Hunting for Food Security Strategies:
Analyzing the Commercialization of Traditional Inuit Foods in Nunavut

by

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ABSTRACT

In Inuit communities in Nunavut, foods such as seal, caribou and Arctic char have traditionally been regarded as common resources to which every member of the community is entitled access. In recent times, a complex combination of colonial influences have marginalized the role of country foods and caused food insecurity in the territory to rise to alarming rates. In response to these trends, many Inuit have begun adopting strategies that commercialize country foods, or incorporate them into the monetary economy through cash-based exchange with other Inuit. This trend is the subject of many conflicting viewpoints, viewed by some Inuit as an adaptive strategy to make country foods more accessible and by others as fundamentally incompatible with their kinship-based systems of exchange. This project contributes to the growing dialogue surrounding the commercialization of Inuit country foods by providing 1) a comprehensive analysis of the academic and 'grey' literature on the subject and 2) a comparison of the prices of imported food items with the prices of country food exchanged through an online social media channel. I find that country food exchanged using social media is substantially cheaper than analogous imported food items. Using this, I argue that commercializing country food can serve as an adaptive strategy for Inuit to alleviate food insecurity if such initiatives remain 'made-in-Nunavut' and guided by Inuit ecological and kinship-based values; but that this should not preclude an interrogation of the colonial nature of the food crisis in Nunavut.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

In Inuit communities, foods such as seal, caribou and Arctic char have traditionally been regarded as common resources to which every member of a community is entitled access. These country foods, as they are known, are held in high regard due to their taste, nutritional value, spiritual significance and the central role that they play in Inuit social networks and identity. In recent times, the role of country foods has been becoming increasingly marginalized due a complex combination of factors including the high cost of hunting, changing environmental conditions, and the growing colonial influence of southern Canada. This has been accompanied by increasing and alarming rates of food insecurity, with 36.7% of Nunavut households classified as food insecure compared to only 8.3% of Canadian households in 2011-2012, and a basket of food in Nunavut costing on average 2.13 times the overall Canadian average (Statistics Canada, 2013; Nunavut Food Price Survey, 2015).

In response to both of these trends, many Inuit in Nunavut have begun adopting strategies which commercialize country foods, or incorporate them into the monetary economy through cash-based exchange with other Inuit and local institutions. Although such transactions have been common practice in select other Arctic geographies for decades or even centuries, it has only recently emerged as a topic of discussion on the territorial policy agenda in Nunavut, with Nunavut Food Security Coalition identifying "exploring the sustainable commercialization of country food" as a priority in their 2014 Strategy & Action Plan. There are many conflicting viewpoints surrounding commercial markets, viewed by some Inuit as an adaptive strategy to make country foods more accessible and by others as fundamentally incompatible with their worldviews and

kinship-based systems of exchange, the latter of which has otherwise always characterized Inuit society. The commercialization of country food carries a complex set of considerations related to its impacts on regional food security and the Inuit social economy, which call for in-depth consideration.

This thesis contributes to the growing dialogue surrounding the commercialization of country food in two ways. Firstly, it will provide a comprehensive review of all efforts to do so in Nunavut along with Inuit perspectives on the issue documented in both academic and 'grey' literature to comment on what trade-offs, opportunities and challenges are associated with the commercialization of country food in its various forms. Secondly, it will compare the prices of commercialized country food with food obtained through other avenues to answer the question of whether or not the commercialization of country food acts as a viable pathway to make food more affordable for Nunavut residents. I conclude that the commercialization of country food does have the potential to strengthen regional food systems without threatening traditional Inuit sharing norms and traditions, provided that such initiatives are designed 'by Inuit, for Inuit' and informed by the same ecological and kinship-based values which have enabled Inuit to survive in their environment for thousands of years. The incorporation of cash into a subsistence-based society can be, but is not necessarily, destructive to tradition, and using traditional values and the experiences of other groups, the Inuit of Nunavut can use this imported technology to alleviate severe food insecurity and adapt to changing circumstances as they have throughout their history.

1.1 Thesis Outline

This thesis is structured as follows. Chapter 2 will conceptually ground further discussion by providing a review of three key bodies of literature and the pertinent concepts and ideas they contain: Inuit epistemologies, including the social economy; the challenge of global food security; and the commoditization of common property resources. Chapter 3 will briefly outline the challenge of food security in Nunavut, present a comprehensive overview of the various country food commercialization arrangements which have emerged in response to it, and discuss the perspectives of Inuit surrounding them documented in both academic and 'grey' literature. It will also outline two successful commercial arrangements which have taken hold in the Inuit regions of Greenland and Nunavik. Chapter 4 will supplement this analysis by comparing the costs of buying country food with the costs of buying imported food from the grocery store to address whether commercialization can act as a strategy to make food more affordable for Nunavut residents. Finally, Chapter 5 will draw together the insights from the literature reviewed in Chapter 2, the experience with commercialization and perspectives of Inuit reviewed in Chapter 3, and the comparative pricing information from Chapter 4 to defend that commercialization can act as an adaptive strategy to alleviate food insecurity in Nunavut without necessarily threatening tradition, provided that Inuit and their values remain the driving forces and guiding principles of these initiatives.

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Each of the following bodies of literature contains theoretical insights which are necessary to inform the rest of this thesis. Firstly, Inuit epistemologies, encompassing values, worldviews and economic systems, are constructed in ways that often differ fundamentally from Western ones. It is necessary to ground an analysis of this issue with not only an understanding that these differences exist, but also an appreciation for the complexity and sophistication of Inuit epistemologies and for the integral role of food within them. Secondly, many Inuit communities are facing severe levels of food insecurity, a subject which is discussed in an emerging body of literature due to growing levels of global attention on this widespread challenge. Finally, there exists a sizeable body of literature that deals with the commodification of common property resources, beginning with Marxist scholarship and concluding with works which address more contemporary issues, which provides highly pertinent insights and arguments. The conceptual links between these three bodies of scholarship are illustrated in **Figure 2.1**. I now turn to a discussion of Inuit epistemologies and the social economy.

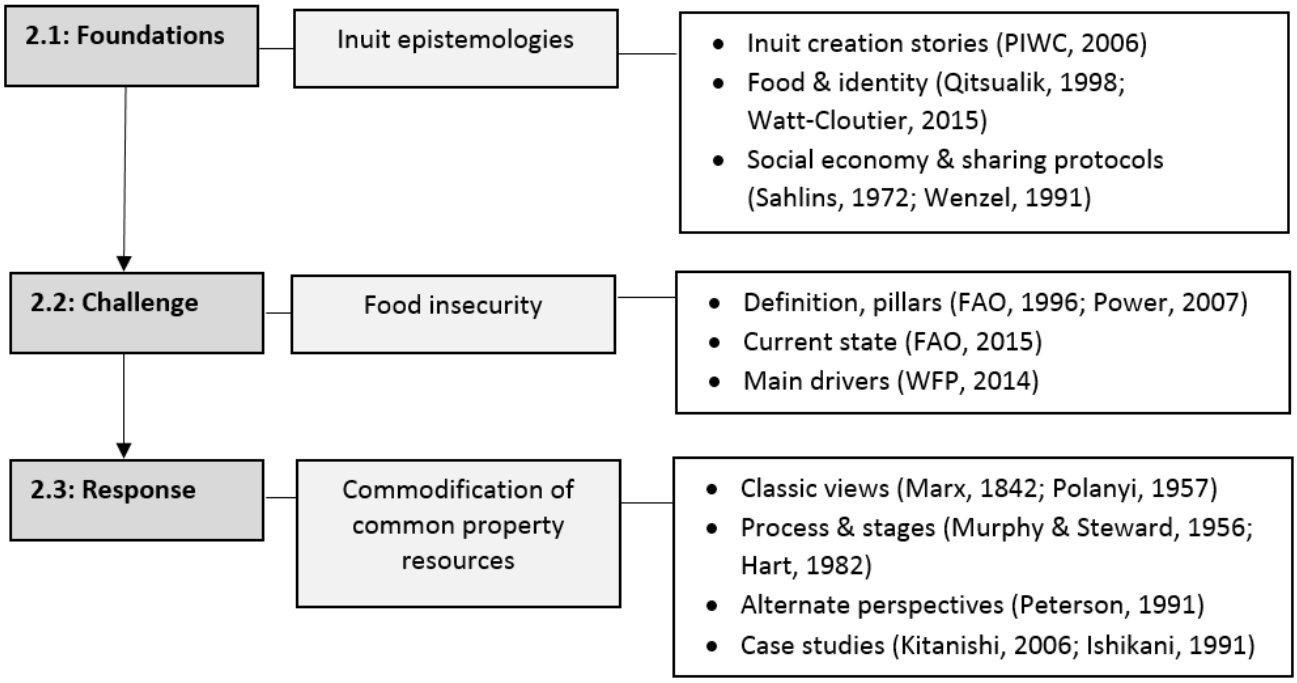

Figure 2.1: Overview of bodies of literature and the conceptual links between them

2.1 Inuit epistemologies

Inuit culture has developed and evolved over millennia. This culture, encompassing worldviews, values, beliefs and traditions, has proven to be sophisticated enough to permit Inuit to survive and thrive in cold environments, and flexible enough to evolve and withstand the changing social and environmental circumstances which have come to characterize the region. It differs markedly in nuance and specificities from region to region, community to community and even Inuk to Inuk, and is by no means immaculately and uniformly observed by all (PIWC, 2005). However, its various manifestations have several common and underlying themes which continue to have an active presence in Inuit life and identity today.

At the core of Inuit epistemology is the set of connections and relationships that is understood to exist between all people, animals, land and spirits. All of these elements of creation are connected to each other in specific ways, and preserving harmony, respect and balance in each and every relationship is viewed as integral to personal and community well-being as well as necessary for survival. This intricate web of connections is understood to extend temporally, with the presence of spirits of ancestors and the impacts of today's actions on future generations both highly present in everyday consciousness and decision-making. What happens to one element of creation is understood to have reverberations on the rest, and so decisions must be made with careful and deliberate thought and the consensus of all implicated (Watt-Cloutier, 2015). This connection enables Inuit, animals and the land to live in a good way and fulfill their respective purposes through mutually dependent and beneficial relationships.

Inuit worldviews and values are reflected in the story of Sedna, an Inuit creation story. While many versions of this story exist, this version is from the Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada's Guide to Inuit Culture:

> "According to one version of this legend, Sedna was a beautiful Inuit girl who was pressured into marriage by her father. Unknown to Sedna, her new husband was actually a raven who fed her fish and kept her in a nest on an island far away from her family. Her father, who missed Sedna terribly, went in his kayak to rescue her but the raven, with his special powers, called up a storm. The father panicked and pushed Sedna into the cold water. As she clung to the Kayak, her frozen fingers and hands were broken off and fell into the sea where they became seals, whales, and other sea mammals. Sedna could no longer struggle and sank into the water where she became a goddess of the sea. Her frustration and anger continue to be expressed through the creation of storms and high seas. Inuit hunters have treated Sedna with respect for centuries to ensure she will allow Inuit to harvest her bounty. Today some hunters still sprinkle a few drops of fresh water into the mouths of sea mammals they harvest to thank Sedna for her generosity."
>
> (Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, 2006: 4)

Although various lessons can be drawn from this story, it carries particular implications for a discussion of food acquisition and distribution. Inuit hunt and fish to maintain good relationships with a higher power, who has control over the weather and the land's resources. When Inuit take care of land, the land provides a home to animals, and animals offer themselves to people as food, creating a mutually dependent cycle of relationships that Inuit are just one part of. Inuit understand themselves to be providing a service to animals through hunting and fishing them, by reaffirming their role in this cycle and enabling them to fulfill their purpose. For Inuit, death is not necessarily viewed negatively, but often as part of an ongoing cycle that gives rise to other forms of life (Qitsualik, 1998). Hunting is thus more than just about obtaining food, it is about reaffirming one's identity, perpetuating this ongoing cycle, and connecting to past and future generations through land-based activity (Wenzel, 1991; Anderson, 2004). Furthermore, the story of Sedna provides us with a warning of the negative consequences when love and respect are not present in each of these foundational relationships.

The significance of hunting, fishing and trapping is expanded by virtue of the fact that they are inherently and structurally group-based activities. Different members of clans, extended families and communities take on predefined roles in the process which correspond to their gender, experience and skill level. The Inuit hunt and redistribute their food through a sophisticated set of norms and rules known as *ningiqtuq,* translated roughly as 'to share' and often referred to as the social economy (Wenzel, 1995). This system overlays the kinship system, or the intricate set of norms and mechanisms which structure different social relationships, with the exchange of the material goods which are obtained through the subsistence activities of hunting, trapping and fishing (Damas,

1972; Wenzel, 1991). Sahlins notes that, far from being a mark of a 'primitive' culture, societies which use such activities to meet their needs actually employ a wide range of complex, advanced strategies to ensure that 'all the peoples' wants are easily satisfied' (1972: 85). This concept of the social economy encapsulates both the acquisition of food items through subsistence activities, and their subsequent distribution and allocation among community members.

Although the specific distributive mechanisms vary regionally and evolve over time, the literature reflects a remarkable complexity which is consistently present in the various forms that *ningiqtuq* takes. Norms and rules surrounding who food is given to, what part of the animal is given, and how and when the exchange happens frame and guide Inuit behaviour before, during and after a hunt. The terms 'subsistence' and 'generalized reciprocity' have been used by anthropologists to refer to the material aspects of the lifestyle of a hunter-gatherer society, reflecting the misconception that the Inuit live a bare, desperate existence and share everything with little to no structure. However, such views are challenged on the basis that this understanding of the term fails to encapsulate the full range of strategies which are employed by the Inuit and other hunter-gatherer societies to ensure their survival and success in their various environments, and the material abundance and affluence which it has enabled them to enjoy in the past (Sahlins, 1972; Wenzel, 1991).

The social economy is neither defined by which material goods are used to achieve its goals, nor which material goods flow through it. Over the course of several decades, southern manufactured goods such as snowmobiles, firearms and motorized boats became available for Inuit hunters to use, and gradually came to replace more traditional

items such as dog sleds, harpoons, and kayaks (Wenzel, 1991). Similarly, fluctuations in species availability have caused the Inuit and the groups they descended from to shift their reliance on food items throughout their history, sometimes incrementally from year to year, and sometimes drastically, as was the case with the rise and fall of whaling (McGhee, 1972). In both cases, these changes were predominantly material, and did not impact the underlying cultural values and relationship structures that the social economy is predicated upon. The literature references a viewpoint referred to as 'acculturationist', which laments that a cultural loss occurs with such material changes from southern influence, and was prominent in the years following forced settlement by the government in the 1950s (Hughes, 1965; Vallee, 1962). This view was challenged by Kemp, who understands material changes to be purely surface-level, writing "if a snowmobile is perceived to have greater utility than a dogsled, then the ownership of a snowmobile will become one of the criteria defining the traditional Eskimo hunter" (1971: 115). Technologies that were once seen as a cultural loss came to be seen as adaptive, and not impacting the system's underlying structure or composition (Jorgensen, 1990; Wenzel, 1991).

Similarly, wage employment has become integrated into all Inuit communities, but instead of replacing traditional activities, it complements them by providing Inuit hunters with the means to purchase equipment to catch food locally. As Fienup-Riordan (1986: 314) notes, "[Monetary income] is the means to accomplish and facilitate the harvest, and not an end in itself." This combination of the traditional with the modern, along with the social regulation of economic transfers, creates what is known as a mixed economy, and characterizes most of Inuit society today (Wenzel, in press; Natcher, 2009).

Adaptability, resilience and innovation have all come to characterize Inuit society, as they are constantly finding new ways to fulfill traditional goals and conversely, using tradition to address contemporary challenges.

This section has highlighted several key elements of Inuit epistemology: the importance of relationships to Inuit identity, the kinship-based sharing system to which food is integral, and the adaptability and resilience which has allowed Inuit society to evolve into the mixed economy which characterizes it today. This thesis now turns to a discussion of the challenge of food insecurity.

2.2 Food security

This section will briefly summarize the definition, current state of, and causes of food security documented in the emerging body of literature on the subject. Food security initially appeared on the international policy agenda in the 1970s, at which point it encompassed purely the supply or availability of food items (Fitzpatrick, 2013). This conception has since expanded to include not only the availability of food, but also three additional 'pillars': access, or whether or not it is affordable and obtainable; utilization, or whether or not it is stored and prepared safely and properly; and stability, or whether or not food can be accessed consistently over time. This is reflected in the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) definition, which is 'when all people, at all times, have access to safe, sufficient and nutritious food, which takes into account their dietary needs and preferences for a healthy and active life' (Food and Agriculture Organization, 1996). More holistic understandings of food security emphasize cultural dimensions of food: the Expert Panel of the State of Knowledge of Food Security in Northern Canada (2014) situates our conception of food security within the broader context of well-being, which incorporates physical, social, mental, spiritual and emotional facets; and Power (2007)

proposes the concept of 'cultural food security', which recognizes the importance of obtaining food from traditional lands and sources. These dimensions are of particular importance for a discussion of food among the Inuit.

In 2015, the FAO released a report entitled "The State of Food Insecurity in the World", which reported that approximately 795 million people are experiencing food insecurity as defined above. Although this has decreased both in absolute and relative terms, progress has been uneven on a global scale, with rates of food insecurity climbing in Africa and Oceania but declining in Latin America, the Caribbean and Asia (FAO, 2015). This report concluded that inclusive economic growth and social protection systems, such as education, healthcare and welfare, are key drivers of food security worldwide. It also highlighted that improving small-scale productivity and production is a particularly powerful and necessary approach for alleviating global food insecurity in the long-term.

Causes of food insecurity cited in the literature are both human and environmental, and are understood to be becoming increasingly interconnected. The FAO notes that countries and areas that have failed to see progress towards global hunger targets are most often those which are impacted by war, political instability or natural disasters. The World Food Programme (WFP) forwards that climate change is one of the most frequently cited drivers of food insecurity, affecting all four pillars of availability, access, utilization and stability (WFP, 2014). Food security is also frequently discussed from a human rights perspective; the right to adequate amounts of nutritious food was first enshrined into a global agreement the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, but has appeared in numerous international agreements and treaties since. For example,

the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights contains 'the right of everyone to adequate food and the fundamental right to be free from hunger', which was ratified by over 150 countries, including Canada, and is legally binding (ICESCR art. 11).

With a grounding in the epistemology of the Inuit of Nunavut as well as the literature on a major challenge that they are facing, this thesis now turns to a discussion of the theoretical perspectives surrounding a response which has emerged, or the commodification of common property resources.

2.3 The commodification of common property resources

While the commercialization of common resources is a relatively new occurrence for the Inuit of Nunavut, an established body of literature on the subject discusses the patterns and consequences associated with doing so in theoretical terms. This literature is dominated by a 'classic' subset, which is primarily concerned that introducing cash into a subsistence-based society inevitably leads to the destruction of its traditional modes of economic relation, and its assimilation into the dominant, capitalist society. This view is challenged by those who view cash and commoditization as reconcilable and compatible with tradition in some circumstances.

The classic body of commoditization literature originated with Marx (1842, 1867), who defined commoditization as the assignment of economic value to goods traditionally held outside of the monetary sphere. He wrote that commoditization begins at the margins of pre-capitalist communities when certain members make contact with capitalistic modes of exchange, which then infiltrate deeper into a community 'exerting a

disintegrating influence' on it (1859: 50). Marx also criticized commoditization for resulting in what he termed 'commodity fetishism', or a false perception of a good's innate value and an obscuring of the connection that it has to the people who laboured to produce it (1867). The role of money itself is expanded upon by Simmel (1907), who conceptualized it as a store of value which depersonalizes interactions and diminishes the emotional, social and spiritual value associated with goods and their modes of exchange. Mauss (1954) similarly remarks that the commodification of common resources erodes traditional values and weakens norms of reciprocity in favour of more individualist, simplistic modes of relation.

Polanyi (1957) built upon Mauss's and Marx's ideas in his book *The Great Transformation*, which documents the large-scale shift that society has undergone over the past four centuries from one where goods are acquired based on tradition, redistribution and reciprocity to one where they are acquired through self-interest and utility maximization. Polanyi suggests that commodification not only erodes, but eventually leads to the dissolution of all forms of social relations, and reduces transactions from being complex and contextual to being impersonal and profit-driven. Like Marx and Mauss, Polanyi disparaged the commodification of environmental resources, arguing that nature is not something that should be for sale under any circumstances. Moore (2000) introduced the notion of 'commodity frontiers' to describe this interface, or that which exists between commodities which have been brought into the dominant market system and those which have not. Kopytoff (1986) challenges the assumption inherent in much of the above literature that commodification is

unidirectional and absolute, arguing that things can move in and out of commodity status, and be viewed as a commodity by some but not by others.

Two works within this body of literature address the processes or stages that pre-capitalist societies go through when the commoditization of common resources occurs. Murphy and Steward contribute to this area with their thesis that when money is introduced into subsistence communities, similar changes occur independent of region or local environmental conditions (1956). The consequences of commoditization they identify include the nuclear family becoming the primary social unit, families becoming organized around trading posts, and tradition eroding to the point of disappearing; observations all later reinforced by Fox (1969) and Bird (1983). A comparable sequence was outlined by Hart (1982), who identified ten stages through which subsistence societies become integrated into the capitalist economy. In his framework, money initially enters to facilitate exchange, and is later used for profit and eventually mass-production. Gemici (2008) refers to this using the vocabulary of 'embedded' versus 'disembedded' economies, the former representing an economy in which transactions are mediated by social relations and the latter in which money allows transactions to take place independent of the social sphere.

While most of this literature reflects a deep concern for the potential impact of cash and commoditization on subsistence values, some works have suggested that tradition and money are not irreconcilable and can often be positioned to complement each other. Peterson (1991) argues that traditional societies are often much more resilient than the classic perspective described above would assume, and have the capacity to assimilate cash for their own internal purposes. He cautions that it would be 'romantic

and naive' to overlook the strong influence that capitalist modes of relation can have on tradition, but that the capacity to adapt should not be underestimated (1991: 14). Langdon (1991) offers a similar view, suggesting that cash and tradition can compliment each other when certain criteria are met, including when population density is low, natural resources are in adequate supply, external demand for these resources is limited, and production remains kinship-based.

The literature also contains case studies which support these viewpoints empirically. Most notably, Kitanishi (2006) describes how the Baka of southeastern Cameroon have incorporated cash into their subsistence-based economy to facilitate the exchange of cacao and other crops, noting that although sharing has decreased to some extent, other negative consequences of commoditization predicted by the 'classic' view have been avoided because cash is generally used by the Baka immediately after acquired, rather than stored for accumulation. Ishikani (1991) describes an analogous instance among the Mbuti people in Congo, who have modified their tradition to incorporate cash. Generally, these perspectives complicate the 'classic' view by highlighting the multitude of grey areas between the polarities of traditional and capitalistic modes of economic relation.

This section has highlighted the prominent theoretical perspectives surrounding commoditization in subsistence-based societies, and this chapter has outlined key concepts in three bodies of literature which pertain to this analysis. This thesis will now move to discuss them as they apply to the Inuit of Nunavut.

CHAPTER 3: COUNTRY FOOD COMMERCIALIZATION

This chapter will begin by providing a survey of the ways Inuit relationships to food have evolved over the course of history. It will then present a comprehensive overview of the various institutional arrangements which are currently in place to facilitate the commercial exchange of country food, the various opportunities and challenges they pose, and some of the viewpoints surrounding them documented in academic and 'grey' literature. It will conclude by describing two successful models which have become established in Inuit geographies outside of Nunavut.

3.1 Historical Background

For centuries prior to the arrival of Europeans, Inuit met their needs by hunting, fishing, harvesting and trapping country foods directly from the land. Despite extremely cold weather, archaeological evidence demonstrates that these strategies enabled Inuit to not only survive, but flourish in these harsh conditions. They developed sophisticated strategies which adapted and withstood various shocks and challenges, such as periods of relative warming and cooling and interactions with other nomadic groups. Over the course of colonization, this traditional economy adapted to incorporate new technologies, practices and institutions. In the 1950s, the government of Canada moved the traditionally nomadic and sparsely populated Inuit into permanent settlements, and technologies such as dogsleds, harpoons and kayaks gradually came to be replaced with snowmobiles, firearms and motorboats. Far from being a dilution of culture, the Inuit adapted their food acquisition to new realities associated with colonialism as they have to other changes in their history (Peterson, 1991). The Inuit traditional economy has since

evolved into what is known as a mixed economy, whereby traditional structures are both complemented by and in tension with foreign ones in myriad ways.

A key dimension of this ongoing set of changes relates to the diet of Inuit. The growing wage economy has resulted in country foods being increasingly replaced with imported food which was produced and packaged outside of Nunavut, generally flown in from southern Canada. Although this has occurred part and parcel of the growing tide of southern influence, this nutrition transition can be attributed to two more specific developments. Firstly, the sealskin boycott of European environmental activists in the 1980s greatly decreased the ability of Inuit to rely on traditional activities, the effects of which are still present today (Wenzel, 1986, 1991). Secondly, this trend is compounded by environmental changes, with increasingly unpredictable weather, changing animal migration patterns, thinner ice, later ice freeze-up, earlier ice break-up, and more frequent and intense storms making it more and more difficult to hunt and acquire food in traditional ways (Wakegijig, 2013). In 2006, 45% of Inuit households relied on southern foods for half or more of their diets (Tait, 2008). With the decrease in the ability to obtain food from traditional sources, alternatives are not readily available.

Broad trends of increasing southern influence and climate change, specific events such as the sealskin boycott, and the geographic realities of living in harsh and isolated conditions all combine to make food security and hunger a significant challenge in contemporary Nunavut, particularly among the 84% of the population that is Inuit (Statistics Canada, 2013). In 2011-2012, the percentage of households in Canada which were classified as food insecure was 8.6%, compared to 36.7% in Nunavut, a rate which is over four times the national average (Statistics Canada, 2012). This is striking even

compared to second and third most food insecure provinces or territories, the Northwest Territories and the Yukon, respectively at 13.7% and 12.4%. (Statistics Canada, 2012). Even in a country as rich and developed as Canada, it is very difficult for many Nunavut residents, particularly Inuit, to feed themselves and their families.

The Government of Canada has made efforts to address this challenge through two federal programs, beginning with the Food Mail Program in the 1960s which shipped fresh produce to the North; and Nutrition North, which replaced the Food Mail Program in 2011 by providing subsidies to Northern retailers to reduce the costs of food. However, coalitions of Inuit such those mobilized under the banner of Feeding My Family, as well as a 2014 report by the Auditor General of Canada, have drawn attention to the reality that the latter program fails to make food affordable because retailers often do not pass on the subsidies to consumers and food remains exorbitantly expensive (Auditor General, 2014). This program was suspended in 2014, and the future of food policy in Nunavut remains unclear.

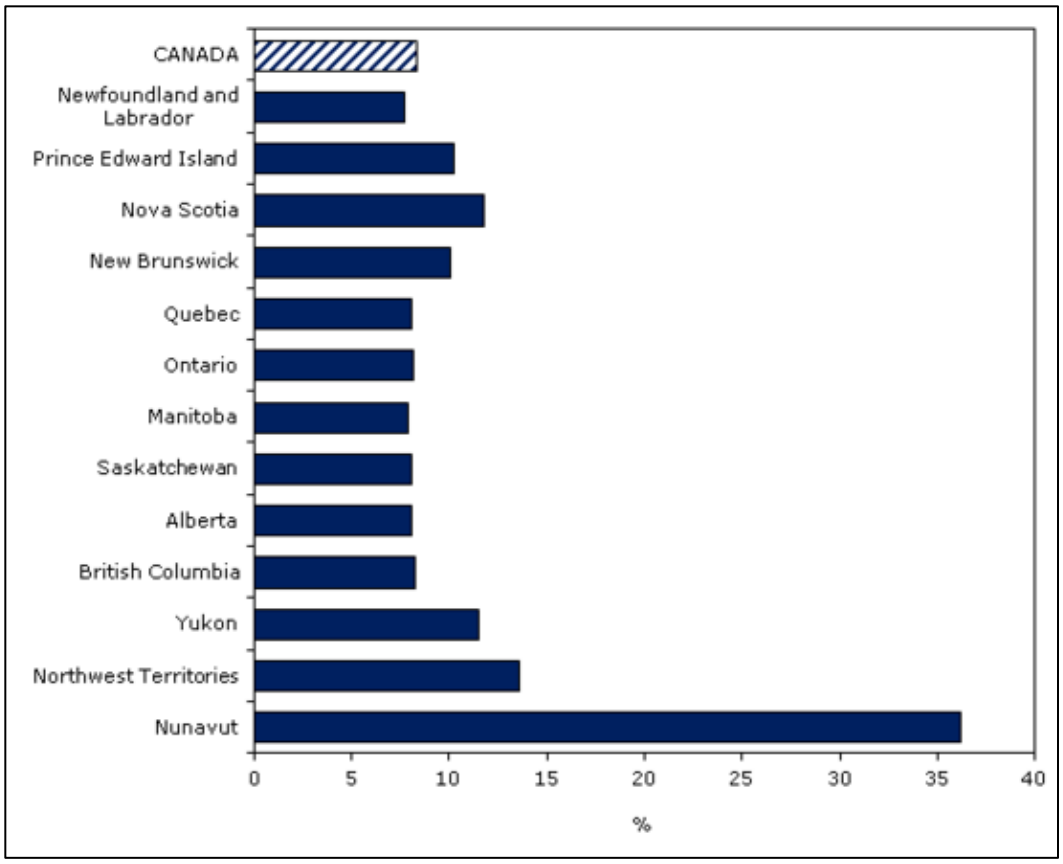

Figure 3.1 Household food insecurity in Canada by province & territory (Source: Statistics Canada, 2012)

3.2 Country food commercialization in Nunavut today

While challenges of this complexity require solutions on multiple levels, the commercialization of country food was recently identified by the Nunavut Food Security Coalition as a key priority to explore as a strategy of alleviating food security (2013). Additionally, a report produced by the Council of Canadian Academies study has suggested that selling traditional foods might be a way to increase overall food supply (2014). Although this practice dates back to the 1960s and 1970s when the federal government promoted the trade of country foods as part of broader efforts aimed at modernization and acculturation, these efforts were not lasting (Aarluk Consulting

Incorporated, May 2005; Reeves, 1993; Wenzel, 2013). Furthermore, in contrast to these early efforts, more recent ones are Inuit-led, most often as grassroots initiatives and small-scale, individual transactions to help with hunting expenses and make country food more easily available for those who cannot afford to hunt (Pearce et al, 2006). Inuit are allowed to sell country food as part of the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement, which states that "…an Inuk shall have the right to dispose freely to any person any wildlife lawfully harvested. The right to dispose shall include the right to sell, barter, exchange and give, either inside or outside the Nunavut Settlement Area" (NCLA, art. 5.6.1).

While these strategies all involve attaching money to traditional food, in practice they can take on a number of different forms. Some communities have physical stores and markets where hunters and community members can buy and sell country food in exchange for cash. There is also a growing online market for country food, where exchange is facilitated through social media websites Facebook and online exchange platforms such as eBay. In the past, the Nunavut government has also administered a subsidy program called the Nunavut Harvester Support Program, which provided subsidized equipment and funding to alleviate some of the financial barriers to going out on the land until the program was recently suspended for evaluation due to concerns surrounding its effectiveness. A number of other models have been applied in other Arctic geographies, with varying degrees of success. This thesis now turns to discuss the different strategies in place, the viewpoints surrounding them, and their respective benefits and limitations.

3.2.1 Retail Sales

Most grocery stores, such as Northern Stores or community-based cooperatives, have some form of country food available for convenience as a secondary commodity to imported and manufactured goods from the South. Over the past several decades, however, a small number of stores have been established by local residents which are primarily geared towards selling country food, usually in processed and packaged form. This began with the development of country food processing plants in the communities of Cambridge Bay (Kitikmeot Foods Ltd.), Rankin Inlet (Kivalliq Arctic Foods), Pangnirtung (Pangnirtung Fisheries Ltd.) and Whale Cove (Papiruq Fisheries Ltd) in the early- to mid-1990s by the Nunavut Development Corporation (NDC), a territorial corporation of the Government of Nunavut (Northern News, 2011). These plants buy harvested food from Inuit hunters, provide processing and packaging services, and re-sell them primarily to Inuit but also to non-Inuit residents of Nunavut and clients outside of the territory. Kivalliq Arctic Foods provides a popular 'country pack', packaging together foods such as caribou, Arctic char, muskox and whale and shipping it out to people and organizations across the territory (NDC, 2014). Another similar establishment has been active in Iqaluit (Arctic Enterprises) since approximately 1980, and has recently transferred ownership after the passing of its former manager (Nunatsiaq News, 2012). All of these establishments provide federally-certified products, primarily caribou and Arctic char.

The literature is inconclusive on the perspectives of Inuit surrounding the retail marketing of country foods. A study by Myers (2002) discusses country food stores which were active in Cambridge Bay and Pond Inlet at the time of publishing, and found

that they met with great success, providing a source of employment for local Inuit and giving rise to a sense of community pride and confidence. Furthermore, a discount event at Iqaluit Enterprises in 2012 was documented to remarkably well-attended by community members, suggesting that there is a high demand for it in the town (CBC, 2012). Nevertheless, the 2010 IPY Inuit Health Survey noted that only approximately 10% of Inuit purchased country food from retail stores in the year of study (Egeland, 2010a).

A survey of Northern retailers revealed that retailers face barriers to selling country foods, especially their high prices and a lack of availability (Aarluk Consulting, 2005). It is also noted that many of these stores provide processed and value-added country food items, such as muskox jerky, caribou steaks, and smoked char filets, but that such items tend to be preferred by non-Inuit, with Inuit preferring raw and original food items. This raises concerns about the extent to which these stores exist to make country foods more accessible, and the extent to which they are profit-driven. Overall, however, it is clear that there is a great demand for country food among the Inuit, and retail options provide one channel of many to obtain them.

3.2.2 Physical markets

Acting on a model that has been in place in Greenland for about 150 years (see section 3.3.1), temporary or 'pop-up' markets have been attempted sporadically in some locations in Nunavut (Petrasek Macdonald, 2015). This was first attempted through a project spearheaded by a social enterprise called Project Nunavut, which aims to 'improve the viability of the traditional economy' (Project Nunavut, n.d.). This market

was first held in 2010 in Iqaluit, and subsequently 15 markets were organized in Iqaluit and two in Rankin Inlet over the course of two years. At these markets, prices are set by the individual hunters themselves, and they are permitted to keep the revenue. These markets all saw significant attendance and were well-received by the community, with demand far outstripping supply (Nunatsiaq News, 2012). Products available included char, seal, caribou and less common food items, such as ptarmigan. The project is designed to facilitate easy participation by the community, with no pre-registration required or other institutional barriers in place (Nunatsiaq News, 2012).

Ford et. al. (2016) and Petrasek Macdonald (2015) note several perceived benefits to these markets, including increased access to traditional food, income for hunters, socio-cultural benefits of having a physical location for the community to gather, and having some physical infrastructure to support harvesting activities. Furthermore, an additional benefit is accountability; buying food directly from a hunter keeps them accountable for the safety and quality of their product in a way that other methods cannot, to 'know who is good and caring', as one Inuk put it (Ford et. al., 2016: 38). A similar market was initiated in Pangnirtung in 2014, which required pre-registration, but gave hunters control over the prices of their goods. One participant noted that prices at these markets were not necessarily cheaper than at the store, but that the food is undoubtedly healthier (Nunatsiaq News, 2014).

3.2.3 Online sales

Social media and other online platforms have opened up new possibilities for Inuit to exchange country food across different parts of the territory. This allows Inuit to

access food items which might not be readily available in their home communities, and to connect directly with their buyers or sellers rather than exchange through a third party. In particular, a group on Facebook called 'Inuit Country Food Sell & Swap' has about 4,500 members and is being used with increasing frequency by Inuit from all three major regions of the territory. CBC (2013) reported that harvest of caribou has almost doubled because of online sales, due in part to the lack of restrictions within Nunavut on hunting under the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement. Additionally, both major Northern airlines, First Air and Canadian North, have discounted rates for shipping country food, with Canadian North offering a flat rate of $1.50/kg between all communities in Nunavut (Canadian North, n.d.). Online media and these reduced rates have greatly facilitated the commercial exchange of country food among Inuit.

Despite this accessibility, the grey literature reflects that many Inuit have concerns that online sales is putting or will put pressure on wildlife supply. Southampton Island in particular has received attention for its declining caribou herds, and in 2011 an air cargo company reported that 1,500 to 2,000 pounds of caribou meat were being shipped from Coral Harbour to other parts of the territory every second day. Some have attributed this decline to the increase in demand for caribou due to online sales, expressing great concern that the trend will continue as online sales become more popular. Additionally, concerns have been raised about the ethics of selling country food, with one interviewee noting it goes against Inuit values (Nunatsiaq News, 2014). Nevertheless, Ford et. al. (2016) reported that the resistance to selling country foods has softened very recently as Inuit are beginning to see that commercializing can lead to increased access to country foods.

3.2.4 Government subsidy programs

The Nunavut Harvester Support program was a program which was established in 1993 by the Government of the Northwest Territories and the Tunngavik Federation of Nunavut. Its purpose was to provide financial assistance to Inuit to take part in traditional hunting activities, and consisted of a $30-million dollar fund for several programs (Chan, 2006). The Capital Equipment Program & the Small Equipment Program provided one-time donations of hunting equipment, such as snowmobiles, boats, GPS, satellite phones, radios and sleeping bags to Hunters and Trapper Organizations (HTOs) to sell to hunters at subsidized costs (Chan, 2006). Similarly, the Community Harvest Program provided stipends to HTOs to facilitate community hunts (Chan, 2006). These programs represent an 'upstream' form of country food commercialization, as hunters are free to redistribute or resell their catches how they would like to, but money is still introduced into the full hunting equation.

Although the Nunavut Harvester Support Program was structured to allow for traditional sharing to occur, it was suspended in 2014 to allow the program's administrators to determine how to best use the remaining money in the fund. Reviews of the program exposed that the funds only reached a small fraction of Inuit and failed to make hunting more accessible for the vast majority of hunters (Aarluk Consulting, 2013). Similar programs currently exist in the Inuvialuit Settlement Region and in Nunavik (see section 3.3.2), but Gombay (2010) refers to the Nunavut HSP as 'the poor cousin of the lot', as it wasn't indexed per-capita and was unable to make hunting a more accessible activity for most of the Inuit population.

3.2.5 Selling to third parties

In addition to commoditization through the channels described above, a number of other channels are used by Inuit to buy and sell country food. Hunters and Trappers Organizations (HTOs) are local organizations which exist in every community in Nunavut to regulate and facilitate hunting, and buy and sell country food (Myers, 2000). Although there is a lack of data concerning the pricing of country foods at HTOs, they are independently managed in every community and it can thus be inferred that it ranges, with some marking prices up and others re-selling it at cost. This is supported by Myers' (2002) finding that at an HTO in Pond Inlet, country food meat was sold at roughly the same price as imported beef, whereas at one in Cambridge Bay, Arctic char was marked up from $1.25/pound to $5-$9/pound. Hunters also sell catches independently to a variety of other third-party institutions, including hotels, patient boarding homes, and food co-ops (Myers, 2002). However, the small-scale and often haphazard nature of many of these transactions mean that there is a lack of data on what percentage of country food Inuit sell to each of these respective channels.

3.3 Country food commercialization in other Arctic geographies

Country food commercialization has also been undertaken in other Inuit regions with different histories, institutional constraints, and political relationships to colonizing jurisdictions. It would be unrealistic and unnecessary to discuss all of the different country food commercialization arrangements which have ever been attempted in Inuit geographies, but two in particular stand out as models which have been documented to

increase access to country foods successfully without threatening wildlife populations or traditional values. Each of these two is now discussed in turn.

3.3.1 Open-air markets in Greenland

When discussing the commercialization of country food in Arctic regions, Greenland is one of the most widely-reported examples of a place where this has been established successfully (Duhaime, 2002). Buying and selling country foods has been common practice for several centuries in the country because of policies put in place by the Danish and Norwegian colonial administrations beginning in the 1700s (Marquardt, 1995).

There are various channels through which Inuit can commercially exchange country food in Greenland, such as between Inuit and private institutions, between acquaintances, or at open-air traditional food markets (Marquardt, 1995). In contrast to in Nunavut, all individuals who wish to hunt and fish in Greenland are required to be registered under a national licensing system, which carries different 'classes' depending on the frequency and purpose of hunting (Petrasek Macdonald, 2015). If an individual wishes to buy or sell their catches, this license must be of the 'professional' class, which carries with it the obligation to pay taxes on income earned through doing so and report annual catches to the government (Petrasek Macdonald, 2015).

The open-air traditional food markets are the most widely-reported on model, and have been the subject of recent interest in terms of their potential relevance and applicability to a Nunavut context (Petrasek Macdonald, 2015; Ford et. al., 2016). They consist of permanent, physical spaces in most major towns and many smaller ones across

the country, where hunters or their representatives sell their catches according to a set of prices predetermined by a local hunters and fishers association (Marquardt, 1995). The literature reports these as being highly successful: Petrasek Macdonald (2015) notes that most Greenlandic Inuit do not feel that sharing networks are negatively impacted by these markets, and Marquardt and Caulfield (1996) report that they are seen are as an institution which contributes to regional food security without preventing Inuit from sharing according to traditional protocol.

3.3.2 *Nunavik Hunter Support Program*

The Nunavik Hunter Support Program (HSP) was created by the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement (JBNQA) in 1975 and formally operationalized in 1982. Similar to the Nunavut Harvester Support Program, its purpose is to 'favour, encourage and perpetuate the hunting, fishing and trapping activities of the beneficiaries as a way of life, and to guarantee Inuit communities a supply of the produce from such activities' (Government of Quebec, 1982: 4). It does this differently than the Nunavut program, in that it provides guaranteed per-capita cash transfers to all municipalities in Nunavik which are intended to be made in perpetuity. Municipalities then use these funds to subsidize costs associated with hunting for individual hunters and short-term task groups, and to purchase their catches when they return. The municipalities then redistribute the catches, for free, to individuals registered as beneficiaries under the JBNQA (Government of Quebec, 1982). In this sense, the program is a hybrid of both the traditional and market economy, as country food is purchased by the municipality but it

is still the norm for food to be redistributed according to traditional norms and practices (Gombay, 2005).

According to Gombay, this hybridity has contributed to the HSP being generally well-received among the Inuit of Nunavik. It provides a way for communities to obtain sufficient amounts of country food, and is perceived to be less threatening to the traditional economy than other forms of commercialization. Additionally, the funds given to hunters are understood to be for the purpose of covering hunting costs, and not for the animal or meat itself. This avoids the serious taboo associated with attaching a monetary value to an animal's life, which is of concern in many other buying and selling arrangements.

Chabot (2003) found that out of all of the country food sold in Nunavik in 1995, 83.3% was sold to the HSP, which further demonstrates the program's relevance and popularity among the Inuit of Nunavik. However, Kishigami (2000) observes that despite the fact that this model still allows for traditional redistribution, it has come to make Inuit less reliant on social networks. Other concerns expressed by Inuit are that the HSP promotes actions contrary to Inuit values, such as only turning in parts of animals and letting the rest go to waste, or hunting with the purpose of profiting personally (Gombay, 2010). Overall, the model is a well-established arrangement which addresses the need for capital to hunt while allowing the traditional economy to remain intact, but it is nonetheless the subject of some criticism and concern from many Inuit.

The literature reflects that there are strong opinions both for and against the commercialization of traditional food, and that such arrangements are established with different end-goals in mind. Some are more profit-driven, and some exist primarily to

increase the accessibility of country food or cover hunting costs. Through examples in Greenland and Nunavik, it has also been demonstrated that there are 'middle grounds', or arrangements which can increase the accessibility of country food while also allowing for Inuit to redistribute country food according to traditional protocol.

This chapter has not spoken to the pricing of country foods, which is a significant factor impacting whether country food commercialization is a viable way to address food insecurity and make food more affordable for the Inuit of Nunavut. This issue is the subject of Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4: PRICE COMPARISON

The pricing of country food is a key factor in determining whether its commercialization can address food insecurity by providing a more affordable avenue towards obtaining food. Because hunting can be very expensive, Inuit who cannot afford to hunt or who cannot receive food from someone who can afford to hunt can obtain food by purchasing imported food or by purchasing country food. The literature does not contain any information on which avenue is more cost effective, and it is to this question which this chapter turns. If commercialized country food is cheaper than imported food, it could be concluded that strategies for its marketing do hold some promise to alleviate food insecurity in Nunavut. If commercialized country food is similarly priced to imported food, arguments could be made both for or against the practice. And finally, if commercialized country food is more expensive than obtaining food through other channels, it could be argued that doing so further contributes to the exclusion of those who cannot afford country food.

4.1 Methodology

Pricing information for each of the two main avenues for obtaining country food was obtained from two different sources. Store-bought, imported food pricing information was obtained from the 2015 Nunavut Food Price Survey, which contains detailed information on the pricing of various food items for each of the 25 communities in Nunavut. Pricing information for country food was obtained by recording information from listings posted on the 'Inuit Country Food Sell & Swap' Facebook group from November 2015 to March of 2016.

To compare the cost of country food with the cost of imported food, it was necessary to derive the average cost per kilogram of each country food item sold through online sales. On the online platform, country food items were generally displayed with their species, a photo, the price, and whether or not that price includes shipping. Although a small number of other species were sold, the vast majority of listings were for caribou and Arctic char. Because the weights of these items were generally not specified in the listings, George Wenzel's 'Traditional Food Inventory' table was used, which contains the average edible weights of different Arctic species. For items which did not have shipping included, $1.50 was added per kilogram, as this is the flat rate which is charged by Canadian North to ship country food between any two locations in the territory. This process, illustrated through an example in **Figure 4.1**, was repeated for each of the listings recorded.

Figure 4.1 - Process of converting listing information into price per kilogram

Several listings did not contain adequate information for analysis, and were thus removed. For example, some displayed simply a photo of some pieces of country food, or combined several different types of country food into one price. When these were removed, there were 56 different items remaining. Because prices can vary greatly from community to community in Nunavut, the average prices for caribou and Arctic char were obtained for every community which had sales in the study period. These prices

were then compared to the prices of analogous food items from the grocery store in that same community using data from the 2015 Nunavut Food Price Survey. There were multiple analogous items to caribou meat, so the cheapest meats were selected on the assumption that Inuit struggling with hunger would buy the cheapest meat available, if they were to buy meat at all. Where data gaps existed in the 2015 Food Price Survey, they were filled using the same survey conducted in 2014. Imported food pricing is also compared to the cost of a whole caribou carcass at Iqaluit Enterprises, which is $750-$800 (Joe Hess, pers. comm).

4.2 The cost-effectiveness of commercialization

The comparisons between the cost of purchasing country food online and purchasing imported food from the store are displayed in **Tables 4.1** and **4.2**. These tables show that it is substantially cheaper to purchase country food through the online platform than it is to purchase comparable imported food items from the grocery store, even when shipping costs are taken into account. This is particularly true for Arctic char, with online sales offering a price that is, on average, more than three times cheaper than canned fish from the store.

Community	Average cost of Arctic char	Average cost of store-bought, canned fish
Arctic Bay	$9.50/kg (n=1)	$37.51/kg
Iqaluit	$7.50/kg (n=1)	$29.50/kg
Kugaaruk	$10.23/kg (n=11)	$19.32/kg
Repulse Bay	$9.01/kg (n=5)	$38.41/kg
Taloyoak	$9.61/kg (n=8)	$34.19/kg
Average	$9.17/kg	$31.79/kg

Table 4.1: Cost of Arctic char sold online vs. canned fish from the grocery store

Community	Average cost of caribou	Average cost of ground beef	Average cost of chicken
Arviat	$8.17/kg (n=4)	$10.11/kg	$8.49/kg
Coral Harbour	$9.10/kg (n=5)	$16.80/kg	$15.74/kg
Rankin Inlet	$9.67/kg (n=14)	$14.61/kg	$9.12/kg
Repulse Bay	$6.78/kg (n=6)	$16.24/kg	$6.93/kg
Average	$8.43/kg	$14.44/kg	$10.07/kg

Table 4.2: Cost of caribou sold online vs. meat items from the grocery store

However, this value does not extend to caribou purchased from a country food business instead of through individual transactions between individual Inuit. Iqaluit Enterprises sells caribou for $750-$800/carcass, which translates to approximately $17.22/kg. This is compared to purchasing meat from the grocery store in **Table 4.3**, which shows that the cost of caribou is almost always more expensive than similar meat items from the store.

Community	Cost of caribou	Cost of chicken	Cost of ground beef	Cost of pork chops	Cost of steak
Iqaluit	$17.22/kg	$8.93/kg	$15.32/kg	$14.80/kg	$30.57/kg

Table 4.3: Cost of retail country food from Iqaluit Enterprises vs. various imported meat items

4.3 Discussion

This data demonstrates that commercialized country food sold online is substantially cheaper than purchasing analogous food items from the grocery store for the two primary food items sold online. However, this data must be interpreted with caution. Using average edible weights instead of the true weights of the country food being sold introduces a source of error into the price per kilogram calculation. It is possible that

some items were sold at a lower price when sold through social media because they are slightly smaller, and vice versa. Furthermore, it can be inferred that Inuit would not necessarily buy analogous food items; they might buy cheaper items instead, so country food would actually be more expensive than the alternatives. Nevertheless, it is reasonable to conduct a comparison between country food and store-bought meat as they are indeed comparable in terms of their nutritional content.

Despite being substantially cheaper through online media, country food is as expensive as, or more expensive than other analogous items when sold in retail stores. When country food is sold in the store, overhead costs such as heating and electricity make it more expensive than most other meat items (Joe Hess, pers. comm). This supports the idea that selling country food can make food more affordable in some circumstances, but not in others, depending on the scale and purpose of the commercialization strategy in question. Furthermore, data is not available for country food purchased at pop-up markets. However, pop-up markets are similar to online sales in that the seller chooses the price, there are minimal overhead costs (with the exception of shipping for online sales), and there are no third parties involved. Based on this, it can be inferred that costs at pop-up markets would be comparable to those through online sales, and not high like the costs of retail country food.

CHAPTER 5: ANALYSIS

While few would dispute the importance of increasing consumption of nutritious, locally available and culturally significant foods and of doing so in an environmentally sustainable way, country food markets carry a complex set of considerations related to their potential impacts on Inuit values and sharing networks, the overexploitation of wildlife, and the strategy's ability to alleviate food insecurity. Through studying theoretical perspectives surrounding the commercialization of common property resources, reviewing the literature on what is currently taking place in Nunavut as well as in other Arctic geographies, and examining the costs associated with some ways of marketing country food, some comments can be made with regards to the impact that country food commercialization has on each of these three areas of concern.

5.1 Tradition and sharing

Although many Inuit and non-Inuit have expressed concerns about commercializing a resource which has otherwise always been governed through tradition, this thesis has demonstrated that it is possible for Inuit to incorporate cash as an adaptation for their own internal purposes. The cases of the Inuit jurisdictions of Greenland and Nunavik have shown that there are 'hybrid' arrangements which incorporate money into the overall hunting equation while still permitting sharing to take place according to kinship-based protocol. In Greenland, food is generally purchased by individuals who redistribute it through their networks, and in Nunavik, money is introduced 'upstream' of the transaction by subsidizing hunting costs to allow more people to go out on the land and obtain food in traditional ways. Ford et. al. (2016)

further noted that the resistance to the idea of sharing has softened, although the grey literature contains many reflections of Inuit concerns with regards to the impact of commercial markets on tradition.

This assertion is supported by the literature, which contains examples of cases where members of subsistence-based societies have incorporated money for their own internal purposes while retaining important elements of tradition. The cases discussed in Section 2.2 of the Baka in Cameroon and the Mbuti of the Congo are two examples of societies who have incorporated cash into their economies to facilitate exchange and adapt to their changing society (Kishigami, 2002; Ichikawa, 1991). Further to this effect, Wenzel (2013) notes that the issue isn't the penetration of money itself, but that money lends itself more naturally to a certain individualist allocation of labour, rather than a collective one. Although instances where labour continues to be a collective endeavour even after the introduction of cash are more exception rather than norm, it has been demonstrated that it is possible. Given the resilience the Inuit have demonstrated to date in their history, to assume their vulnerability to capitalism would be to grossly underestimate their capacity to adapt as a collective. This is summarized by a comment by Peterson's note:

> There is no reason to suppose that the ways in which people use their cash, sell their labour and consume will not be harnessed to distinctive sets of identities and purposes, even if they are more recognizably cognate with those of the encapsulating societies. (1991: 16)

Commercialization does have the potential to erode traditional values, but the resilience and adaptability the Inuit have demonstrated throughout their history may enable them to incorporate cash for their own internal purposes while retaining long-standing elements of their cultural identity.

5.2 Affordability

Section 3 demonstrated that there are a range of different motives behind the creation of country food commercialization arrangements, such as to simply cover one's own hunting expenses, to increase the consumption of country food, to generate a personal profit, or for altruistic purposes. Section 4 demonstrated that the sale of country foods through online platforms such as Facebook made food significantly cheaper than buying it at the grocery store, and inferred that pop-up markets would have similar effects due to the fact that they are also being sold directly from individual to individual with no overhead costs or third parties involved. This means that the commercialization of country food does hold promise to make food more accessible and increase the self-reliance of Inuit communities if these current, small-scale strategies were scaled out and adopted by more Inuit. However, it must be noted that just because the prices of country food are cheaper than those of imported food does not mean that everyone can afford them. These prices would certainly make food more accessible for some income brackets, but perhaps would still be outside of the range of others.

As was also demonstrated in Section 4, retail stores sell country food at prices that are greater than the cost of analogous items due to overhead costs such as heating and electricity, reproducing the same exorbitant price levels prevalent at grocery stores throughout the territory. This suggests that selling country food at the micro-scale, or from individual to individual, is more desirable than doing so through a third party such as a retail store because it prevents unnecessary costs from being passed on to the consumer. It also highlights the diversity of prices; caribou could range from being sold at $17.22/kg at a retail store in an urban centre to $8.17/kg including shipping, when

purchased from another Inuk through an online platform. It is thus concluded that some country food commercialization arrangements have potential to drastically reduce the cost of food for Inuit, while others perpetuate the status quo or even worsen it by selling food at higher prices than are found at the grocery store.

5.3 Environmental sustainability

Many concerns have been raised that increased sales, particularly from online platforms, will put pressure on wildlife populations such as caribou. This is reinforced by the fact that there are no restrictions on hunting for Inuit in all of Nunavut, in contrast to the institutional arrangement in Greenland. This view, however, fails to account for the reality that Inuit have successfully managed their own wildlife populations using traditional knowledge for centuries prior to the arrival of Europeans. There is no shortage of examples where the commercial exploitation of natural resources has led to adverse environmental impacts; however, in all of these instances, the driving motive is profit. In most of the commercialization arrangements described above, Inuit are buying and selling food to cover their hunting expenses or because of its taste, nutritional value, and importance to spirituality and identity, which is very different from exploiting a resource to generate revenue. Nevertheless, further research outside of the scope of this paper is necessary to quantify the demand for country food and weigh that against wildlife populations to conclusively determine the potential impacts of commercialization on wildlife populations.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

> *"I think we need to protect the traditional values forever. But the world is changing and the Inuit are changing as well."*[1]

The Inuit are one of the most adaptable and resilient peoples in the world, and this adaptability and resilience is currently being put under pressure due to severe and alarming rates of food insecurity in Nunavut. The Inuit have adapted their lifestyles and innovated in many ways to respond to these pressures, including through buying and selling country food through a variety of structures. This thesis has not aimed to do something as simplistic as take a position 'for' or 'against' the commercialization of country food, but rather to expose the complexity of this trend through an analysis incorporating theory from the literature, practical information on the current situation, and data on the costs associated with commercialization. What is currently Nunavut has been impacted by centuries of colonialism in which non-Inuit have attempted to prescribe their values, beliefs and assumptions about what is best for Inuit onto them with little understanding of everyday realities of the North. I refuse to replicate this dynamic by suggesting a course of action, particularly from the positionality of someone who has never stepped foot in Nunavut. Instead, I assert the importance of creating conditions which will enable the Inuit to continue to innovate on their own terms, or of promoting 'made-in-Nunavut' solutions such as the ones described in this thesis.

Three main conclusions can be drawn from this analysis. Firstly, while at first glance commercializing traditional food might be viewed as a cultural loss, this view problematically underestimates the Inuit ability to make the most of their circumstances

[1] James Eetoolook quoted in <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/inuit-hunting-market-cultural-betrayal-or-necessity-1.2616577>.

and adapt using new technologies. The literature demonstrates that the incorporation of cash into mixed economies can be, but is not necessarily, destructive to tradition. Secondly, online sales of country food offers prices which are notably cheaper than those of foods at the store, but this isn't necessarily true of all commercial arrangements. Finally, concerns related to wildlife populations need further exploration, but the Inuit have successfully managed wildlife throughout their history, and their ability to do so independently should not be underestimated.

Using lessons learned from other Inuit and subsistence-based societies who have found themselves at similar crossroads, contemporary Inuit of Nunavut have the option of using a foreign mode of economic exchange to address a local, embedded challenge in their society. It is unclear whether commercialization would have perverse impacts on Inuit society or permit them to make country food more affordable for a large number of Nunavut residents, or do both at the same time. However, Inuit social structures and environmental management techniques have proven to be sustainable enough to withstand pressures over the course of thousands of years, and the adaptations described in this thesis are undoubtedly reflections of Inuit resilience and resourcefulness in action. As money enters a sphere it has never governed before, the Inuit are at a crossroads, and only they are positioned to determine whether it will have a disintegrating influence on the social fabric of their society or enable them to overcome the challenge of food insecurity and continue on a path to self-determination.

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