Final Report

Re-storying NunatuKavut: Making connections through multi-generational digital storytelling

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The Urban Aboriginal Knowledge Network, the UAKN, is a community driven research network focused on the Urban Aboriginal population in Canada. The UAKN establishes a national, interdisciplinary network involving universities, community, and government partners for research, scholarship and knowledge mobilization. For more information visit: www.uakn.org

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Purpose of the research

Dominant historical narratives about a place and its people — the stories that we tell about ourselves, whether in school or in the media — have widespread impact on our sense of self, our relationships with one another, and even our range of economic possibilities. Southern Inuit from the NunatuKavut region of Labrador have started to challenge the established historical narratives that have been shaped by settler colonialism to reflect dominant interests about the land and its people. The historical re-production of the life and culture of the Southern Inuit has often been portrayed by merchants, doctors, academics and researchers with ambivalence and uncertainty. Much of what has been written has been produced from a western, male perspective, informing a knowledge base that tends to reflect and privilege patriarchal ideals. As a consequence, the female Southern Inuit voice and diverse versions of indigeneity have been minimized and in some cases erased from the narrative or story making process.

The narratives that have been articulated largely concentrate the Southern Inuit around a particular geographic boundary along the south coast of Labrador. This region is remote, and while there is little doubt that it constitutes a large part of NunatuKavut territory, the coastal communities do not reflect the territory of NunatuKavut in its totality. Southern Inuit also live in urban centres within NunatuKavut territory, such as Happy Valley-Goose Bay (HVGB) and Labrador City, but urban realities and experiences are often not equally valued within these narratives, and people's Aboriginal identities are sometimes compromised or questioned, both externally and internally. As a result, the urban Southern Inuit population is often left with minimal voice and participation in informing Southern Inuit life and culture.

Rationale

This research was informed by the perceived need to respond to injustices that impact Southern Inuit in NunatuKavut. From the perspective of this research initiative, the perceived gap is twofold. On the one end, Southern Inuit identity and knowledge is, and has been informed through a Eurocentric lens. On the other end, Southern Inuit identity and knowledge has largely been formed at the expense and exclusion of the urban Southern Inuit population. As a result, the urban population has had fewer opportunities to both learn and pass on stories and knowledge that inform Southern Inuit life and culture. However, this is not to generalize that all Southern Inuit living in urban areas are displaced from their roots or that all Southern Inuit living in remote regions are informed or better equipped with cultural knowledge. These identified gaps between knowledge formation and translation between remote communities and urban regions is not absolute, but it is a reality. Hudson, Procter & Moore (2016) worked with community

members, elders and other knowledge holders over the past year to explore how Southern Inuit women, in particular, can re-story their own histories. Based on our collaborative research experiences, we worked with other researchers and community members to develop *Re-storying NunatuKavut: Making connections through multi-generational digital storytelling*.

Research questions

1) How can the practice of storytelling by NunatuKavut women destabilize established historical narratives and understandings?

2) How can the involvement of urban youth in multi-generational digital storytelling create new interpretations of the diversity of experiences and Aboriginal identities of Southern Inuit?

Objectives

1) To encourage urban NunatuKavut youth to participate in the re-storying of historical narratives about the region and its people;

2) To provide opportunities for urban NunatuKavut youth to develop their skills in digital storytelling, historical research, and interviewing; and

3) To provide opportunities for women and youth from NunatuKavut to connect stories from multiple generations in order to create new understandings of historical experiences and Aboriginal identities.

Methodology

Narrative methods are consistent with an Indigenous methodological approach to research (Smith, 1999; Thomas, 2005, Lambert, 2013) and storytelling is a culturally significant way of knowing and a way of telling (Little Bear, 2000; Lanigan, 1998; Cajete, 1994; Stiffarm, 1998; Bishop, 1996; Kovach, 2005; Moore & Iseke, 2011; Moore, 2017). Indigenous digital storytelling reflects Indigenous ways of knowing, doing, and being (LeClair & Warren, 2007, p. 10) and sharing stories between women and youth illustrates the "intergenerational communication of essential ideas" (Lanigan, 1998, p. 103). Elders are a positive influence in Aboriginal cultural identity (Berry, 1999), and research can support and strengthen the relations between the youth and the community members they interview engage in digital storytelling. In addition to preserving community history, digital stories can link urban aboriginal people in innovative ways to their communities, land, and traditions.

Indigenous storytelling "aids in negotiating social priorities and contemporary community needs, expresses community viewpoints, and safeguards community values and norms" (Iseke & Moore, 2011, p. 21). Engaging youth in validating their own experiences and stories by connecting their stories with those of multiple generations of women within their own family or community, can have a two-fold effect. First, it can create new understandings of how historical processes have affected and continue to affect the choices and the personal identities of multiple generations of Indigenous peoples. Second, it can revise the dominant narratives that

have enacted violence through their silences and erasures Hudson, Procter, &Moore, 2016).

The research received ethics approval from Memorial University's Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR) and from the NunatuKavut Community Council's (NCC) Ethics Committee. The research followed the guidelines of the NunatuKavut Community Council for community engagement, including the principles of ownership, control, access and possession. The research was funded by the Urban Aboriginal Knowledge Network Atlantic Research Centre (UAKN Atlantic), which is supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) through a Partnership Grant.

Methods

Digital storytelling workshop: The project partners organized a digital storytelling workshop in July 2016 as the project's first public event. Titled "Nans and iPads," the workshop was billed as an opportunity for urban Southern Inuit youth of Happy Valley-Goose Bay to come with their grandmothers to learn how to do interviews and make digital stories on iPads. A group of multiple generations spent the day in the NunatuKavut Community Council's office boardroom on July 16th sharing stories, practicing how to make digital stories, and enjoying each other's company.

On the land Indigenous youth camp: On April 2017, a four-day youth camp took place outside Happy Valley-Goose Bay and brought together 10 Youth, as well as knowledge holders and elders from diverse Indigenous cultures and backgrounds in Labrador. The camp activities reflected both Inuit and Innu culture and youth shared in intercultural knowledge exchange. The activities included sealskin crafting, traditional cooking, trapping skills, ice fishing, tent setup, gathering wood, fire making, and storytelling. There are few opportunities for such intercultural knowledge sharing and exchange and with the sharing of diverse culturally relevant stories in particular, the NunatuKavut Community Council (NCC), in collaboration with the Labrador Institute, agreed that audio recording would not take place at the camp however, digital photos were taken. In addition to intercultural sharing and skill development, the participants expressed their desire to have the camp as an annual event.

Storying with the 50+ Club of Cartwright: NunatuKavut youth worked with the 50+Club of Cartwright. The youth interviewed and recorded stories about the lives of participants in the Club.

Individual gathering of stories: NunatuKavut youth interviewed women in their extended families. Researchers supported youth in collecting these digital stories.

Results

The research validated the voices and stories of Southern Inuit women as legitimate and authentic Indigenous knowledge holders. It also engaged urban Southern Inuit youth in a way that will allow them to engage with Southern Inuit women as storytellers from both urban and remote NunatuKavut communities. Urban youth become a part of the story making and the

translation process, with Southern Inuit women as the knowledge holders and providers.

The research contributed to building an archive of photos and interviews from the women of NunatuKavut. The youth involved in the project developed research skills in interviewing, digital storytelling, and historical research, which builds the capability and capacity of NunatuKavut researchers. The research strengthened the relationship of youth across multiple generations of elders and knowledge holders as they developed their understandings of historical experiences and Aboriginal identities.

All digital stories are in the final stages of editing and will be available on the NunatuKavut Community Council's website at: http://www.nunatukavut.ca/home/rec.htm

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