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CHAPTER 2

Invented Places: Environmental Imaginaries and the Inuit Colonization of Labrador

Peter Whitridge

> The great sea moves me!
> The great sea sets me adrift!
> It moves me like algae on stones
> In running brook water.
> The vault of heaven moves me!
> The mighty weather storms through my soul.
> It tears me with it and I tremble with joy.
> (Petrone 1988, 21)

The above epigraph is a transliteration of a song that used to send the Iglulingmiut shaman Uvuvnak into a trance. It embodies a particular engagement with place and landscape that distinguishes this woman's personal lifeworld from those of people around her, and from our own. While it is not opaque, it does suggest how distinctive an individual's relation to his or her own place and time and history can be. The distance between an archaeologist's experience of the world and that of a particular Inuk's in the past is vast. Nevertheless, archaeologists owe it to themselves and their audience to attempt to grasp and illuminate the particularity of past events and settings. The new phenomenological (Tilley 1994; Hamilton and Whitehouse 2006; Witmore 2004) and sensory (Hamilakis et al. 2002; Loren 2008; Skeates 2008) archaeologies, together with parallel trends in archaeological science (e.g., Jahn et al. 1996; Scarre and Lawson 2006), have increasingly encouraged archaeologists to project themselves into the perceptual and sensory worlds of past actors. Any attempt to unfold Inuit understandings of Labrador during the period of first settlement illustrates the difficulty of this task.

Labrador (together with Nunavik) appears to have been colonized by the Thule from Baffin Island in the mid- to late-fifteenth century CE (Kaplan 1983; Schledermann 1971; Whitridge 2008); other researchers assign this event to about 1300 (Fitzhugh 1997, 407), or to the late thirteenth to early fifteenth century (Woollett 2007, 71). This represented the last major Inuit territorial expansion before the inception of contact with post-Norse Europeans in the sixteenth century (Sturtevant 1980). In the course of rapidly settling the Eastern Arctic, Classic Thule–phase Inuit encountered a succession of radically different land-, sea- and icescapes, to which they had to adjust their habits of making a living (Whitridge 2004). Such an adjustment involved not merely learning the biotic schedules and spatial layouts of new territories, but also assimilating profoundly new sorts of organisms, people, and places to a foreign worldview. The archaeological record of Inuit colonization of the southeastern Canadian Arctic reflects this interplay between a resilient cognitive style and novel ecological situations. As Inuit expanded south from Baffin Island into northern Labrador and Quebec they encountered the transition from arctic tundra to subarctic forest for perhaps the first time since their ancestors had left the Western Arctic. The novel patterns of residence and land use, and representations of the world that emerged here, represent an interesting instance of cultural accommodation to a novel environment—the forging of a distinctive "ecoreality."

The notion explored in this chapter is that colonization often involves an imaginative engagement with profoundly new sorts of places, resulting in a creative reworking of the mental, social, and material frames through which people grasp the world. Flexible cognitive templates—ecological taxonomies, landscape models, architectural strategies, technological repertoires, economic tactics, and the social constellations appropriate to each—seem to have effectively equipped Inuit groups as they progressively covered an enormous region during their eastward push through the Arctic Archipelago. However, people did not simply "discover" and unproblematically "colonize" these new place, as some models of the colonization process seem to suggest (Rockman 2003); they had to actively create a home for themselves, naming places on the land, sea, and ice, and gradually (and in locally distinctive ways) learning their respective animals, plants, geology/hydrology, climate, and seasonal schedules. The imaginative quality of the landscapes that ensued is reflected in the surprising mix of generic and novel place names they acquired (Stewart et al. 2004; Whitridge 2004). Regions had their Nuvuk (point) and Qikkertaq (island), but also their singular places, like Angutausugivik (the place where he thought he was a big man; Wheeler 1953). Similarly, prior human and human-like inhabitants and their traces were sometimes subsumed in existing cognitive tropes, and sometimes given novel names and readings. Thus the same Tunit stories recur throughout the Eastern Arctic, reflecting a distinctive style of thought about the ubiquitous evidence of prior Dorset settlement, but room was also made in local cosmogonies for entirely new sorts of beings, like the Innu of the interior, or the powerful deity Torngâsok of the Torngat Mountains coast (Taylor 1997).

The encounter with novel peoples and biomes frequently demanded such novel concepts and practices. Labrador had an archaeologically complex history of repeated colonization and abandonment by an alternating array of First Nations (Maritime or Labrador Archaic, Intermediate Indian, Recent Indian or Innu) and Paleoeskimo (Independence I, Pre-Dorset, Groswater, Middle Dorset, Late Dorset) groups (Fitzhugh 1977 and 1997; Loring 2002). While the Paleoeskimo traces would have been a mostly familiar, even reassuring, confirmation of durable Inuit historical models forged in the Arctic Archipelago, the traces of Amerindians must have been astonishing, reflecting a disturbingly discordant occupational history based on alien spatial, social, and technological templates. In effect, different people had lived in the same places with radically different models of both what constituted a living and what constituted a place. The landscape and biota were similarly novel. For example, moving south along the Atlantic coast Inuit would have encountered not merely willow and alder thickets but increasingly dense stands of spruce. Forest likely presented a silent challenge to Inuit understandings of how people could make their way in the world. Beyond the novel landscapes to which the new arrivals had to quickly accommodate themselves, the Inuit colonists of Labrador ultimately became embroiled in the production of new histories of encounter and conflict. Innu still occupied some of these places, and within decades of the Inuit arrival Europeans began exploring and raiding north along the coast, establishing seasonal commercial outposts in southern Labrador (Tuck and Grenier 1981; Grenier et al. 2007). Inuit pioneers were drawn into an intricate, millennia-long dialogue on society and nature. The settlement of Labrador exposes the diversity of people, things, and processes that local imaginaries must reconcile.

Environmental Imaginaries

Like those they study, archaeologists have repeatedly revised their approach to the environment. The arrangement of archaeological study areas by ecological zone—arctic, subarctic, northwest coast, eastern woodlands, etc.—preserves the legacy of early twentieth century environmental determinist thinking about the land, which accorded primary importance to the scale and nature of food production as understood by Euro-Americans (Holmes 1919). The

varying importance accorded to the environmental constraints and opportunities faced by a distinct array of societal types—bands, tribes, chiefdoms, states—reflects the mid-century allowance of cultural ecologists for the character of particular sorts of groups' adjustments to their environment (Steward 1955). Not merely the source of food, but how it was produced, stored, and distributed, and by whom, assumed critical significance, and these factors were seen to be at least in part the legacy of historical processes that had progressively transformed people's relationship to the land and its resources. For evolutionary ecologists, the quantified details of resource abundances, and the contextual harvesting decisions that are seen to follow from them, have been of key importance (Broughton and O'Connell 1999).

Missing in all of these approaches is recognition that prior harvesting decisions and frameworks are adjusted to a current situation through an ongoing and creative process of accommodation and invention. Individuals are not locked into a rigid environmental understanding; a fluid reality forces them to constantly arrive at novel solutions to harvesting problems. The archaeological record of inhabitants' spatial organization appears to be in particularly rapid flux in northern Labrador during the period of Inuit arrival in the region, and there are very few grounds for anticipating precisely how colonists would have reacted to the unusual situation in which they found themselves. Environmental areas, cultural ecology, and evolutionary ecology assume stable cultural boundaries and understandings, not movement, discovery, and invention. There is little reason to expect that Inuit would have driven south of the treeline into already occupied territory.

Different occupants of northern Labrador read and utilized the landscape in profoundly different ways, and consequently left different sorts of material traces. In each instance archaeologists are confronted with a record of exploration and colonization that was subject to a shifting set of rules that were mostly foreign in origin, having congealed in the disparate ecological milieus from which the new arrivals had come. Amerindian groups, who appear to have made only seasonal forays into far northern Labrador, beyond the major chert outcrop at Ramah Bay (Loring 2002; Tuck 1975), originated further south in mainland North America and would have been accustomed to a more diverse terrestrial fauna and flora (for example, access to substantial stands of timber). Paleoeskimos and Inuit likely both arrived from the biotically simpler Canadian Arctic islands with a focal orientation to marine mammals, but radically different types of equipment (and correlative needs or expectations, for example of Paleoeskimos for knappable cryptocrystalline stone) and patterns of cooperation. Europeans staged their exploration, seasonal harvesting, and, ultimately, settlement of Labrador from an enormous distance, with the

advantage of deep reserves of labour and equipment, but the disadvantage of dissonant environmental understandings and slim local knowledge. In each case, the cognitive resources and social needs of the colonists appear to have been as significant as the material environment itself for shaping the record they produced. Although for the most part the ecological setting fluctuated only gradually, according to very long-term cycles (deglaciation, Holocene warming and cooling, the century-long cycles of game peaks and crashes), the styles of knowing and using it were diverse.

The assumption adopted here is that particular societies have distinctive modes of social, economic, and cultural organization that mediate their relationship to the world around them, including, not incidentally, what is considered the world around. What is taken as the *boundary* between the social and the natural is peculiar to particular worldviews, and even to the subject positions of particular groups or individuals. For example, the notion that the seasons are changing in northeastern North America in September or October is constructed, in part, from non-environmental facts, including the return to work from summer vacations, the return of students to school, tree viewing by tourists, personal observations of calendrical change, and perhaps changing patterns of interaction with family, friends, and co-workers. These more-or-less orchestrated social events complement and give substance to changes in the atmosphere and biosphere—make them socially and personally *real*. The change of seasons means something radically different depending on one's social and personal understandings, one's actions, and the actions of those around. The actual environmental cues may not be readily recognizable to someone who has never been to this part of the world before, at least at this time of year. Local Aboriginal peoples in the past would have experienced and understood changes in the biophysical world—such as reddening foliage—in a profoundly different way. They may, for example, have felt deeply implicated in these changes through their participation in significant economic and ritual acts, such as harvests, hunts, and festivals

As archaeologists, we use various terms for talking about different aspects of people's lives, but these terms are frequently incommensurate with people's own experience of the world. The notion that land, ice, sea, atmosphere, fauna, and flora constitute a sphere or spheres wholly distinct from, and even opposed to, the human is not universal. Inuit, for example, saw the world as being arranged in different ways than did Western scientists, with an array of planes of existence and conditions for moving between them (Saladin D'Anglure 1986). A host of complex beings and simple creatures inhabited the land, sea, and air that we might not recognize as real at all, and the behaviour of various edible creatures was articulated with the human in

unusual ways. For example, the well-known corpus of Sedna beliefs represents a folkloric map of relations amongst different sorts of humans (male/female, young/old, child/parent, married/unmarried, Inuit/qallunat, etc.), animals (dogs, sea birds, sea mammals), hybrid creatures (dog-human, bird-human), and deities (Sedna) and their mediation by different landscape (mainland, island, air, sea), weather (stormy, calm), and technological (umiak, iglu) contexts. Their repetition in social settings (storytelling, performances, shamanic séances), embedding in language and place names, and depiction in art rooted this distinctive worldview in habitual practices and understandings. The particular understanding held at a given moment of interactions amongst people, deities, biota, and landscape across a network of inhabited places can be considered a group's environmental imaginary, or ecoreality (Whitridge 2004).

There is no reason to expect that local ecorealities were homogeneous. Inuit likely held widely varying understandings of their world, depending on their position within it and their personal history. Women's and men's histories were distinct on a host of scales, from daily routines and paths of movements to entire lives, based on their different task obligations, systems of interaction amongst themselves and with others, and experience of their own and others' bodies. Children understood the creatures of which they heard stories, or that they encountered, differently than did elders with a lifetime of experience watching, harvesting, and otherwise using and interacting with animals. Ecoreality names a dimension of understanding of the world that certainly varied amongst individuals (according to knowledge, experience, values, roles, etc.) but likely also achieved a certain consistency with respect to nameable (and hence typically interacting) categories of individuals, from gender and age cohorts to groups of co-resident families, named culture groups, and larger linguistic entities. It would be possible to take some element of this world and examine it from the distinct perspectives of various social groups. Polar bears, for example, are represented archaeologically by bones, artifactually altered teeth (pendants, whetstones), hair, hide, and representations in various media (e.g., wooden toys, ivory amulets, decorated tools, engraved depictions). These contain information bearing on the interactions of different people (men, women, children, shamans, etc.) with living bears (while hunting, travelling, in the settlement), various dead bear parts (meat, bones, teeth, hide), and the idea of bears (for example as animals, food, supernatural creatures, or figures in myth and stories), in various natural (ocean, sea ice, land) and built (kitchen, house, settlement) settings. Alternatively, we could take a particular group of people (e.g., women, children, or the occupants of a house, settlement, or region) and examine their set of understandings of various environmental phenomena within a particular place-time. This is the approach adopted here:

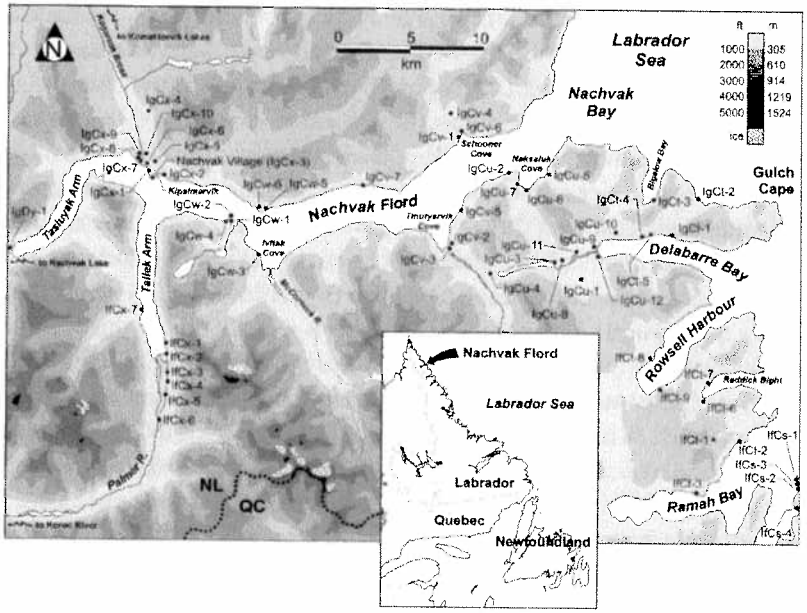

Figure 1. *Archaeological sites in the Nachvak Fiord region.*

some of the rudiments of the Inuit environmental imaginary at Nachvak Fiord during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries are explored below.

Nachvak Fiord Case Study

Nachvak Fiord is situated at the southeastern corner of the North America Arctic, only a couple of hundred kilometres north of the treeline at Napaktok Bay (Figure 1). It is a deep, for the region, east-west trending fiord that cuts some 45 kilometres into the northern Labrador coast at about 59° N. The steep fiord walls are patchily covered with sedges, mosses, and willow, and there are relatively few areas that appear readily suitable for human settlement. In most places the walls rise precipitously to an elevation of 1000 metres or more, with broader areas of level ground confined mostly to the mouths of river valleys that enter the few bays. Before the over-hunting of the nineteenth century, bowhead whales entered the outer fiord in late fall (bowhead bone and baleen occur at Inuit sites throughout the fiord), and walrus could be found there in late winter (Brice-Bennett 1977). Now only solitary minke whales are regular summer visitors, and occasionally small groups of ringed and harp seals; herds of migratory harps pass through in late fall. Ringed seals would have been accessible throughout the fiord during

the winter period of stable ice cover. A polynya in the inner reaches of the fiord, at the junction of Tallek and Tassiuyak Arms, was likely a major attraction for past occupants of the area (Kaplan 1983); the main pre-contact Inuit winter village is situated on a terrace directly adjacent to it, and traces of a string of prior occupations of the area occur on the terrace and nearby. Arctic char are abundant in summer, as they school along the coast before ascending streams to winter, and portions of the George River caribou herd were likely harvested not far inland, around the Komaktorvik Lakes, in late summer and early fall.

The first people to arrive in the area were the Maritime or Labrador Archaic, who explored north as the Holocene ice sheets receded during the later sixth millennium BP (Fitzhugh 1997). A significant outcropping of high quality chert at numerous locations between Nachvak and Saglek Bay, centred on a "quarry bowl" at intervening Ramah Bay, likely continued to draw Maritime Archaic and Intermediate Indian summer visitors over the next few millennia. Certainly, traffic in this material encompassed much of the northeastern North American seaboard between the fifth and first millennia BP (Loring 2002). Pioneering Arctic Small Tool tradition groups moving south into Labrador (Hood 2000) appear to have made sporadic use of the area, though not the Ramah chert, not long after 4000 BP, while later Paleoeskimo populations embraced this raw material and had a more visible presence in the region. A substantial Middle Dorset occupation dating to around 1500 BP occurs at Tinutyarvik Cove, towards the mouth of Nachvak, and traces of a sparse, seasonal Late Dorset presence occur further in the fiord.

At some point during the later fifteenth century Inuit groups moved south along the Labrador coast, establishing permanent regional occupations of varying sizes in a number of fiord systems before the arrival of Europeans (Schledermann 1971; Kaplan 1983). Evidence of an earlier arrival and contact with resident Late Dorset (Fitzhugh 1994) is equivocal (Park 2000) and made somewhat unlikely by recent re-dating of the initial Inuit colonization of the Canadian Arctic (McGhee 2000; Whitridge 1999a). Staffe Island, Komaktorvik, Nachvak, Uivak, Hebron, Napaktok, Okak, and other village sites likely emerged as recurrent wintering locations in the late pre-contact era, with anywhere from five to twenty sod, stone, and whale bone winter dwellings each housing half a dozen to a dozen people. The initial arrivals were likely refugees from the Central and High Arctic, or perhaps groups bumped by them, pushed south by deteriorating harvesting opportunities at the beginning of the Little Ice Age (Whitridge 1999a). Sporadic contact with Europeans exploring north along the newly encountered coast began in the early sixteenth century, and by the seventeenth century Inuit groups from Killinek to the Strait of Belle Isle were avid users of metal, beads, and other European commodities,

although only the southerners had good access to these wares through direct contact with the newcomers (Jordan and Kaplan 1980; Kaplan 1985; Kaplan and Woollett 2000; Woollett 2003). During the 1600s Nachvak became a site of occasional consumption of European goods by resident Inuit who likely obtained them through down-the-line trade with central and southern coastal groups. The emergence of large, multi-family winter houses, and a major residential shift from the inner fiord settlement of Nachvak Village (IgCx-3) to the more coastally oriented Kongu (IgCv-7), probably reflect, in part, intensifying interaction with British, French, and Dutch traders during the eighteenth century.

Nachvak was first investigated by the Smithsonian Institution's Torngat Archaeology Project in the late 1970s (Fitzhugh 1980; Fitzhugh et al. 1977, 1978; Kaplan 1980). After a twenty-five-year hiatus, large-scale feature investigations were conducted between 2003 and 2006 at sites IgCx-3 and IgCv-7 by Memorial University of Newfoundland's Archaeology Unit. Four houses have been excavated at the pre-contact site of IgCx-3, and middens adjacent to communal houses have been tested at the contact-era site IgCv-7. IgCx-3, consisting of about fourteen winter houses and associated midden deposits, appears to have been abandoned by 1700; a small collection of nails, a single glass sherd, and a trade bead are the only indications of access to European materials. IgCv-7, on the other hand, has produced little to suggest a pre-contact presence; it appears to represent a new winter village established at about the time that IgCx-3 was abandoned, likely to better position Inuit for the emerging indigenous trade in European commodities (e.g., Haven 1773a, b; Curtis 1774), and perhaps even to directly intercept European coastal traffic. With the establishment of a Hudson's Bay Company post at Kipsimarvik in 1869, Inuit settlement appears to have returned to the inner fiord; both the joint Euro-Canadian/Inuit community there and the large village of Ivitak (IgCw-1), immediately across the fiord, were occupied during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. IgCx-3 provides a useful starting point for thinking about pre-contact Inuit conceptions of northern Labrador's land-, sea-, and icescapes, and it is the focus of subsequent discussion.

The Archaeology of Environmental Imaginaries at Nachvak

From the perspective of environmental imaginaries, Nachvak is interesting for a number of reasons. First, its period of prehistoric occupancy is relatively well constrained archaeologically because of the late arrival of Inuit in the area and the appearance, within decades, of European explorers. Northern Labrador was rapidly resettled soon after the onset of the Little Ice Age (LIA), at which time it represented a huge, sparsely inhabited region with relatively

abundant resources (bowhead whales, walrus, small seals, caribou, char). This means, second, that the arrival of Inuit at Nachvak was part of a colonizing movement more than two centuries more recent, hence potentially more accessible archaeologically, than the initial Inuit settlement of the Eastern Arctic, with which it affords a productive contrast. Third, the colonization of Labrador was likely associated with a severe disruption, in part LIA-mediated, of prior ecological models. If Inuit had come to possess a relatively stable set of understandings and representations of the Eastern Arctic environment, it was likely impossible to transfer these directly to northern Labrador in any substantially intact fashion in the fifteenth century. Fourth, the long history of prior occupation of the region by Amerindians and Paleoeskimo groups can be regarded as both an important resource for newly arrived Inuit (in terms of the value of a record of prior settlement for guiding, or at least influencing, resettlement and resource use) and a productive set of contrasts for archaeological analysis. Although organic preservation is often poor, it would still have been possible to discern the very different social and technical resources that underpinned the contrasting networks of harvesting, travel, and settlement locations. Fifth, although it is only one of many occupied fiords along the north coast, Nachvak is unusual because of the inland situation of the main pre-contact winter village and because the Inuit deity Torngâsok was reputed to live in the mountains on the north side of the fiord. The interior location of site IgCx-3 presents an interesting contrast to the situation at the neighbouring winter villages of Komaktorvik (at the mouth of a fiord issuing into Seven Islands Bay) and Ikkusik (on an island in Saglek Bay, at the head of a network of fiord arms), both of which provided readier access than Nachvak to the outer fiord and *sina* (floe edge) but poorer access to interior travel and harvesting opportunities. Together these establish Nachvak as a unique, and in many ways uniquely informative, archaeological case study.

As the abode of Torngâsok, Nachvak occupies a pivotal place in Labrador Inuit cosmology. Although there were locations, such as Saglek, that appear to have been more productive for the marine mammal harvesting that anchored Inuit economy and that supported correlatively larger pre-contact populations (Haven 1773a, b; Curtis 1774; Kaplan 1983), the tradition that a powerful and petulant supernatural being occupied Nachvak draws attention to indigenous understandings of the northern Labrador lifeworld. The entire region was named and assimilated into Inuit understandings; fiords, islands, settlement sites, and topographic features are individuated in local stories (Wheeler 1953). Nachvak, however, is reputed to be a big place (Gary Baikie, personal communication, 2003): significant, and not a little dangerous. Its situation also varies from the pattern for other major winter villages.

Figure 2: *Base of toy soapstone pot from House 12, IgCx-3, with incised design resembling mountains.*

While most are located close to the outer coast, tacitly emphasizing winter access to ringed and bearded seal, Nachvak is located some 30 kilometres inland of the fiord mouth. It is well-positioned for ringed seal hunting at the polynya, and for travel to the interior to recover cached caribou or harvest timber along the Koroc valley, but it seems inappropriately distant from the fall whaling grounds and opportunities for winter walrus and seal hunting at the floe edge.

Geographically, the situation of Nachvak implies an attempt to balance interior harvesting, cache-retrieval, and inter-regional travel with outer-coastal harvesting, a possibility that was typically foregone in other fiord systems. One result of this emphasis is the unusually mountainous quality of the local backdrop; people made their winter home in the centre of a landscape in which the Torngats rise steeply from the ocean to peaks of over 1600 metres (the highest in northeastern North America south of Baffin Island). Outer fiord winter settlements, in contrast, typically open out onto an icescape with little vertical relief. The situation of being ringed by tall mountains appears to be documented in a design scratched into the base of a toy soapstone pot from House 12 (Figure 2), which depicts a line of simple triangular peaks that resembles the surrounding terrain (and especially the regular saw-toothed array at nearby Ramah Bay; see Figure 3). Figurative art or decoration of any kind is rare in the Nachvak assemblage. Although

Figure 3: *Skyline at mouth of Ramah Bay, looking southeast.*

pots (both full size and miniature) often exhibit an incised groove on the upper face of the rim and one or more grooves around the adjacent upper edge of the exterior, this is the only specimen with incised lines on the base. The distinctiveness of the Nachvak landscape seems to have been reiterated in a common element of local material culture, and, based on the contrast between the careful craftsmanship of the pot and the impromptu scratching of the design, perhaps by a later user of the object rather than its manufacturer. Women and/or children entered into a discourse linking landscape, gendered labour, and foodways (and whatever other magical, decorative, or play associations such objects may have possessed) through the medium of an imaginary landscape.

At a smaller scale, the main pre-contact winter village is distinctively positioned on a ten-metre-high terrace facing the junction of the fiord arms, rather than immediately adjacent to the fiord (and a regular source of freshwater from one of the brooks that enter the ocean on either side of the point). This may be due to the winter build-up of freshwater ice on Kogarsok Brook that makes the more obvious coastal location inappropriate. In any case, occupants of the village had an excellent view out over two major fiord arms and the leads that formed there some winters. The village is composed of clusters of single- and two-family houses and likely reflects a complex palimpsest of the changing family composition of the community. Some houses were substantially remodelled and may have been wholly or partially abandoned for some of the life of the settlement. House 2, for example, had two compartments that were likely both occupied during the early period of site occupation and then abandoned, whereas only one of its compartments

seems to have been reoccupied during the period leading up to village abandonment (Whitridge 2008).

Individual houses either have a single platform or, like House 2, are bifurcated, with two more-or-less identical living areas attached to a single tunnel. Each house or living area includes a raised, stone-edged sleeping platform, paved floor, and stone lamp stand, and most also have small niches or extensions. A superstructure composed of whale bone and/or wood was likely tied together with bowhead baleen and covered with hides and sod. The lamp stands typically incorporate a single bowhead vertebra, as they do at the contemporaneous site of Ikkusik (Schledermann 1971, 75). The houses, then, organize a sheltered social space in a repetitive, highly conventional fashion and make relatively conspicuous and deliberate reference to the importance of whales. Vertebrae not only represented useful construction elements and tools (they were used in unmodified form as chopping blocks at both House 2 and Ikkusik) but also invoked the centrality (perhaps declining) of bowheads in Eastern Arctic economies and invested women's domestic workspace with cetacean symbolic associations. These associations would appear to be closely related to the whale-woman association marked by the incorporation of bowhead skulls in the detached kitchens of Classic Thule-phase winter houses in the Central Arctic (Whitridge 2004). They also seem to tangibly cite the Inuit story of a woman who married a whale and made a home in its body (Sheppard 1998). Bowhead whales, a key pre-contact Inuit prey species in many parts of the North American Arctic for centuries (McCartney 1980; Savelle and McCartney 1994; Whitridge 1999b), represented a fertile nexus of domestic meanings even as economic reliance on them waned. Houses helped "house" these meanings and provided space for formal age and gender groupings involving work, rest, eating, and sleep. These living arrangements, mostly inherited from Classic Thule-phase antecedents in the Central Arctic, changed in significant ways when people assembled into multi-family houses in Labrador in the early eighteenth century (Whitridge 2008).

At the level of household artifact assemblages, the northern Labrador material stands out for the overwhelming importance of stone. The assemblages are dominated by ground slate for various styles of men's and women's knives, harpoon head end blades, and lance blades; nephrite for drill bits, knives, and occasionally end blades; and soapstone for lamps and pots. Whale bone, baleen, and wood appear to have been in regular use, along with lesser amounts of antler and bone, but uneven preservation makes these difficult to quantify. Considering the importance of caribou in the food-bone assemblages from some of these houses, the apparent paucity of antler

tools is difficult to explain. However, the absence of flaked chert is even more surprising. Nachvak Fiord sits at the northern edge of an extensive intermittent outcropping of Ramah chert that continues south for tens of kilometres almost to Saglek (Lazenby 1980; Nagle 1984; Loring 2002). This was one of the most widely exchanged raw materials in prehistoric eastern North America, and it dominates pre-contact Amerindian and Paleoeskimo tool assemblages throughout Labrador. Although Inuit groups made extensive use of cherts for knife and harpoon blades in the Western Arctic (see, for example, Giddings and Anderson 1984), and during the initial stage of expansion east (Arnold 1986), they seem to have effectively discarded this material in favour of slate, nephrite, iron, and copper by the time they reached the Central and Eastern Arctic (Whitridge 2002). Strikingly, the Inuit settlers of Labrador clung to a distinctive set of cultural identifiers in the face of an attractive local alternative.

Conclusion

If we cannot begin to see the world through indigenous eyes, then what are we doing as archaeologists? Are we talking only to each other about our fascinations or, worse, serving some insidious political purposes of which we are mostly unaware? Although there are undoubtedly sensible patterns to be adduced through conventional archaeological approaches, we should also be prepared to think and talk in different ways. Inuit moving south into Labrador exemplify this need: people with a distinct and local understanding of North Atlantic land-, sea-, and icescapes adapted their understandings and practices to a dramatically new physical and social environment, which they assimilated and ultimately reinvented in the course of constructing a new system of liveable places. Nachvak came to be understood as the abode of a powerful deity, Torngâsok, and the land and sea were progressively marked with the stories, memories, and physical traces that people's lives produce in their wake, some of which were radically different from modern ones. These understandings and practices and things, not to mention the land and sea, were themselves in flux. The movements of game were learned, new sources of stone were discovered, Europeans arrived, whales and walrus disappeared, and conflicts arose between converts and traditionalists. The troublesome details of people's lives at a particular time and place dissolved into the flow of history.

Acknowledgements

An earlier version of this paper was presented at the NABO conference "The View from Here: History and Ecology of the North Atlantic Region" held at Université Laval, Québec, 20–24 September 2006. Thanks very much to Jim Woollett for the invitation to participate in the session "Colonisation of Landscapes and Anthropogenic Change in Northern Landscapes," and to Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, Canadian Foundation for Innovation, Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, J.R. Smallwood Foundation and Institute for Social and Economic Research at Memorial University, and the Newfoundland and Labrador Provincial Archaeology Office (PAO) for funding various aspects of the Nachvak research. The Torngâsok Cultural Centre, PAO and Parks Canada provided permission to conduct this research, and of course the work could not have been accomplished without the numerous field assistants from Nain and Memorial University who carried on through weather, bears and the inevitable logistical delays and made the fieldwork a true pleasure. Finally, I am grateful to David Natcher, Larry Felt, and Andrea Procter for their patience and encouragement with the manuscript. Photos and map by Peter Whitridge.

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CHAPTER 3

Southern Exposure: The Inuit of Sandwich Bay, Labrador

Lisa Rankin, Matthew Beaudoin, and Natalie Brewster

The Inuit presence in Labrador was not restricted to the North, and while the recently established boundaries of Nunatsiavut define a modern geo-political unit and represent a "new chapter" in Labrador Inuit history, they do not fully demonstrate the breadth of Inuit influence in the historical development of southern Labrador, a region generally considered to be outside the core Inuit settlement zone. Nevertheless, a lengthy and significant Inuit presence in southern Labrador is now being documented by both historical and archaeological research. This is not altogether unexpected, as it was to southern Labrador that the Inuit first travelled to retrieve desirable European commodities from seasonal European whaling stations, and much of the early contact between Inuit and Europeans took place in the south before the establishment of Moravian missions in the north. Ultimately, many Inuit chose to remain in the south, often marrying European settlers. In this manner Inuit of southern Labrador played a significant role in the emergence of new economic and cultural traditions that are now associated with Inuit-Métis society in the south. The blended culture pattern that emerged from the union of Inuit and European populations maintained strong ties to Inuit traditions, and it is the enduring legacy of Inuit of southern Labrador that has defined the Inuit-Métis culture from the eighteenth to the twenty-first century.

Settlement, Subsistence, and Change Among the

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EDITED BY DAVID C. NATCHER,
LAWRENCE FELT, AND ANDREA PROCTER

University of Manitoba Press