concentrations in Iqaluit, Nunavut (June 14-Aug 4, 2014)*, 3.

\(^{377}\) IBID, 3.

\(^{378}\) IBID, 3.
PCB, VOC and PAH concentrations were present during the fire, according to Health Canada they “do not pose an unacceptable risk to health.”

“Bullshit. I call bullshit on that,” says Janet Brewster. “You know you can’t tell me that burning plastics and you know like, Javax bottles and Mr. Clean and who knows what other kind of containers were in there, old computers, electronics, you name it, [is safe].”

Part of the problem is that as the dump was burning, there was no way to know for sure that each sample was consistent. Because the material in the dump was by and large unregulated and undocumented over time, it was literally filled with everything imaginable—even the bulletin from July 31 mentioned that although the results generally said the toxins being released were within acceptable levels, there were ‘spikes’. “To be able to say ‘this dump fire produced x tones of dioxins’, can’t do that,” says Jamesee Moulton. “Can’t do that without being able to grab a representative portion of dump smoke that you can prove is statistically comparable to x volume. Without being able to put a cap over it with a little valve, and [go] ‘OK 20 seconds of this,’ you can’t say ‘well over the 120 days the dump fire produced this’. What we can say with the stations we set up was ‘OK based on readings at these sites, the population was exposed to roughly this much volatile organic compounds, particular matter smaller than 2.5 microns, polyaromatic hydrocarbons, dioxins, furins. It was more a public safety standpoint as opposed to a ‘this is what’s coming off the dump’ standpoint.”

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379 Health Canada, Water and Air Quality Bureau, Air Pollution Concentrations in Iqaluit, Nunavut (June 14-Aug 4, 2014), 3.
Although those levels fell within an ‘acceptable’ standard of risk, there is still debate over if that risk really is acceptable. As Leonard writes in *The Story of Stuff*, “Only a handful of the tens of thousands of synthetic compounds in use have been screened for health and environmental impacts. Not one has been screened for full synergistic health impacts, which means the impacts on us when we’re exposed to more than one of these compounds at the same time.” So although it might be possible to say we know what happens when Janet Brewster’s Javax bottle burns, we don’t know what happens when it’s mixing with the smoke from her Mr. Clean bottle. But what do we know? Although research into many of these substances is just beginning—especially what happens when they interact—there are some facts that are accepted by the scientific community. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the International Agency for Research on Cancer have both confirmed that dioxins—a group of noxious chemicals that persist in the environment and are capable of travelling long distances and building up in the food chain—cause cancer, as well as damage to the endocrine, reproductive, nervous and immune system. It’s been called “The most toxic persistent pollutant in existence.” During the fire, as the Health Canada report from August 4 found, “dioxin concentrations have sometimes exceeded the relevant health standard.” However, the report continues that this does not mean that “adverse health effects will be observed. In particular, the Ontario Standard is very conservative (i.e. protective of health) and

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381 IBID, 54.
the health risks associated with airborne concentrations of dioxins/furans in Iqaluit remain low."\textsuperscript{383} According to the Health Canada Report, these elevated levels of dioxins/furans are to be expected at major fire events, like forest and land fill fires, and while “long-term exposure to high levels of dioxins is known to increase cancer risk” the levels observed in Iqaluit between June 14 and August 4 were “far below the relevant health standard for cancer.”\textsuperscript{384} Although testing during the dump fire put exposure at acceptable levels, is there ever an acceptable level? Especially considering, as discussed previously, that those standards for acceptable levels of toxicity are based on average toxin loads within people’s bodies. As previously mentioned, people in the Arctic already far exceed these levels. And that’s before they’ve been exposed to dump smoke.

One common source of dioxins is polyvinyl chloride (PVC) plastic; it’s a cheap and versatile plastic, and you’ve probably encountered it in everything from fake leather clothing to bibs and shower curtains, hard garden furniture, food containers, vinyl siding, binders and medical supplies, as well as in toys and clothing. Because in its pure form its fairly brittle, other chemicals and additives need to be mixed in—these include neurotoxic heavy metals, like mercury and lead and phthalates.\textsuperscript{385} These additives actually spend a lot of time being ‘off-gassed’—released into the environment—as they don’t bond to the PVC at the molecular level. Off-gassing often happens when the material changes state—is heated or cooled down. In 2008,

\textsuperscript{383} Health Canada, Water and Air Quality Bureau, \textit{Air Pollution Concentrations in Iqaluit, Nunavut (June 14-Aug 4, 2014)}, 4.
\textsuperscript{384} IBID, 4.
\textsuperscript{385} Leonard, \textit{The Story of Stuff}, 69.
the Center for Health, Environment and Justice tested the chemicals that were off-gassed from a PVC shower curtain. They found 108 different volatile compounds released into the air over 28 days, at levels 16 times over the indoor air quality levels recommended by the U.S. Green Building Council. They’re actually the cause of new car smell. Why am I ragging on PVC? Because it makes up a huge amount of the plastic in landfills across North America. Americans throw away seven billion tons of PVC per year, with two to four billion tons going to landfills, where it leaches those toxic additives into the soil and air. Although we don’t have accurate statistics on the makeup of the Iqaluit dump, based on these trends we can assume it did so there as well. And, as Leonard writes, having PVC not just be buried, but burned in an uncontrolled dump fire makes the toxic effect even worse. When PVC burns, it creates the super toxin, dioxin. And, as we know from building fires where PVC was used in construction materials, when it heats up in a fire, it releases hydrogen chloride gas or hydrochloric acid, which “is deadly if inhaled by firefighters and others trapped inside.” The Iqaluit dump was regularly used by construction workers at the end of projects to discard their materials. While there’s no data to say for sure if some of it was PVC and added to the pile of existing PVC during the dump fire, the potential alone should give pause.

Dioxins, furans and other persistent organic pollutants (POPs) are, as discussed previously, so dangerous that they’re the subject of a United Nations

387 IBID, 69.
388 IBID, 69.
Conventio
n, the Stockholm Convention on persistent organic pollutants. The Convention identified eight different pesticides and two industrial chemicals: aldrin, chlordane, DDT, dieldrin, endrin, heptachlor, mirex, and toxaphene, hexachlorobenzenes (HCBs) and the polychlorinated biphenyls [PCBs], plus two industrial bi-products, dioxins and furans. More were added in 2009, including HCH/Lindane, HBB, Penta and Octa DBE, Chlordecone, PFOS and pentachlorobenzene. They don't break down, meaning they stay inside the tissues of living creatures, bio-accumulating and being passed through the food chain.

We also know that the dump site itself was toxic—it’s not pure speculation that the content of the dump was hazardous. In a paper in the Canadian Water Resources Journal in 1998, Glenda M. Samuelson quoted soil analysis done with soil from the dumpsites in Iqaluit and Upper Base for several contaminants by the Department of National Defense and the Environment Sciences Group in 1995. The samples were analyzed against standards for contaminants derived from the DEW Line Clean-up Criteria, Canadian Environmental Protection Act and Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment. Citing research done by the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development in 1994, Samuelson found that:

Soil samples from the old and new municipal dumpsites have the following mean concentrations: arsenic (3.7 ppm), cadmium (1.a ppm), copper (81 ppm), lead (176 ppm), nickel (17 ppm) and zinc (353 ppm) elevated above background levels. Some samples contained concentrations of cadmium (5,2

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ppm), copper (145 ppm), lead (840 ppm) and zinc (1080 ppm) above standards. Pesticides were detected, and PAHs and PCBs (0.74 ppm) were elevated above background concentrations. Water located within the new dumpsite contained PCBs (0.0086 ppm) and cooper (0.012 ppm) in excess of standards . . . The Iqaluit Leachate Monitoring Program detected levels of ammonia nitro- gen (5.8 mg/L), suspended solids (997 mg/L), PAHs $.7 mg/L) and TPHs (0.042 mg/L) above standards in the leachate from the new dumpsite.390

All of that—the contaminants found in the 90s, the POPs, the PVC plastic, JavaX bottles and Mr. Clean—were in the dump. But monitoring agencies maintain it was safe. As mentioned before, the Arctic Paradox also means that Arctic bodies already have a much higher toxicity load than do Southern bodies—there hasn’t been enough research done at this time to determine if that means the acceptable level of risk should be adjusted to accommodate a pre-existing level of toxicity. According to Samuelson, “Further research is required to determine accurate background concentrations of contaminants in the Arctic and to develop suitable standards for these contaminants.”391

Beyond health concerns, however, the fire also created social and emotional tolls. The fire trapped Northerners in their homes that summer, cutting them off from the pristine wilderness marketed to tourists. Not to mention, in the heat of

391 IBID, 331.
summer, people weren’t able to open their windows; in fact, many people told me that to keep out the smell from the dump, they had to practically seal their homes. It’s a big part of the culture in Iqaluit to go outdoors. Being on the land is a way to pass down knowledge, cultural understanding and to reconnect with a huge part of what has kept this community strong for centuries. Being unable to go outdoors during the summer months was culturally devastating. “Our way of thinking and being is so we can survive. And we are the only ones who could survive in this harsh environment where people said there was nothing,” says Aaju Peter. “The traditional saying is the mind is so powerful that the body is like a feather being blown in the tundra. That’s how we can survive, that’s how we could survive and that’s how we are succumbing to suicide because we are losing, our most precious strength … the mind,” says Aaju Peter.

Most summers, many people set up tents in Sylvia Grinnell Territorial Park and spend evenings with other people from the community out of doors, as well as all sorts of other outdoor activities that are a huge part of the culture and heritage that goes with living in the North. With the dump on fire and warnings and fears about toxic contamination, people were instead trapped inside. “I’m not going to say it was unbearable, because some people did it, but it was nearly unbearable to go to the river and camp and hang out because at the whim of the winds your experience could be completely destroyed,” says Stevenson. “And it was an awful smell, it would give you a headache, it was an awful smell.” The smell, however, according to officials, wasn’t cause for concern. As the Health Canada Report from August 4 states, “Health Canada recognizes that offensive odours may be detected in Iqaluit as
a result of the fire and that these odours may raise concerns with respect to the health impacts of the fire. Although unpleasant, odours alone do not necessarily indicate a health risk as odours are often detected at concentrations below values that are relevant to public health.\footnote{Health Canada, Water and Air Quality Bureau, \textit{Air Pollution Concentrations in Iqaluit, Nunavut (June 14-Aug 4, 2014)}, 4.} That’s looking at ‘health’ in a very narrow scope, without including the emotional and mental impact of the smell of burning garbage for months at a time.

As part of his job as the Manager of Parks Facilities and Operations with Nunavut Territorial Parks Division of the Department of Environment within the Government of Nunavut, Cameron DeLong oversees operations at all the Territorial Parks across Nunavut In Iqaluit that means Sylvia Grinnell Territorial Park. It’s the most visited park across the whole Territory, because it’s easy to get to—it’s a two minute car ride from downtown Iqaluit. And it’s only a few kilometres from the dump. They operate a pavilion that is used by the public for a variety of events, as well as an informal campground in the back of the park. People visit for organized events or just to hike and fish. And during the dump fire they saw a significant drop off in the number of people making it out. “I think initially there’s that sort of ‘oh look the dump is on fire’. I was living just in front of it on the other side of the bay, so I had a great view of this burning pile of garbage, and you’d see it all night long. It was cool to look at but then it was very quickly realized that this was not going to be good if the wind changes,” says DeLong. “It was burning within two kilometres [of the Park], downwind for the better part of the whole period of time that that fire
burned. So we were getting the odour, basically any toxins and or particulate matter that was in the air was blowing over the park. My staff was basically exposed to this from 8.30 in the morning until 5 at night during their shift. But then beyond that we were now seeing a huge decrease in our numbers in the Park.”

Park officials track attendance by counting the number of vehicles—cars, taxis and ATVs—that come in and out of the Park. In 2012, 6,911 visited in June-July. In 2013, 7,344. And in 2015, 7,648 visited the Park. But in 2014, the year effected by the fire, just 4,270 vehicles were counted—that’s the lowest number by over a thousand in the last five years.393 “What’s typically a busy time, like in June and July with requests for reservations, those numbers basically just fell off. The building was hardly rented and it came to a point where we realized now that this was going to have a serious impact on visitation all summer,” says DeLong. “I can’t force my staff to work in this... So instead of them working in the Park we were trying to create projects that were doable in one of our warehouses, away from the fire. That didn’t mean they couldn’t smell it, it just meant they weren’t in the direct path.” He, like many others, got the advice to stay indoors and batten down the hatches until the smoke cleared. “But the reality was there’s nowhere we can go, we’re here. You can stay inside but depending on what kind of ventilation you have in your house, air exchangers or whatever, you can still smell it. You can’t arguably be held captive in your home for months on end,” he says.

This wasn’t the first time Park employees had to deal with the dump. According to DeLong, it’s part of the daily routine to pick up garbage in the Park—

393 See Appendix A.
but not litter. Rather, it’s trash that’s blown across from the dump, right next to a Territorial Park. “In the summer time when it’s not snow covered you can see garbage along the fence lines, up against buildings, by containers, because it’s just the wind. That’s what’s coming into town. When it’s blowing the other way, how much garbage is out in Frobisher Bay? I’m not talking about massive garbage bags that are going up, but litter, all kinds of stuff,” he says. “We keep that Park pretty clean. My staff walk around the Park all the time and keep it clean. So we know that a percentage of what we’re picking up comes from people who are just non-environmentally conscious throwing stuff out the window of their vehicle but the rest is coming as debris that’s blowing in from the landfill. That’s just part of the reality of what the Park is. And so we manage it as best we can. I think the staff do a really really good job, and part of it is you need to be consistent, persistent, anal in some respects.”

Originally, the city was going to allow the fire to burn itself out. But that would take three years, and with school closures and concerns about air quality, that was too long. Instead, crews started fighting the fire in September. This process of extinguishing the fire involved scooping up loads of fiery trash, soaking it with salt water, then dumping it into a pool of salt water. Total price tag? By November 2015, the city had spent over $4 million, according to Mayor Madeleine Redfern, dealing with the fire. “It is, was, is, still today a massive burden on the City of Iqaluit, the cost to put out the dump fire. It was a huge expense, both immediate, and we’re still paying, and will still be paying in the next fiscal year to deal with the water runoff from the fire specifically,” says Romeyn Stevenson. “When they put all that
water on the dump the water trickles off and the waters contaminated, and we needed to treat that water. We’ll be treating it this year and we will probably again treat it next year. Most likely there will be another large expense in our budget for treating water. And we paid for it all. We paid for it all in spite of asking for help from the Government of Nunavut to pay for it. I’m not here to complain too much about the Government of Nunavut, but they didn’t help financially. They helped with a bit of logistics and they helped supplying some pumps and that was it. The rest of it the city of Iqaluit dealt with completely. And you know to their credit, the people who work for the city did an awesome job of making it happen in the end of getting through that dump fire and also of changing practices at the dump so that now things are a lot better on that site. The dump fire in a way was a very expensive blessing in disguise because it woke the city up to the absolute need to lead practices, and practices have been changed. The pile that has been built there now is not the same pile that was there four years ago.”

Once the extinguishing process began, it was actually completed fairly quickly, in a matter of weeks. “The day they picked up the equipment to put the fire out to when the fire was out was like nothing compared to the amount of time the dump fire was burning for,” says Jamesee Moulton. “What took so long was to figure out who was going to pay for the remediation and what course of action to select.”

3.11 Canada™: Branding the North and Operation Nanook

In the middle of the fire, on August 20-29, the joint effort between the Canadian Forces, the Canadian Red Cross, the Canadian Border Services Agency and Transport
Canada, as well as other federal agencies, arrived in Nunavut for their annual scenario exercise, learning how to respond to emergency situations in Canada’s North. In 2014, 800-plus personnel were slated to attend, ringing in at $10 million.

The activist group that sprang up to draw attention to the crisis of the dump fire, Iqalummiut for Action, asked, in an open letter, if in 2014 the scenario could be putting out a large scale dump fire. They asked the military to turn “this year’s exercise from a mock rescue to a real operation that will contribute directly to Arctic sovereignty and the well-being of Canada’s Arctic citizens.” After all, the Canadian Military has been used in the not-so-distant past in other municipal emergencies, like floods, forest fires and winter storms. Why not a burning dump?

Instead, Operation Nanook acted out a cruise-ship crash. The reasoning was that cruise-ship traffic in the region has increased 10-15 per cent. In other words, this year, 13 cruise ships carrying about 200 people each, stopped off Iqaluit.394

There are plans for a 5,000-passenger liner to travel through Iqaluit in 2016. “A mock cruise ship exercise, though that’s something that could possibly may be needed in the future, this right now is a crisis in a lot of people’s minds and needs to be extinguished now,” Christa Kunuk, a member of Iqalummiut for Action told the CBC.395 Cruise ships and tourism seem like an odd thing to be focused on in the North; however, in terms of declaring intellectual sovereignty, there are very few

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things as effective. In this way, I’m not referring to intellectual sovereignty in the same way Robert Warrior might, for instance. Rather, it’s the idea that outside of legal or tangible sovereignty there’s the assumption of sovereignty that is bestowed by intellectual practice; because we think Canada owns the Arctic, Canada does own the Arctic. There is actually precedent for this; as mentioned previously, geographical and navigational lines were used for centuries to determine which country owned which part of the Arctic; and these lines have been known to move from map to map, instance to instance. In this case, my use of intellectual sovereignty is closer to argumentum ad populum, or the idea that because many people believe something, it must be so.

As part of the branding exercise that brought us the Franklin computer game, tourism in Nunavut is geared towards reinforcing the message, over and over again, that Canada is the North, and more importantly, that the North belongs to Canada. Although there is some targeting of international tourists, much of this messaging is to Canadians themselves. “Our demographics are mainly Canadians,” says Kevin Kelly, CEO of Nunavut Tourism. He says because of the cost involved with coming to Nunavut, they tend to be in their 40s and up. “Yes we are getting some people from overseas, from France, from England, from Brazil, some Americans, but mostly our demographics are Canadians,” says Kelly. Many of these people are coming up to experience the National Parks, to hike and take part in outdoor activities, and tick something off their bucket list. “People should really kind of get to know their own country first before they go off travelling other areas of the world right?” he says.
Cruise ship passengers are a little different, and it’s there that more of the international travellers are arriving. “Basically most of the cruise ship passengers are 50s, even older, 60s and 70s, type of thing. Some of them have very limited mobility. A hiker coming up or a Millennial coming up, where they’re very much mobile and they want to see different things, as compared to what a cruise ship passenger might want to see. So they’re very different worlds.”

But, when I asked him if any of these tourists have a good idea of what the North is really like, outside of the brochures, he’s skeptical. “Certain regions have a better understanding of Nunavut. Like Manitoba, they have a great understanding of Nunavut. Whereas Ontario? Ottawa may have a good understanding, but Toronto? They have limited knowledge of Nunavut.” While I’m in Nunavut, multiple people express similar sentiments, with many people referencing the fact they think the South sometimes believes they’re still living in igloos. Kelly tells me that Nunavut Tourism is in the middle of a new branding campaign, to brand the Territory not as Nunavut Tourism but as tourism in Nunavut. “So we’re really trying to bring some awareness to the Territory about what is actually here,” he says. But for now, what this means is that all those cruise ship passengers estimated to be arriving, the vast numbers that necessitated Operation Nanook, aren’t necessarily coming for the reality of Nunavut and Iqaluit—they’re coming for that imagined idea of the North. And instead of investing in solving problems of the real North, on a federal level Canada is investing in that myth. Regardless of whether or not the military could actually have an active role in putting out the dump fire, that investment reveals priorities that have carried over from the Franklin era to today.
“In Iqaluit the general consensus was it was the wrong choice. Why simulate an emergency when you have an emergency? It seems like you’re not using your basic resources effectively,” says Jamesee Moulton. “You know you have a group of people together who are emergency responders, and you have an emergency, well wouldn’t it make sense to deal with that emergency that is actually effecting people as opposed to simulating an emergency? I would argue that showing our capacity to respond to emergencies of any shape or form in the North demonstrates Arctic sovereignty because the fact of the matter is other countries in the world would not have that capacity. So just by nature of being able to respond to that the Canadian government can demonstrate its willingness and its ability to control the North.”

Janet Brewster had a hand in drafting the Iqalummiut for Action letter. But she doesn’t think it could have been as simple as having the military just put out the fire. “The fact of the matter is that although [we saw those] military exercises as an opportunity at the time, the reality is that because they don’t have the specialized training that it was not necessarily an appropriate or doable request,” she says. “However what it did do was it further raised the profile on the national level of this fire which then actually embarrasses people into taking action. So while it may have been kind of ill-informed at the time, and a little far fetched to address that issue, it did in fact have an excellent effect.” She and others are quick to point out that simply asking the military to ‘fix’ the dump wouldn’t work—it required specialized training and specialized equipment, not just man power.

“Would it have been nice if they had said ‘oh yes we have all this personnel we’ll come and do something’, sure, but having spent time with the dump experts,
the fire experts, it wasn’t just a man power issue, it wasn’t like everyone grab a shovel and dig into this pile and here we go. It took the concerted effort of experts to put the dump fire out, and it might have been more trouble than it was worth to have the army there,” says Romeyn Stevenson. “You’d like to think that the army is capable of doing anything. You wouldn’t have wanted to put our forces in danger, and being anywhere near this fire put you in danger, you needed personal protective equipment to be safe, you needed heavy equipment.” Multiple people in Iqaluit mentioned to me, however, that the barracks used to house the military when they’re doing exercises in the region, normally located next to the dump, weren’t used this time around. Instead, during the dump fire, the military was housed in a different location (one community member was appalled by what that temporary accommodation did to the tundra), because the smoke near the dump was decided to be too dangerous for visiting forces. The smoke, however, wasn’t a concern for the residents of Iqaluit, who had been breathing it for months.

If even a portion of the money allotted for that exercise had been reallocated to helping the City of Iqaluit put out the fire, it would have relieved some of the burden off the city. “My approach initially was well we need help from the Territorial Government, Operation Nanook was due here, so why not declare a state of emergency or whatever it takes to get that support?” says Janet Brewster.

3.12 Who should have paid to put out the fire?

So why did it take five months before the fire stopped? ”Iqaluit is a prime example of what can happen in any community in Nunavut, right?” says Janet Brewster. Much of
the time was spent deciding who should pay to put the fire out, the Municipality, the Territory or the Federal Government.

Some people however see the entire thing as a mismanagement of priorities that made it much more expensive and cumbersome than it had to be, regardless of who was responsible for putting out the fire. “When that fire ignited, when it became visible, there was still ice in the bay. You know, we went through an entire summer, an entire sealift season, without action. And then spent tens of thousands, maybe hundreds of thousands of dollars, flying equipment up, to douse this fire,” says Brewster. The delay in debating who should be responsible for picking up the tab—the Municipality, the Territory or the Federal Government—made the crisis worse. “So when the city complains that it cost so much, all I can say is, and this led me in my voting over the last election, they knew that the dump was on fire, and they chose to blame somebody else, they chose to come with their hat in their hands, yet they had the funds, they had the ability to take action, to put it out, and really I felt manipulated,” says Brewster. “In terms of asking and saying who’s responsible, the city is responsible. And it’s up to the city to take an informed approach to engaging the territorial and federal levels of government, but most definitely the city has to take action. You cannot pass that buck. The city maintains the dump, they’re responsible for it, and therefore they’re responsible when it comes to addressing issues that arise because of it.”

This mismanagement of priorities didn’t just start with the fire. This was the long term, multi-generational effect of putting waste management infrastructure on the back burner, prioritizing other needs and wants ahead of fixing the dump.
Surprisingly, no one I spoke with in Iqaluit blamed just one person, or even a group of people, for what happened: the culprit was a long-term lack of infrastructure and institutional priority memory. But that doesn’t mean people don’t think it could have been handled better. “You know what, when I have a toothache I go to the fucking dentist. I get that crap drilled out, I deal with it so it doesn’t become a bigger problem,” says Brewster. “And that might mean that I can’t get my hair cut this month. So I realign my choices and where I’m going to spend my time and energy. But I don’t ignore it just because I didn’t plan for it.”

But there was a reason the Municipality needed help. This wasn’t simply an example of municipal mismanagement. “I think it was not very well lobbied, politicked or advocated by the City of Iqaluit that the other two levels of government had an obligation or duty to assist this community in dealing with that fire,” says Redfern. “This is a regional centre, it’s a capital city, we have a whole bunch of infrastructure here in our community, like the court, which is the only court in the Territory, the only hospital, the only big jail, a lot of the stuff in our landfill is not just being produced by our community. And we simply cannot expect nor rely on a tiny little tax base to do it on its own.”

Iqaluit is the only tax base in the Territory. However, its population is small, made smaller because many of them are Nunavut Land Claim recipients. “Iqaluit is the only community in Nunavut responsible for its waste management. Every other community in Nunavut has the community and government services provide them with their waste infrastructure, which they then turn over to the hamlet and the hamlet operates it,” says Moulton. The fact that Iqaluit is a tax based community,
and one of the only communities in the Territory that doesn’t practice open burning on a regular basis anymore, tied the Government of Nunavut’s hands.

“If the Government of Nunavut had stepped in and said ‘yes we’re going to pay for this in a tax based community,’ well they know that 22 of the other communities burn, and have the exact same problem,” says Moulton. “So if they come in with their purse and start throwing all kinds of money to put this fire out, well then they turn around to 22 other communities sitting there with their hands out saying ‘hey we have a dump that’s burning, we want a new dump that’s done properly too’.”

Matthew Hamp agrees. “I used to live in Pond Inlet for about seven years and yeah it’s [open burning] like almost daily. Fortunately there the winds generally went the other way, but occasionally you’d get this waft of awful smell into the town.” How could, then, the Government of Nunavut deem the dump fire in Iqaluit unacceptable and untenable enough they had to intervene, without cleaning up the dumps in the other communities across the territory?

So why didn’t the Federal Government contribute to cleaning up the dump fire? Why did the Municipality have to shoulder the full responsibility? Who should have been responsible? “It was really a hodge podge hot potato sort of thing. It was the city coming to the government saying ‘you need to give us money, we don’t have it’, and they’re going ‘no no our records of our books show that you have a healthy surplus, use it’. ‘Now that you’re in crisis mode doesn’t mean we have to jump’ type of thing,” says Cameron DeLong. “I sincerely do feel that for the better part of a
month no one wanted to sign their name to it at all as it continued to burn and became a larger and larger and larger issue.”

It goes back, once again, to the limbo Iqaluit finds itself in—much as the Inuit population existed as citizens but without the benefits that come from being citizens, the city has the dubious distinction of being a municipality without any of the support. As James Gordon wrote in an op-ed in the Ottawa Citizen in August of 2014, when the cost to put out the fire was being estimated at $3.3 million, “To a city like Ottawa, $3.3 million barely registers. To the Federal Government, it’s a rounding error.”396 As Gordon explains, the cost for the Federal Government to cover just one third of the cost of putting out the dump fire would have been only 1/500th of what they committed to Toronto’s 2015 Pan Am Games. Contrarily, $3.3 million is 75 per cent of Iqaluit’s “uncommitted reserve fund. It’s money many hoped and assumed would go toward things like road paving and playground equipment and other badly needed social and economic infrastructure. . . . The whole situation reeks of hypocrisy. And garbage.”397

Madeleine Redfern attributes this lack of attention to priorities. “I think they felt they could get away with not doing anything. And that’s for the most part what always happens with the levels of government up above. And there was little political fall out for not doing anything,” she says. “We’ve seen certain communities or certain projects go ahead because of the nature of that particular party or that particular politician and their relationship with another politician or with a

397 IBID.
particular business interest. And that’s not unique to Iqaluit, that happens elsewhere in Canada. And sometimes it’s a scandal and sometimes it isn’t. It’s sort of that level of government will do an analysis and can it get away with doing nothing.”

Iqaluit in many ways inherited a toxic legacy, burdens from before the 1999 creation of the Territory that they’re now being asked to shoulder. “I think that the Government of Nunavut should have paid for at least some of the dump fire … I feel that waste management is an extremely important part of a municipal responsibility, and one that all of the communities in Nunavut, including Iqaluit, don’t have the history to be able to deal with it yet,” says Romeyn Stevenson. “The practices that led to us having that fire was because we were inadequate. And I feel that the Government of Nunavut needs to share some of that responsibility for the fact that their communities, and it is all of us, are inadequate and were inadequate in our understanding of waste management and in our dealing with our waste. And to allow it to travel on through 15 years of failure and then when it all comes to a head say ‘oh that’s your problem, not our problem’ wasn’t fair.”

3.13 Iqaluit’s Toxic Inheritance

The failure doesn’t just begin with the existing dump site. Iqaluit inherited a legacy of toxic waste management practices that is well beyond the ability of the community to deal with on its own. Iqaluit, even though it was a hub for the DEW Line sites, was not designated, itself, a DEW Line site, and therefore it was not deemed the responsibility of the Federal Government to clean up the numerous unremediated sites scattered around town that came from that era, in the same way
they’re handling the DEW Line sites. “It’s a bit frustrating to sort of know the
government remediated Resolution Island where no one lives, and that we’re not on
the list for remediation,” says Madeleine Redfern. “I had discussions with different
levels of government in my last term about sort of getting us on that list, and I can
tell you then there was little to no interest. I hope with the new Liberal government,
that with the Minister of Environment, Climate Change, with the new Minister of
Indigenous and Northern Affairs, that this oversight is going to be addressed.”

It’s hard to get a precise number on how many unremitiated dumps are
scattered around Iqaluit. “Oh they’re all over the place” says Matthew Hamp. He
guesses there are around seven or eight, if not more. But as Director of Public
Works, he was told he had other fish that needed frying first. “I think before I started
the sort of de facto position was it’s there, don’t worry about it. Like we’ve got other
things to handle,” he says. That’s not to say there haven’t been efforts to address
some of the issues of this legacy waste. Last summer, for instance, the city did a
drum clean-up. “I think we maybe ended up with getting 75 drums off the beaches.
They’re just old fuel drums, just sitting around. And then in Apex we did the same
thing. We took a few drums that had been there for years, probably decades, and
managed to get them out,” says Hamp. These clean up efforts are laudable and say a
lot about the community itself. However, why should the community be responsible
for cleaning drums of fuel from their beaches, if they didn’t put them there in the
first place? It’s expecting the same community mechanism that organizes litter clean
ups in the spring, to pick up empty candy wrappers and plastic bottles dropped by
the community, to clean up industrial and military waste. Something about that just
doesn’t seem fair. “I don’t know if you saw the one out at the end of Federal Road, it’s like a huge metal dump and a big barrel dump. It’s awful. And the one behind the Ford garage, there’s part of an airplane down there, it’s just nuts,” says Hamp. No matter how big the pointy stick and garbage bag, a community cannot be expected to clean up an airplane.

“Everything from vehicles with their batteries to empty barrels are just littered all around the community. In some places it’s just a few barrels, in other places it would be tons and tons and tons. Most of the barrels would have been fuel,” says Redfern. These are incredibly toxic sites. In 1995, according to a Department of Defense report, there were over 250 metal barrels that were found to contain concentrations of inorganic contaminants; so toxic it required the barrels to be shipped South for disposal. Over the years there have been sporadic and aborted efforts to clean up the unremediated sites, at least a little. Upper Base was cleaned up in 1996. Samuelson refers to data from the Department of the Defence in 1995:

A total of 230 m3 of PCB contaminated soil (60 m3 > 50 ppm; 170 m3 t 5 ppm) required removal to treatment facilities in the South. Soil with lower concentrations of PCBs was placed in a dumpsite constructed at Upper Base. Concentrations of arsenic (49 ppm), cadmium (10.4 ppm), copper (2500 ppm), lead (9860 ppm) and zinc (2640 ppm) were above standards. There

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were elevated levels of dioxins (1.2 ppb), pesticides (9.3 ppm) and PAHs. In addition, asbestos was found in several buildings.399

This isn’t just an issue for potential health problems. It impacts development, as you cannot build near these contaminated sites. “For a place that’s vast in land it’s expensive to develop land here because it’s hard. It really is to build roads and to get water and power lines to areas, you need to stay close,” says Stevenson. Having to take account of a very dirty treasure buried all over the place makes that even harder. “On down under Northmart, behind there, and where the Elder Centre is, that’s like barrels and barrels of who knows what buried under there,” says Janet Brewster. “It’s frightening to think.”

None of this is news to people who live in Iqaluit. “This whole downtown core arguably is contaminated. That’s a fact. Before the roads were paved here, they used to soak the roads with oil to keep the dust down. So I mean, people ‘oh well that areas contaminated’ well you know what? The whole bloody downtown core from the hospital all the way down, all the land down is contaminated. That’s a fact,” says Cameron DeLong. “The reality is that you’d never remediate that back to a state that was usable again. There’s so much toxins and stuff over there. The military used just below the Park closer to the landfill, they used that whole area as a dumping ground, there’s equipment and everything else that was dumped basically over the side of the embankment.”

399 Samuelson, “Water and Waste Management Issues in the Canadian Arctic,” 331.
If the current dump was under regulated and lacked basic sanitary infrastructure from the beginning, the unremediated legacy dumpsites certainly did as well. “And that’s the thing. A lot of these old dump sites either there was no regulatory or legislative protections in place or they were disregarded. But we live with the legacy,” says Redfern. “And what horrifies me, because I’ve been back home now for 20 years, I’ve watched these piles of old metal dump, which is airplanes and trucks, and barrels with contaminated fuel, literally being moved around. Like moved from one area to another. They are digging gravel here, sifting it, to use as new material, gravel material, to build roads, to use as pads for building either institutional buildings or residential buildings. So we’re taking contaminated land and spreading it around the community. It just astounds me.”

Even as the region is marketed to tourists as a place of pristine beauty and untouched wilderness, scratch beneath the surface and it’s toxic. One example Cameron DeLong points out is the fish at Sylvia Grinnell Falls. The Falls and the Park are one of the tourist hot spots in Iqaluit, drawing people to sample the famous Arctic char. The Falls are a product of the river that comes from Sylvia Grinnell Lake further inland, running to the sea. And even though it’s right next to the dump, people regularly fish in the river. But DeLong says he would never eat one of those fish. “The fish are in the water where the dump is leaching into the bay. There’s no doubt that that’s happening. And so a lot of people, those who know, say ‘I wouldn’t eat a fish within five kilometres of this place.’ The fish are in the water and people are eating the fish. What toxins are in the water that are directly caused by the leaching of the landfill?” says DeLong. I bought some smoked char to take back to
Ontario—it seemed like a tasty souvenir. But I checked to make sure my char did not come from the area around Iqaluit. For the first time in my life, I was actively trying to buy a souvenir that had been imported.

Why did this happen? How could anyone, in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s when these dumps were being abandoned willy nilly, think any of this was a good idea? It’s not like these unremediated sites date to a time when people weren’t fully aware of the environmental impact. People knew. The government knew. The military—both American and Canadian—knew. The unremediated dumps prove a history of Terra Nullius that’s still at play today. As Redfern tells me, “Because it was perceived as a place where you can just literally dump and run! No one’s here, not many people to complain about it.” Terra Nullius may originally have been a way to justify colonialism and land claims, by painting a picture where the people in that space did not matter, and could not be stakeholders in their own future. Today, the unremediated dump sites that litter Iqaluit, and in fact the state of dumps all across the Territory, use the doctrine of Terra Nullius to justify inaction. If the population in those spaces were considered to be of equal value to the rest of the citizens of Canada, we as a nation would not tolerate and absolve ourselves from our responsibility for those waste sites.

Near the end of my tour of Iqaluit with the Mayor, Redfern urges me to walk to the edge of a cliff, to see the trash peeking out under the snow, going all the way down to the water. “That’s the Sylvia Grinnell River, that’s where our fish are running up and down. So one of the problems too is a lot of these old dumps are right near bodies of water and we know that there’s been a number of different
reports that have shown that these dumps are leaching contaminants and toxins into the environment,” she says.

The problems with the historic dumps were allowed to happen because the population wasn’t seen as something to be bothered about. But, to continue the paradox of simultaneous erasure and enfranchisement that colours Canada’s interaction with the North, that same population is now being tasked with cleaning up a toxic colonial legacy. “We’re aware that there is research gaps on some of these issues because we haven’t had to deal with it in the past, not just as local communities but as a national sovereign state, with an Arctic region, we haven’t had to deal with them,” says Redfern. “The City of Iqaluit can’t afford to deal with these infrastructure issues on their own. We’re the only tax based community in the whole Territory and our tax base is small. Even though our population is growing, there are very few homeowners and not very many landlords. We just simply under no circumstance can afford to even shut down our dump and open up a new dump, remediate the old dump,” says Redfern.

Matthew Hamp agrees. “It’s certainly one of the bigger legacy issues we could never deal with on our own. Even if we had a comparable tax base, I don’t think we could deal with them, I think as a percentage of population. I think they’re just too much. Each site around here, all these legacy sites would be millions to clean up each one,” says Hamp.

“We’re in the news all the time as a city for our financial issues currently. They are not only related to the dump fire but they are certainly exasperated by the dump fire and the fact that we’ve taken that money out of the pot,” agrees
Stevenson. “It came from the only pot that we have to pay for everything, and it has shadowed every other decision that’s been made because it’s there.”

And that pot isn’t exactly overflowing. According to the Conference Board of Canada, if the population of Nunavut continues to grow at its currently rate, it will “grow too fast for the GN’s investments to help enough people.”

But, the idea of handing yet more federal money to fix the ‘Indian problem’ is something many Canadians balk at. As the Conference Board of Canada reported in 2004, “Critics believe the federal government already spends enough money in Nunavut.”

This doesn’t come as a shock to Madeleine Redfern. “There’s been no good three levels of government planning. The communities are so poor that when the Federal Government says ‘well we’ll pay for a new playground’ [no one] is going to say no even though their infrastructure need may be their power plant because you’re just so happy to get anything. And it’s very difficult as one of the stakeholders with the least amount of effectively power or money to influence higher levels of government,” says Redfern. Once again, Northerners find themselves between a rock and another very hard rock: they have been left with infrastructure problems that are nearly insurmountable, and yet asking for support to correct these problems feeds into stereotypes about Indigenous populations in Canada. “On the other side of the stereotype of pristine and undiscovered and empty and all that kind of stuff is also so many people know the very high rates of suicide and abuse

401 IBID, 15.
and low education rates and all that kind of stuff. I think people become numb because you know it’s the ‘Indian problem’, the ‘Eskimo problem’. It’s been happening since the 50s,” says Williamson Bathory.” And it’s all true. I mean there is a crisis, there should be a state of emergency here for the rates of suicide, and that’s why it’s so important that Inuit tell stories from their own perspectives, and that people listen. Because there is something terribly wrong happening here and part of that is that there isn’t enough room in this colonized atmosphere for people to truly express themselves.”

### 3.14 The scars of colonialism: priorities, bigger issues and garbage

Iqaluit, and Nunavut, are communities that bears the scars of colonialism within living memory; there are social and infrastructure problems that are almost too big to handle. The QTC Final Report found that 70 per cent of Inuit preschoolers in Nunavut live in homes where there is not enough food. Statistics Canada reported that in 2001, 49 per cent of all Nunavut households experienced food insecurity—seven times the Canadian average. As the QTC put it: “Housing is in a state of crisis, and the territory is plagued by high rates of suicide, addiction, and incarceration. Indian and Northern Affairs Canada’s most recent Community Well-Being Index shows a significant gap between the quality of life of Inuit communities relative to other Canadian communities . . . Inuit communities scored an average 62 out of a
possible 100 points, in contrast to a score of 77 out of 100 for all other “non-Inuit” and “non-First Nations” communities.”

The QTF Final Report found that the Territory averages 27 suicides a year, about 10 times the national average. Aaju Peter tells me to hang out after our interview—some friends are stopping by to sew. There’s tea and laughter and mocking my attempts to pronounce Inuktitut words... then someone gets a call that the teenaged boy they all know has committed suicide. These statistics aren’t just numbers—they’re a part of the everyday. And that should be horrifying. The biggest cities in the territories, Iqaluit, Whitehorse and Yellowknife are too small, even when combined, to figure into Maclean’s Magazine’s annual crime rankings; however an article Maclean’s reports that Statistics Canada data is available, and found that in 2007, the aggravated assault rate in Iqaluit was 1,033 per cent above the Canadian average, while its sexual assault rate in 2007 was 1,270 per cent above the national average. In 2002, that meant that one out of every 100 people in Nunavut reported a sexual assault, compared to just 78 per 100,000 in the rest of Canada. The article goes on to discuss the rising rates of drug and alcohol abuse, which contribute to this crime rate, in the Territory. These statistics also contribute to the high number of babies born with fetal alcohol syndrome in the Territory—about one quarter—as well as the high rate of school dropouts. As Nancy MacDonald explains in Maclean’s, “More Nunavummiut drop out of high school than

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graduate.” Many of these people end up in jail. In another piece she did for *McLean’s*, MacDonald found that incarceration rates for Indigenous people in Canada were growing, even as the incarceration rates for white adults are declining. As she explains, “In Canada, the Indigenous incarceration rate is 10 times higher than the non-Indigenous population—higher even than South Africa at the height of apartheid.” Comparatively, in the United States, which is often held up as an example of asymmetric jailing of minorities, black men are only six times more likely to be jailed than white men. Aboriginal peoples make up just four per cent of Canada’s population, but between Federal, Provincial and Territorial jails, they make up 22.8 per cent of the incarcerated population. The Inuit are part of that statistic. As MacDonald puts it, “criminologists have begun quietly referring to Canada’s prisons and jails as the country’s “new residential schools.” And Statistics Canada reported that 54 per cent of Nunavut residents live in what’s considered crowded conditions. The Canadian average? Just seven per cent. This is a problem not just for mental health and comfort but for physical health—living in such close quarters, especially in the Arctic where homes are kept “virtually airtight” according to the report to conserve heat during the winter months, contributes to the transmission of respiratory and other diseases.

“Children are living in poverty. Child poverty levels here are just insane. I did research on maternal health, actually when I was pregnant with Miles, and 80 per

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404 MacDonald, “Northern Blight: Canada’s real violent-crime hot spot is three tiny cities in the North.”
cent of the moms were malnourished,” says Brewster. One of the questions she asked during her research was had there every been a time respondents were worried they didn’t have enough to eat. “A lot of moms said no . . . some of the statements were things like ‘no I didn’t worry because I knew we could all go to my parents to eat’, or ‘no I didn’t worry because my kids ate, so as long as my kids ate I didn’t worry about myself’. Or ‘as long as I had one meal a day I wasn’t worried’.

When you’re talking about a mother who’s growing a child, it’s pretty frightening,” says Janet Brewster. And when you are focusing on whether you or your kids will eat that day, focusing on garbage or infrastructure gets difficult.

“I think that those social determinants of health really impact people’s ability to take action on issues like this. In what other capital city in the world would you see this incredible piece of real estate be a tank farm?” says Brewster. “Like I should be looking out at across at neighbours right? But instead I had a view of the dump fire.”

This should be a national scandal and a national shame. And it is often the story that is reported, ad nauseum, until many Southern Canadians grow sick of hearing about the plight of the ‘poor Inuit’. But there is no reason that anyone in Canada should be going hungry. There is no reason monumental rates of suicide and incarceration and drug and alcohol abuse should be allowed to exist within a community in Canada, full stop. “I think when you’re living in poverty and your biggest issue is food security and you don’t know whether you’re going to have some where to sleep, the last thing you’re going to do is pick up garbage,” says Brewster.
Madeline Redfern agrees. “There’s a large percentage of our population that’s uneducated or under educated, and are living in poverty or inadequate housing or are food insecure. It’s very difficult for them to have the time or ability to deal with the larger issues like dumps,” she says. “With 70 per cent of your population is in that situation, that’s a significant number of people that are not participating in that conversation because they simply cannot.” She’s quick to point out this has less to do with race, and more to do with circumstance. “It has nothing to do with ethnicity. If you put Ottawa in that same situation or Kingston or Kamloops or any community or any region, you’re going to get the same result,” she tells me.

This is not just a tragedy, it’s an issue of erasure: 70 per cent of people, as Redfern says, cannot participate actively in the decisions of citizenship. They may as well not be citizens at all, in that case—it’s reinforcing the history of saying one thing on paper, but having something else happen in practice. This relates directly back to the tensions inherent in the Inuit of Nunavut’s experience of Canadian citizenship in general; as discussed previously, they were never under the Indian Act or given the special status as other Aboriginal groups in Canada, yet at the same time, their citizenship was enacted without the concomitant rights and say in how their region, and Canada as a whole, was governed.

It is a toxic legacy that has been created by ignoring and under planning at all levels in the North. And this legacy is a drain, intellectually and financially on a tiny tax base struggling to survive. The City of Iqaluit has been forced to reproduce the colonial mindset, where they are not planning for crisis but simply responding to whatever is making the biggest noise at the time. The money that went to put out
the dump fire came out of money that could have been used to address these other, pressing social issues. Instead, the city is now expected to address all of these massive problems, that impact every element of life in Iqaluit, $4 million dollars short.

“Truth be told whether it’s been a Liberal government or a Conservative government, the mindset for the most part by Ottawa and by the Federal Government is out of sight out of mind. And when and if the Arctic has been an area of interest it’s usually photo-ops,” says Redfern. “It’s been reactionary crisis management, a lack of understanding that the Arctic is not the same as Southern Canada with respect to its environment, with respect to its culture. The fact that we have no roads into Nunavut, you can’t just drive up materials, that you have this very short shipping season, that you have to preplan significant time in advance . . . There’s just so many realities or factors that a Southerner, whether a politician or non politician, a bureaucrat or a manager, is simply not aware of. Even if they’re told about it, in my experience they actually need to come up and see it.”
Photographs

View from Sylvia Grinnell Park. Activities in the Park were effected by smoke.

View of Iqaluit from Sylvia Grinnell Park
View of Iqaluit, November 2015

The cliff in Apex where I watched hunters on the ice, November 2015
Piles of cars at the Iqaluit dump
Signs in English, French and Inuktitut at the Iqaluit dump

Ravens at the dump
Piles of tires at the Iqaluit dump

Cardboard and wood at the Iqaluit dump
Cardboard, wood and paper waiting to be burned
Jim Little’s compost program operated out of this site, before it was buried in cardboard.
There is no formal recycling or separation (beyond cardboard and paper) in Iqaluit.
Mayor Madeleine Redfern, showing me some of the unremediated legacy dump sites
Frobisher Bay... and trash
These are the remnants of Canadian and American military activities in Iqaluit
View of Iqaluit from Upper Base. The flat patch of land on the left is where barrels full of toxic waste are buried.
Chapter 4 Conclusion

The country needs to see it. Canada needs to see the reality of the North, with its warts and its wonder. There needs to be attention on the challenges of Nunavut on a national level. Canadians made the mess; if we really are the North, if Canada is truly the Northern nation it claims to be, then we have a responsibility to clean up the North. As The Conference Board of Canada puts it, “Nunavut should not need to convince Canadians that their economic contribution to the country warrants greater support.” This thesis has shown that attempting to transport the South to the North hasn’t worked, from Franklin to the modern day. The history of Nunavut is irreversibly linked to the doctrine of Terra Nullius, with the very definition of the people living in Nunavut trapped between two worlds—both citizen and something other. The Inuit of Nunavut were never under the treaty system, and yet they were treated as second-class citizens, while at the same time acting as human flagpoles, declaring Canadian sovereignty. The changes to the life style in the North brought about by industrialization and consumer culture created the dump fire, and Canada’s failure to listen to Northerners let it burn. Today, the imagined image of the North forms the basis of Canadian identity, while most Canadians haven’t experienced the reality. Orientalized images like the Franklin computer game and photographs of empty Arctic landscapes and an imagined Inuit culture trapped like a bug under cultural glass reinforce the message over and over again that Canada is

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the North, and more importantly, that the North belongs to Canada. Instead of investing in solving the real problems of the North, on a federal level Canada spends more—both in time and energy—on the myth. The reality is a city literally surrounded by legacy waste and unremediated dump sites, and an environment that is slowly poisoning the people who live there. As James Gordon wrote in his op-ed in the *Ottawa Citizen*: “And here in Ottawa, we and our federal government shrug and say, “huh, that’s a shame.” The real shame, though, is that a country that proudly refers to itself as the True North and a federal government that has made a big show of how much it loves the North have basically said to a territorial capital of 8,000 people: that sucks, but you’re on your own.”

408 He may have been writing about the dump fire, but as this thesis has shown, the dump fire didn’t happen in isolation: it was the visible effect of much larger, systemic issues. Gordon summed up the attitude of the rest of the country towards these Northern problems in his article, writing: “When a problem is distant, it’s easy to ignore. If Ottawa had fewer resources and the fire was at the Carp Road landfill — visible from downtown and raining stink on hockey fans as they arrived to watch Senators games at Canadian Tire Centre — it would be out the same day, with everyone offering to lend money and expertise.”

409 The toxic legacy—both in the absence of attention and in the literal toxic waste surrounding Iqaluit—has shackled Canada’s newest territory with a burden that is insurmountable without national help. This thesis has underlined how the

408 James Gordon, “Dumpanco and Canada’s Northern hypocrisy.”
409 IBID.
Doctrine of Terra Nullius has impacted every aspect of development in Canada’s North, up to and including modern waste management. It cannot remain a Terra Nullius; Northern people cannot exist in the in-between shadows anymore. If they are citizens of Canada, they must be treated as such. In fact, the fact that Indigenous peoples in Canada are working from a point of disadvantage at an infrastructure level to begin with is appalling; it shouldn’t matter whether the Inuit of Nunavut were under the treaty system or not. The fact that their occupation has been used to the benefit of Canadian sovereignty while we have ignored the North on a federal level, allowing its infrastructure to languish in disrepair, is a crime. This wouldn’t have happened—from the way the city developed to the fire—if Iqaluit had been South of 60. The Canada I want to live in needs to be better than this.

Canada as a nation has a responsibility to equality and a sustainable future to remove this albatross from around Iqaluit’s neck, and put the entire country on an even playing field. This is something that needs to happen across Canada, in every community suffering from inequality and a lack of infrastructure. But the North is a good place to start.

This doesn’t mean we reproduce the same colonial functions of the past however. “There’s still totally the impression that the South needs to fix the North,” says Laakkuluk Williamson Bathory. “I think in some part because there’s such a vacuum in leadership in many respects, where people aren’t listening to each other.” The North does not need the South to fix the North; but nor can the North fix itself on its own.
“Yeah, that old saying ‘I’m from Ottawa and I’m here to help’. I think that a lot of people assume that because a lot of Inuit live in poverty, all Inuit live in poverty, all Inuit have major social problems. Like I can say without a doubt that honestly one of the real sad truths of being an Inuk is that you are constantly touched by tragedy and trauma. But at the same time, you are also touched by greatness on a regular basis,” says Janet Brewster. “I think that my Inuit family and my Inuit friends just accomplish so many great things, there’s such a strong sense of personal commitment to leadership and community, that stems from traditional cultural values. I’m sure you see that with all the more Inuit you talk to.”

Canada has an obligation as a nation to do something to help. But the impetus and vision needs to come from Northerners. As Michael Byers said during The Globe and Mail's Arctic Circle panel, “a vibrant, sustainable northern economy cannot happen without the full participation of northern residents.”

This has to be a joining, a mixing, of two areas of knowledge. Just as this thesis has argued that you cannot simply import the South to the North, you can’t expect the North to solve problems created by the South on it’s own. This has to be a dual effort of mutual understanding and respect, taking the best that the North and the South has to offer to find sustainable, long term solutions. Canada has to step up as a nation and work with the North to come up with Northern specific solutions, utilizing the best of the North and the South together. There is an amazing opportunity for change and excellence in Iqaluit; Canada has the chance to do it.

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right this time, to not fall back into negative colonial patterns, but to learn from past mistakes and do better this time around. Sustainable infrastructure and development must become a national priority, and not just when we’re speaking about sovereignty or mining. “If they subsidize the mines why can’t they subsidize that?” asks Ellen Hamilton.

The QTC Final Report declares that what’s needed is: “The Government of Canada to formally acknowledge its responsibility for the harmful historical acts,” and “accept responsibility for the ongoing consequences of those acts.”411 What would this look like? According to the Final Report, the Government of Canada has to acknowledge, “that the high rates of suicide, substance abuse, incarceration, and social dysfunction among Inuit are in part symptoms of intergenerational trauma caused by historical wrongs. This symbolic first step will clearly signal its commitment to help correct the mistakes it made over many decades.”412

Part of this acknowledgment involves not simply throwing up our hands and self-flagellating for our racist past. This is about more than racism or colonialism—it’s about building a better country, for everyone. As Ania Loomba explains, colonialism degrades the colonizers themselves.413 The acknowledgement will only work towards fixing the legacy problems if the true purpose is exposed, explained, and dealt with— this idea that Southern ways are the only way forward and must be brought North. Otherwise we will just keep repeating those same mistakes. As the QTC Final Report explains, “The original intention of government planners was to

412 IBID, 76.
413 Ania Loomba, Colonialism/Postcolonialism (New York: Routledge, 1999), 22.
bring the standards of living of the South to the North. Many actions and policies were inadequately resourced and poorly planned. . . the Government of Canada, as well as the Government of Nunavut, should commit to ensuring that all government health, social, and education programs and services are available to the people of Nunavut on a basis equivalent to those taken for granted by Canadians in the South.”

This is going to take money. Real investment in the North would be investing in long term planning and solutions that work with Northerners. To get there isn’t a matter of reproducing Southern ways in the North (tried that, and it never works. Just ask Franklin how his boots tasted). But nor is it asking Traditional Knowledge for all the solutions. Iqaluit is a modern city, with a diverse, modern population and modern, diverse problems. The solutions have to look like those problems—they have to combine the best of Southern expertise with traditional Inuit knowledge and values to get solutions that will work in the North. These solutions will look different than what Southern policy makers are used to—that’s a good thing. This is one more step in a Northern culture that has always been constantly evolving. We need to break the metaphorical glass trapping Northern identity in an imagined past. Doing so will allow Canada, as a whole, to move forward.

We stand on the precipice of waste management and environmentalism across Canada. Across the country, our dumps are aging out. Iqaluit can be a cautionary tale for what’s coming across the country, but also give us the opportunity, as a nation, to move forward. Investment in every aspect of the region

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is required, but waste management wouldn’t be a bad place to start. “Dollar signs upon dollars signs. It’s expensive. You’re looking to reclaim the existing waste site, establish a new waste site, education programs for the public,” says Jamesee Moulton. “Everybody needs to get formally educated or properly educated on how this stuff should be dealt with.”

That’s going to take long-term commitment by politicians both Northern and Southern. “We need political will. We really do. We need our leaders to be leaders and to help us,” says Ellen Hamilton. “We can all complain as citizens but we need our leaders to hear it, and take some initiative for god’s sake. They’re voted in to lead.”

One way this could be accomplished is investment, from the federal level, in both a new, sustainable dump that meets Southern standards, and a recycling centre in Iqaluit to serve the Territory. This would encourage the development on the territorial and municipal levels of more waste management and diversion programs, while also making it economically viable to have those diversion programs in the first place. It turns a tragedy and an untenable situation into a resource, providing jobs and development that will help create a sustainable future in the Arctic. But creating a future isn’t enough—Canada, on a national level, needs to address the past. The unremediated dump sites around Iqaluit must be cleaned up in the same way that other Dew Line sites—because make no mistake, Iqaluit should be on that list—have been. That is not Nunavut’s mess to clean up. It’s Canada’s. Taking responsibility for that legacy waste would allow Nunavut and Iqaluit to stop playing catch-up with responsibilities, and move forward. An investment in either of these
things—legacy clean up or a recycling centre—would mean the burden on the Municipality and Territory becomes something they can actually shoulder.

But the results will be worth it.

“When I was going to sleep, my grandfather would ask me about my day, and then he would ask me ‘what did you do for other people today’. He never fully acted disappointed if I hadn’t done anything, but then in the morning we would talk about our plan for the day and what we would be doing, and he would always ask ‘so what are you planning to do for other people today?’ Eventually it grew into me waking up and thinking ‘what am I going to do for my community today?’” says Janet Brewster. “And then at night going to bed and asking myself what did I do, what impact did I leave? I think a huge part of the reason that communities are so suffering is there aren’t enough Inuit who are asking themselves those two questions. What can I do, what did I do?”

Those are questions everyone in Canada needs to ask ourselves.
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Appendix

Appendix A: Sylvia Grinnell Traffic Data

Data provided by Cameron DeLong
Appendix B: Iqaluit Waste Separation Flyer

simplifying waste separation

Why separate waste?

Separating waste is a simple way to make a big impact.

Separating our waste will help stop landfill fires from happening in the future.

Separating waste creates a healthier environment for our community.

Many residents have been requesting garbage separation. We are now actively responding to these requests.

The landfill is a problem, be part of the solution

In response to the acute situation of our current landfill and the pressures of the landfill fire, the City of Iqaluit is advising residents to begin to separate their garbage.

We are all part of the solution, and every person doing their part will make the sustainable changes that we need. All our efforts are needed and valuable in this difficult situation.

We are starting with waste separation of cardboard, wood and metals. Later, we will introduce other waste separation, including organics for composting.

See following page for instructions on how to separate your waste.
simplifying waste separation
Start separating your garbage today.

YES!

All *uncoated* cardboard boxes, like packaging boxes, cereal boxes, pizza boxes, will be safely burned and eventually composted.

**How to do it:** Flatten the cardboard and tie it with string (or put it in a blue bag). Place in your bin. That's it!

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No polycoat please! That means no containers made from cardboard that is coated with plastic, wax or aluminum, including juice boxes, milk cartons, Tetra-Pak containers, take-out cups etc. These go in your regular garbage bags.

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**Cardboard**

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**Wood**

All wood! Treated wood, crates, and plywood will be chipped, and untreated wood will be safely burned, so *please don’t mix in any garbage!*

**How to do it:** Wood must be dropped off at the landfill during operating hours.

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**Metal**

At this time we are ONLY separating construction metal, large appliances, and end-of-life vehicles. It does not include household metals at this time.

**How to do it:** Bulky metals must be dropped off at the landfill during operating hours.

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We're only accepting bulky metal for separation at this time.

We will be implementing a household metal recycling program in the near future. Until then, place your household metals (like tin cans, tin foil, aluminum oven trays etc.) into the garbage. It won’t be long before we introduce a better system...
Appendix C: Map of unremediated dump sites

Appendix D: General Research Ethics Board (GREB)

April 24, 2015

Miss Jessica Davey-Quantick
Master’s Student
Department of Cultural Studies
Queen’s University
Kingston, ON, K7L 3N6

GREB Ref #: GCUL-037-15; Romeo # 6014885
Title: "GCUL-037-15 Dumppano: Waste Management and Environmental Justice in Iqaluit"

Dear Miss Davey-Quantick:

The General Research Ethics Board (GREB), by means of a delegated board review, has cleared your proposal entitled "GCUL-037-15 Dumppano: Waste Management and Environmental Justice in Iqaluit" for ethical compliance with the Tri-Council Guidelines (TCPG) and Queen’s ethics policies. In accordance with the Tri-Council Guidelines (article D.1.6) and Senate Terms of Reference (article G), your project has been cleared for one year. At the end of each year, the GREB will ask if your project has been completed and if not, what changes have occurred or will occur in the next year.

You are reminded of your obligation to advise the GREB, with a copy to your unit REB, of any adverse event(s) that occur during this one year period (access this form at https://eservices.queensu.ca/romeo_researcher/ and click Events - GREB Adverse Event Report). An adverse event includes, but is not limited to, a complaint, a change or unexpected event that alters the level of risk for the researcher or participants or situation that requires a substantial change in approach to a participant(s). You are also advised that all adverse events must be reported to the GREB within 48 hours.

You are also reminded that all changes that might affect human participants must be cleared by the GREB. For example you must report changes to the level of risk, applicant characteristics, and implementation of new procedures. To make an amendment, access the application at https://eservices.queensu.ca/romeo_researcher/ and click Events - GREB Amendment to Approved Study Form. These changes will automatically be sent to the Ethics Coordinator, Gail Irving, at the Office of Research Services or IrvingG@queensu.ca for further review and clearance by the GREB or GREB Chair.

On behalf of the General Research Ethics Board, I wish you continued success in your research.

Yours sincerely,

Joan Stevenson, Ph.D.
Chair
General Research Ethics Board

c: Mr. Robert Lovelace and Dr. Alexandre Da Costa, Faculty Supervisors
Dr. Jane Tolmie, Chair, Unit REB
Ms. Danielle Gugler, Dept. Admin.
Appendix E: Nunavut Research Institute Research License

Nunavummi Qaujisaqturialik / Nunavut Research Institute
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SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH LICENSE

LICENSE #  01 038 15N-M

ISSUED TO:  Jessica Davey Quattick
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  Kingston, Ontario
  K7L 3C2  Canada

TEAM MEMBERS:  R. Lovelace, S. McKeegney

AFFILIATION:  Queen’s University

TITLE:  Dumpcano: Waste Management and Environmental Justice in Iqaluit

OBJECTIVES OF RESEARCH:
On May 20, 2014, the Iqaluit garbage dump burst into flames. It burned for over five months before eventually being extinguished. I want to know why. This study will focus on how the oftine of terra nullius impacts waste management, tourism, identity creation, conservation and development in Canada’s north. Beginning with Franklin and working through the dump fire itself and the response to it (specifically Operation nainook), and culminating in current tourism campaigns and future development in Nunavut, my project uses the dump fire to explore the nature of development in Canada’s North and the realities of environmental justice in Iqaluit.

TERMS & CONDITIONS:

DATA COLLECTION IN NU:
DATES:  November 01, 2015-November 30, 2015
LOCATION:  Iqaluit

Scientific Research License 01 038 15N-M expires on December 31, 2016
Issued at Iqaluit, NU on October 14, 2015

Mary Ellen Thomas
Science Advisor