GENDER, POLITICAL POWER, AND NATIONALISM
IN THE CIRCUMPOLAR NORTH:
A Case Study of Nunavut, Canada

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Dissertation Waiver

I hereby declare that my dissertation entitled, *Gender, Political Power, and Nationalism in the Circumpolar North: A Case Study of Nunavut, Canada,* is not substantially the same as any that I have submitted for a degree or qualification at any other University. I further state that no part of my dissertation has already been or is concurrently being submitted for any such degree, diploma or other qualification.

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INTRODUCTION

Our nationality is like our relations to women: too implicated in our moral nature to be changed honourably, and too accidental to be worth changing.

George Santayana

The opening epigram in Ernest Gellner's famed work, *Nations and Nationalism,* highlights the ways in which both nationalism and gender are perceived wrongly to be natural and inevitable categories of identity. Nationalism, a rhetoric in which groups assert unity and uniqueness in order to gain autonomy and rights over land, is one of the most powerful and central discourses in present day politics. Although nationalism has its roots in Europe, it remains a powerful template for autonomy movements throughout the world. However, indigenous autonomy movements, such as the native movements within Canada, are rarely examined through the lens of nationalism. I will argue that this is due to a bias within the field of nationalism studies and explore the ways in which the creation of the new Canadian territory of Nunavut can be seen as national movement.

On April 1, 1999, one-fifth of Canada's northern landmass became Nunavut, a self-governing province, in which 85% of the population of 28,000 are Inuit.[1] The government of Nunavut is a public government in which all Nunavut residents, native and non-native, can participate. However, the fundamental idea behind Nunavut is that it is to be an Inuit homeland with state structures and political processes that reflect the nature of Inuit society (Hicks & White, 1999; Inuit Tapirisat of Canada, 2002). The creation of institutions, such as the governance structures of Nunavut, through which national can be articulated and reinforced is a crucial component of national movements and nation-building projects (Breuilly, 1996; Smith, 1999). The construction of a unified

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[1] See Appendix 1 for maps of Nunavut.

Nunavummiut[2] national identity, like all national identities, is an ongoing project and one in which, I argue, gender is highly implicated.

Delineating membership within the nation-state is an essential task for a new nation and controlling the behaviour of members is one of the ways in which nationally acceptable practices can be inculcated and boundaries established. As nations are imagined to be extended families occupying a specific *home*land, the role of women as symbolic border guards of culture and keepers of the home has featured prominently in all national movements. The home is a site of power relations, and the nation, as an extended home, becomes a sphere in which proper relationships between men, women and power are articulated and contested. In addition to the gendered nature of the nation, national institutions, through which national identity is expressed, also carry with them hierarchies of gender and power.

The centrality of gender to the Nunavut nation-building project was articulated particularly clearly during the 1997 gender parity vote. On May 26 1997, the inhabitants of the soon to be self-governing region of Nunavut voted on a proposal that would have guaranteed gender parity within the Nunavut Legislative Assembly by creating an electoral system in which two representatives would be chosen from each district: one man and one woman. The proposal was rejected by 57% of the voters and only 39% of eligible voters went to the polls (Dahl, 1997; Gombay, 2000; Hicks & White, 1999). Dahl (1997) notes that the proposal, a radical and unique idea even by global standards, and the public debate leading up to the proposal's rejection addressed fundamental questions about the relationship between men and women in modern Inuit society. I further argue that the gender parity vote, as an aspect of the formation of a new national institution, highlights the interrelated discourses of gender and nation.

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[2] In Inuktitut, the affix –*miut* in combination with a place name indicates people of a certain area. Thus, Nunavummiut means 'people of Nunavut,' a useful phrase when exploring the emerging sense of identity within the new geographical space of Nunavut (Brody, 2000: 317).

I argue that the Inuit autonomy movement is nationalistic in nature and that the 1997 gender parity vote was influenced deeply by the gendered ideology of nationalism and the gendered nature of institutions through which nationalism is expressed. In Chapter One, I will explore the primary features of nationalism and examine the fundamental biases within the scholarly approach to nationalism, which have prevented an exploration of indigenous autonomy movements as nationalist in character. In Chapter Two, I will emphasise the constructed nature of Nunavummiut political identity by tracing its emergence and highlighting the ways in which this rhetoric of identity employs the highly resonant idiom of nationalism. In Chapter Three, I will examine the theoretical understandings of how gender and gendered institutions are implicated in nation-building projects. Chapter Four entails a close examination of the rhetoric surrounding the gender parity vote and highlights the ways in which gender and national identity were central to the debate. Ultimately, studying the creation of Nunavut as a nation-building project and the 1997 gender parity vote as a moment in which the interrelated discourses of gender and nation were particularly prominent highlights the ways in which powerful ideologies can both restrict and liberate development in the postcolonial and indigenous worlds.

CHAPTER ONE: NATIONALISM

1.1   Introduction

The rhetoric of nationalism has been implicated in much of the political change of the twentieth century and continues to play a central role in present-day political discourse (Gellner, 1993; James, 1996; Smith, 1999). Nationalism, a principle asserting that the political unit and the ethnic one should be congruent (Gellner, 1993), enjoys great credibility as it 'determines the norm for the legitimacy of political units in the modern world...it sets the accepted standard' (Gellner, 1993: 49). As a result, nationalism has served as a political and ideological template for autonomy movements throughout the world. However, the role of this powerful ideology in indigenous autonomy movements is relatively unexplored – a blank within the study of nationalism that I will interrogate within this chapter. First, I will explore some of the fundamental characteristics of nationalist rhetoric in order to lay the foundation for my argument that indigenous autonomy movements, such as the one that led to the creation of Nunavut, can be understood as projects in nation-building. Secondly, I will examine the theoretical bases of nationalism studies, including how nationalisms in the post-colonial world have thrown traditional theories of nationalism into question. Throughout, I argue that a critical examination of nationalism theories reveals a 'modernity bias' that, in combination with a lack of understanding of contemporary indigenous life, obscures the role of nationalism in indigenous autonomy movements.

1.2   What is a Nation? Characteristics of Nations and Nationalisms

Due its political currency, the term 'nation' is overused to the point of 'terminological chaos' (Connor, 1994). The most contested differentiation of terms appears to be between nationhood and ethnicity. Connor (1994) argues that the difference between national and ethnic groups is that ethnic groups are 'other' defined categories administratively *imposed upon* the ethnic group by the dominant society while the national groups are self-defined communities constructed *in response to* contact with the 'other.' Frederik Barth, an anthropologist, would contest this definition, as he attributes the existence and persistence of ethnic groups to an active process of internal selection and maintenance. He argues:

> categorical ethnic distinctions do not depend upon an absence of mobility, contact and information but do entail social processes of exclusion and incorporation whereby discrete categories are maintained...ethnic distinctions do not depend on an absence of social interaction and acceptance, but are quite to the contrary often the very foundations on which embracing social systems are built (Barth, 1969: 9-10).

I argue that the key differentiation between ethnic groups and nations is that ethnic groups are seen to be 'not merely or necessarily based on the occupation of exclusive territories' (Barth, 1969: 15) while occupation of a specific territory is fundamental to national rhetoric and the understandings of 'nation.' I also suspect, as does Anderson (1995), that nationalism research focuses upon 'modern' societies while the vocabulary of ethnicity remains central to analysis of 'indigenous' or 'primitive' groups, an issue that will be further addressed.

Although studies of nationalism are highly contested and often contradictory, I believe that the characteristics and themes through which a group can claim 'nationhood' as part of a political discourse of power and legitimacy are relatively clear: primordiality, uniqueness highlighted by contact with the 'Other,' ancient traditions, and attachment to

a homeland. In Chapter 2, I will argue that all of these themes are present in the autonomy movement that led to the creation of Nunavut, a movement that I assert is nationalistic in character.

1.2.1 Primordiality

Nations are constructed or 'imagined' communities and not, as nationalists frequently argue, organic evolutions of pre-existing ethnic groups or races. However, one of the most powerful rhetorical tools of nationalism is the belief that nations are natural divisions of human societies and unavoidable products of political evolution. Nationalists often assert that the nation is a fundamental and primordial form of human identification and organisation, thereby endowing each nation with an historical legitimacy and common destiny (Gellner, 1993; Smith, 1999). Nationalist leaders frequently characterise the nation as a 'natural and universal ordering of the political life of mankind, only obscured by the long, persistent and mysterious somnolence' (Gellner, 1993: 48). Nations are believed to be so natural that they 'require no definition other than self-assertion' (Hobsbawm, 1983: 14). It is through this rhetoric of primordiality and inevitability that the nation becomes a believable story of belonging.

Primordiality in nationalist discourse also implies the concept of kinship. Nations are understood to be rooted in some kind of blood connection between the members of that nation, a perception that persists even in light of substantial evidence to the contrary (Connor, 1994). Nationalism asserts that the nation is a return to ancient ways of social organisation and a recreation of the 'natural tribal community' (Connor, 1994, James, 1996; Smith, 1993). I find that the evocation of tribal communities and kinship leads to a certain understanding of linear descent that, as Ingold (2000) argues, facilitates the occupancy and ownership of land, another crucial characteristic of nationalism that will be further explored shortly. Ingold (2000) argues that the conceptualisation of descent as

a linear progression cuts through the vagaries of historical change and individual life-narratives and allows land to be passed as a legacy, not from individual to individual, but from one generation of a unified collective to the next.

1.2.2   The 'Other' and Self-Cognisance

Coming into contact with the 'Other' is seen as a crucial part of nation-formation. As Sarup writes, 'identity is conceivable only through difference' (1996: 47) and the presence of an 'Other' has characterised much of the research into individual and group identity and identity formation.   Ernest Gellner (in James, 1996:123) highlights this contact with difference as an important step in nation formation during which 'men become fully and nervously aware of their culture and its vital relevance to their vital interests.'[3]   In this self-conscious manner culture comes to be revered directly and the veneration of culture as a reified entity, rather than a daily lived experience, is an essential component of nationalism.   Interestingly, the concepts used in traditional anthropology to elucidate the boundaries of ethnic groups, such as common language, social practices, and modes of production, often become integrated into the national project as primary symbols of difference. This perhaps illustrates the importance of an educated elite in the construction of national identity and the power of an outside gaze in defining identity. Contact with and opposition to the 'Other' allows identity to be constructed and this identity often comes to be seen as both enduring and endangered. The emphasis on a uniqueness that must be maintained even under the aggressive influence of the 'Other' is reflected in nationalists' use of tradition and in the construction of national histories.

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[3] Gellner consistently used 'men' to represent all members of the nation, an issue that will be addressed in Chapter 3.

1.2.3 Tradition and Narrative

New nations require ancient roots. Therefore, national narratives,[4] which play a central role in organising national experience, must invoke a unique and ancient past. Lowenthal (1996: 47) asserts:

> ...each group's heritage is by definition incomparable. The past we prize is domestic; those of foreign lands are alien and incompatible with ours. National identity requires both having a heritage and thinking it unique. It is a heritage that differentiates us; we treasure most what sets us apart.

Thus, nations must possess a captivating shared history that establishes ideas of relatedness and evidences that the past, present and future course of the nation are an undeniable fate (Smith, 1999). The telling and re-telling of these national narratives has the 'power to create the "we" that are engaged in telling them' (Bammer in Morley, 2000: 16) and serves to constitute and reinforce collective identity. For these new national narratives to gain credibility and acceptance, they require ancient and sacred foundations and in this way tradition becomes a usable past that can serve the needs of the present.

Tradition, a tool which creates a surface social cohesion, lends credence to institutions and relations of authority and power, and inculcates conventions of behaviour, is closely bound up in the construction and defence of group identity (Hobsbawm, 1983). Nationalism depends upon tradition as a cultural wealth that, even when used selectively and altered dramatically, legitimates itself through an invocation of deep and sacred roots (Gellner, 1993; Hobsbawm, 1983; Sarup, 1996). Within nationalist rhetoric, culture is seen as collective and unchanging, even though in reality 'cultural discourses often resemble more of a battleground of meaning than a shared point of departure' (Yuval-Davis, 2000: 41).

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[4] Narratives, as representations of reality that are persistent, widely used, and understood to be true and accurate, profoundly influence how people perceive present realities and historical pasts (Adams & Hulme, 2001).

Adversity faced in the protection of the nation also plays an important role in national narratives. Balakrishnan highlights the centrality of struggle to identity formation, writing 'only in struggle does the nation cease to be an informal, contestable and taken for granted frame of reference, and becomes a community which seizes hold of the imagination' (1996: 209). This struggle, often expressed through war or defence of the geographical homeland, is one in which the individual is expected to sacrifice themselves for the collective. The national narratives of traditional uniqueness and of struggle are similar in that they both lay claim to and glorify a particular place, the 'homeland.'

1.2.4 The Homeland

The idea of a 'homeland' and the assertion of an inalienable right to authority over it are key to the construction of nationalist sentiment. The very phrase 'homeland' eloquently expresses the needs that it fills in the nationalist project. First of all, this 'homeland' is something to be loved and defended, as an abstraction of the familial home (Morley, 2000). Secondly, the idea of a homeland entails the understanding that those living within the homeland share a bond as part of the same 'family.' Both nation and home are 'mythic narratives' and 'enacted space[s] in which we try on roles and relationships of…belonging and foreignness' (Bammer in Morley, 2000: 16). In this way, the idea of a homeland can be both inclusionary and exclusionary. If someone is living in your homeland, it is possible that through processes of assimilation for them to become part of the national 'family.' However, it is equally possible, depending upon the style of nationalist rhetoric, that the outsiders in the homeland are forever 'others' – a paradigm of thought that has led to atrocities in the name of national purity and cohesion.

I argue, as will be explored in detail in Chapter Two, that the Inuit autonomy movement entailed all of these key characteristics of nationalism. This raises the

question of why indigenous autonomy movements, such as the one that led to the creation of Nunavut, have not been addressed in theoretical literature on nationalism. To answer this question, I first must turn to the inquiries currently most central to the study of nationalism itself. The key scholarly question, rather than *what* is a nation, has been largely *when* and *how* the nation comes into being. Through an exploration of the intellectual climate and foundations in which theories of nation-building are embedded, I find a 'modernity bias' that I believe explains many of the biases and blanks within the study of nationalism itself.

1.3   When and How is a Nation? Causation Theories and Their Intellectual History

The most widely accepted theories about the emergence of nationalism in the twentieth century are predicated on an understanding that the participants in nation-building projects are already 'modern.' I argue that this emphasis on modernity has led to the absence of literature on indigenous nationalism and is reflective of the 'traditional' and 'modern' dichotomy long present in social sciences as a whole.

Many contemporary scholars of nationalism find their theoretical basis in the works of Max Weber and Emile Durkheim, two sociologists who established a basic distinction between 'Traditional' and 'Modern' societies, or what has been titled the 'Great Divide' (James, 1996: 127). In *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism,* Weber explores the impact of Protestantism in facilitating the development of capitalistic enterprise, an economic and social phenomenon that he frequently asserts is absent in 'traditional' societies. Durkheim, in *The Elementary Forms of Religions Life,* uses 'primitive civilisations' as a simplified case in which the fundamental tenets of religion can be more easily detected and understood. These influential works place a distinction between primitive and modern at the centre of the social science perspective in which the

study of nationalism is embedded. As the nature of contemporary indigenous life is widely misunderstood and indigenous people are not believed to be 'modern,' indigenous movements are not perceived to be nationalistic.

This emphasis on modernity runs through the works of many of the most renowned scholars of nationalism, such as Ernest Gellner, Benedict Anderson, and John Breuilly. Gellner argues that 'nationalism as a phenomenon, not as a doctrine presented by nationalists, is inherent in a certain set of social conditions; and those conditions, it so happens, are the conditions of our time' (Gellner, 1993: 125). Gellner cites the Industrial Revolution, which transformed social organisation and required the homogenisation and bureaucratisation characteristic of modernity, as the primary catalyst for the emergence of nation-states in modern Europe. He traces the evolution from farming cultures to industrialised societies and argues that it was primarily under states attempting to facilitate successful capitalist industrial economies that nationalism could emerge. Modern states[5] required standardised systems of education in order to facilitate effective communication and trade over great areas and standardised educational systems provided the forum in which normalised behaviours and identities could be constructed and reinforced. In Gellner's view, it was this 'Enlightened' industrial modernity that created nationalism.

Benedict Anderson likewise links an important feature of modernity, the widespread dissemination of the written word, to the construction of 'imagined' communities. The emergence of print-capitalism in Europe, which witnessed the creation of new printing technologies concomitant with the growth of a bourgeois class of potential consumers, is linked to the creation of 'national print-languages' that privileged some vernaculars over others (Anderson, 1991; Bourdieu, 1993). The need to achieve

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[5] Gellner posits the modern state as a pre-requisite for nationalism as politically centralised units of power must already be taken for granted and normalised in order for nationalist movements to be deemed acceptable.

cost-effectiveness, through the mass-production of printed material using new printing technologies, precluded the production of written material in the multiple vernaculars of European languages. This process created increasingly dominant dialects of power, particularly because printed materials were most likely to be produced in the dialects of places that were already centres of commercial and political importance.

Anderson argues that these print-languages laid the foundation for national group consciousness in several ways. Firstly, print created 'reading' communities that, while they may not have understood each other's spoken dialects, were able to communicate with one another through written materials. This process served to form the embryo of the nation-state. Eisenstein likewise cites the printing press as a central agent of transformation in early modern Europe. She argues that the wide distribution of identical pieces of information was integral in establishing impersonal links between people, thereby creating new forms of identity that challenged the localised 'nexus of loyalties' (1998: 96). Secondly, print capitalism gave a new permanence to languages, which enabled emerging nations to characterise their languages as ancient and unchanging, endowing these languages with greater power and veracity as national symbols. Finally, the establishment of these print languages created 'languages-of-power [because] certain dialects inevitably were 'closer' to each print-language and dominated their final forms' (Anderson, 1991: 45). These dialects, with the spread of print capitalism, gradually gained dominance in oral speech and facilitated communication between members of an emerging group.

John Breuilly contradicts the sociological approach of Gellner (that nationalism was a response to rapidly changing social forms of organisations) and the continuism of Anthony Smith (1999) (that nations do overlap to some extent pre-existing ethnic groups) to highlight the centrality of politics in the construction of nations. Breuilly (1996) lays great emphasis on the importance of political 'entrepreneurs' with concrete political goals

to the creation of a nationalist rhetoric and the construction or 'imagining' of the nation. Unlike Smith, who argues that national institutions are indicators of national consciousness, Breuilly argues that it is through legal, political, and economic institutions that collective identity can actually develop. Identity outside 'those institutions which can bind together across wide social and geographical spaces…is necessarily fragmentary, discontinuous and elusive' (Breuilly, 1996: 15). Institutionalisation, which lies at the heart of this theorisation, is another primary characteristic of modernity

However, Breuilly (1996) also alludes to the 'modernity bias' in the study of nationalism by highlighting the difficulty of applying Gellner's arguments about the necessity of industrialisation to the post-colonial world. He asserts that nationalism has flourished in many societies that have yet to undergo a transformation to industrialism and that commercial agriculture, mass education and modern communications can cause many of the effects that Gellner attributes to industrialisation. Scholars in post-colonial nationalisms have responded to the limitations of these more Euro-centric theorisations of nationalism and opened up a discursive space in which to explore national movements that have emerged under drastically different circumstances and in varied forms.

1.4   Postcolonial Nationalisms

The traditional and pervasive understanding of nationalism as a result of 'Enlightened' industrial modernity has been particularly limited in its ability to explain the emergence of new nationalisms in the postcolonial era.[6] Chatterjee (1996) outlines how the industrial modernity that created nationalism in Europe was also the foundation for Europe's domination of the rest of world. As a result nationalism is seen as part of

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[6] 'Post-colonialism' and 'neo-colonialism' remain contested terms. Neocolonialists argue that the colonialist project continues under different guises, such as economic and cultural control, rather than explicit political domination. I use postcolonialism to refer to an historical period marked by the post-war collapse of European empires, rather than as an assertion that all colonial projects have ended.

that European domination - as a 'derivative discourse' that prevents authentic and autonomous development in new political communities. It is this assertion that underlies Chatterjee's central objection to Anderson's argument of 'imagined nations':

> If nationalisms in the rest of the world have to choose their imagined community from certain 'modular' forms already made available to them by Europe and the Americas, what do they have left to imagine? History, it would seem, has decreed that we in the postcolonial world shall only be perpetual consumers of modernity...even our imaginations must remain forever colonised...I object because I cannot reconcile it with the evidence of anti-colonial nationalism. The most powerful as well as the most creative results of the nationalist imagination in Asia and Africa are posited not on identity but rather on a difference with the 'modular' forms of the national society propagated by the modern west (1996: 216).

Chatterjee argues that the imaginative space that anti-colonial nations carve out lies not in the material or 'outside' domain of economics, science, and statecraft – an area in which 'the West had proved its superiority and the East had succumbed' (1996: 217). Rather, nationalism is created in the 'spiritual' or 'inner' domain where the fundamental markers of cultural identity reside. Chatterjee writes that the 'greater one's success in imitating Western skills in the material domain...the greater the need to preserve the distinctiveness of one's spiritual culture. This formula is, I think, a fundamental feature of anti-colonial nationalisms in Africa and Asia' (1996: 217). In this spiritual arena, Chatterjee asserts that anti-colonial nationalisms engage in nationalism's 'most powerful, creative and historically significant project: to fashion a 'modern' national culture that is nevertheless not Western. If the nation is an imagined community, then this is where it is brought into being' (1996: 217). I argue that nationalism is an adaptable political tool, as evidenced by postcolonial nationalisms throughout the world, that has played an important role in indigenous autonomy movements as well.

1.5   Indigenous Nationalisms[7]

Indigenous groups' desire to adopt a position of 'nations within nations' is particularly problematic for the dominant state, as nationalism lays claim to both land and power as fundamental collective rights. Yuval-Davis asserts 'that were [indigenous peoples'] claim on the country – in the form of land rights, for instance – taken seriously to full measure, this would totally conflict with the claim of the settler national collectivity for legitimacy' (2000: 76). As a result, the state has often tried to frame the needs of prior occupants as an issue of the protection of minority rights rather than as a problem of national rights.

Indigenous groups, however, continue to claim nation status as part of indigeneity. Indigenous peoples now assert themselves as '"prior nations" with historical rights to homelands and self-government which are different from other minorities' (Brantenberg & Minde, 1993: 5). For example, the construction of Greenlandic [Inuit] national identity was an integral part of the self-determination process, as 'during the long process of colonisation and the accompanying social and cultural changes, Greenland emerged as one country, Kalaallit Nunaat, "the land of the Greenlanders" (Dahl, 1988: 74). The creation of this collective was facilitated by a Greenlandic elite that claimed to speak for all Greenlandic people and the existence of this national 'we' further validated the struggle for autonomy. As in Nunavut, the Greenlanders used the familiar language of nationalism to press their case for self-determination, using European political models to fulfil their own ambitions (Dahl, 1988).

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[7] The concept of indigeneity is difficult to define and remains a contested term in the social sciences. It is problematic to delineate between 'postcolonial' nationalisms and 'indigenous' nationalisms as they share many characteristics. However, indigenous nationalisms generally occupy an ideological place of 'nations within' permanent states, while post-colonial nationalisms are seen to be a result of 'nations' temporarily subsumed within empires.

In adopting a rhetoric of nationalism, indigenous groups must negotiate creatively between the dichotomous Western perceptions of modernity and tradition. Often, indigenous people are mythologised as noble savages living in harmony with the environment, pursuing traditional lifestyles, and expressing no sense of collectivity beyond the 'traditional' and 'organic' local communities. If not seen as traditional, indigenous groups simply become 'impoverished white people' who are so assimilated into Western culture that little cultural uniqueness or group identity remains (Feinup-Riordan, 1991; Krech, 1999). Thus indigenous groups must maintain the sense of 'tradition' necessary for 'indigeneity,' while demonstrating sufficient modernity in order to participate in the political discourse of nationalism. Ingold highlights the difficulty of negotiating this dichotomy, arguing that indigenous peoples are forced to express their connection to the land 'in an idiom compatible with the dominant discourses of the state...that nevertheless systematically invert[s] their own understandings' (Ingold, 2000: 133). Nationalism is thus a political tool that can be both constraining and flexible. Regardless, the rhetoric of nationalism has too much political currency to be ignored.

I believe that indigenous nationalisms are often overlooked, due to the aforementioned 'modernity bias' in combination with the perception of indigenous peoples as either traditional or assimilated. I argue that a close examination of the characteristics and emergence of Inuit group identity reveals it is strongly national in character and that, like postcolonial nationalisms, an exploration of Inuit national rhetoric can expand our understandings of the form, consequences, and potential of nations and nationalism.

CHAPTER TWO: INUIT NATIONALISM

2.1   Introduction

Nationalism is a language of power and the declaration of 'nationhood' entitles a group to an authoritative vocabulary of identity, particularly in relationship to land. I argue that the Inuit struggle for autonomy, which saw its partial culmination in the establishment of Nunavut in 1999, contained all of the necessary characteristics of nationalism. I assert, after Gellner, that nationalism does beget nations and that the adoption of nationalist rhetoric by the Inuit political elite led to the construction of a new nationalised Inuit identity. This newly constructed 'imagined community' legitimised the struggle for autonomy and allowed for political claims to be made in an already familiar political idiom. I will explore the Inuit autonomy movement as a nationalistic one by first tracing the construction and emergence of the Inuit political identity articulated in the struggle for autonomy and then highlighting the nationalist characteristics of this identity.

2.2   Emergence of a Nation

The history of contact between the Canadian Inuit and Europeans is a long and complex one and regions of the Canadian Arctic were affected in different ways. Therefore, generalisations about one crucial aspect of identity formation, namely contact with the 'Other,' are problematic in that different groups' contact experiences varied greatly. Most authors (Mitchell, 1996; Poelzer, 1995) argue that the most significant period of 'contact' was the active extension of Canadian state institutions into the Arctic

during the twentieth century, a period that is concomitant with the construction and political usage of an Inuit national identity.

Until 1895, the Canadian state's interest in the Arctic was largely directed toward the extraction of resources and the assertion of sovereignty over a distant region, rather than toward the welfare of those who lived there. In 1895, the territory was divided into four areas (Ungava, Yukon, Mackenzie, Franklin), which represented 'the beginning, however half-hearted, of Canadian administration in the Arctic' (Francis in Mitchell, 1996: 207). Prior to contact with Europeans and Euro-Canadian bureaucratic structures, the basis of Inuit identity was the extended family unit and people were identified by the specific places in which they lived, a place-based identity that has since increased in both scale and abstraction. The creation of administrative districts, such as the ones established by the Canadian government, has been shown to establish 'pilgrimage networks' in which those living in a particular district are more likely to interact on an institutional level with those also living in their district (Anderson, 1991).[8] Thus, perhaps it is these early administrative districts that laid the foundation for abstract expressions of Inuit identity.

Marybelle Mitchell, in her work *From Talking Chiefs to a Native Corporate Elite: The Birth of Class and Nationalism among Canadian Inuit*, is one of the few authors to reconstruct the history of Inuit identity. Rather than focusing on education and administrative institutions, as does Anderson (1991), Mitchell traces the process of identity construction through the administrative-capitalist structures of the Arctic, such as the Eskimo Arctic Co-operative movement. Mitchell argues that the emergence of a sense of unity can be linked to the patterns of interaction created because of increased economic inter-dependence in a capitalist market.

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[8] Benedict Anderson (1991) traces clearly the impact of administrative districts and educational networks on the emergence of national identities in Batavia.

Mitchell also highlights the importance of these economic relationships in the creation of Inuit identity, arguing that the Inuit 'might not have thought of themselves as a unified population but Eskimos were treated as a distinct kind of people by outsiders who entered into economic relationships with them...Inuit were treated, and began to perceive themselves, as a unity distinct from "others"' (1996: 134). She posits that the birth of a pan-Arctic Inuit movement occurred at Frobisher Bay in 1963 at a conference of Arctic co-operative stores when for the first time Inuit from all over the Arctic saw themselves being treated as a collective. The 1960s also witnessed the increased sedentarization of the formerly nomadic Inuit people by the state, a process that caused the Inuit to interact more regularly with those outside of their own clan or kinship groups and reorganise and reinvent their societal patterns (Honigmann & Honigmann, 1965). Vallee (in Mitchell, 1996: 134) argues that in the late 1960s there was a 'trend towards the emergence of something which can be called an Eskimo social system in the Canadian Arctic, a social system which transcends local camps and communities and links widely separated people in a consciousness of kind.' Subsequently, the 1970s witnessed a flourishing of cultural associations, such as the Inuit Cultural Institute, which worked to record and publish legends and knowledge from elders in an attempt to preserve Inuit culture (Mitchell, 1996).

The establishment of the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada (ITC) in 1971, the organisation that negotiated the Nunavut settlement, was a turning point in Inuit politics. As in Greenland (Dahl, 1988), it was members of the younger generation, who had been educated in government schools and largely raised in towns and settlements, that took the political lead in presenting Inuit demands to a wider audience. This generation of political leaders also shared a sense of solidarity due to their standardised experiences in the state educational system. For example, Rosemarie Kuptana, one of the leaders within the land claims movement, stated that her colleagues in the ITC shared a bond due to

their educational experiences, a bond that facilitated a collective vision (in Devine, 1992).

As in Anderson's (1991) detailed description of the emergence of national identity in Batavia, a standardised educational system, such as the secondary residential school system imposed in Arctic Canada, can play an important role in both the emergence of an educated political elite and in the creation of a sense of solidarity between its members.

These members of the educated political elite play an important role in the selection of national symbols and the articulation of national identity. Thomsen (1988) argues that increased contact with the outside world seemed to increase individual's desire to identify with their own cultural background and advocate for their people. Briggs (1997) asserts that, while many Inuit in northern communities practised cultural traditions more or less unconsciously, cultural traditions emerged as national symbols during the land-claim process. The creation of shared cultural symbols and the construction of a collective identity were ways in which the desire for self-government could be articulated in the powerful and familiar idiom of nationalism.

In 1976, the Inuit Tapirisat submitted an agreement in principle to the government of Canada, suggesting that the Northwest Territories be divided into two territories. Mitchell asserts that this indicated the:

> transformation of an incipient nationalism into a more formalised movement [as] all of these claims necessitate the establishment of eligibility criteria, the definition of who is or is not Inuit, hence who is entitled to benefits...This has led to the phenomenon of Inuit carrying cards certifying that they are, indeed, Inuit (1996: 342).

As Breuilly argues, the establishment of institutions and institutionalised senses of national identity are one of the primary modes through which nationalism is expressed and reinforced. These institutions also played an important role in simultaneously uniting and responding to the diverse senses and ideas of identity that existed throughout the dispersed communities of Nunavut. In the newly formed territory of Nunavut, in which

status as an Inuk entails special benefits, the formalisation of members of the Inuit nation remains an important issue. It is largely an issue of self-identification in answer to the question 'Are you Inuk?' (Taylor, personal communication). However, this question of self-identity is intimately tied up in national identity, which sets the criteria of belonging.

There are many indications that Inuit national identity in Nunavut remains unconsolidated. The debate over electoral boundaries, particularly over whether to have larger districts with two representatives or smaller districts with one representative, highlights the ways in which the nation building project in Nunavut is incomplete. Most communities expressed a desire for their own Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) to represent their own interests. Some Inuit in Baker Lake told the Nunavut Electoral Boundaries Commission that they feel they are a 'separate and distinct people, being "inland" Inuit and that, therefore, they should have their own riding [electoral district], not one shared with another community' (Nunavut Electoral Boundaries Commission, 1997). Other communities argued that they have 'no connection, or commonality' with other nearby communities.

Another example of the unconsolidated nature of the nationalist project is that the presence of several dialects and orthographies remains a contentious issue within Nunavut, especially in regards to the visibility of the more minor dialects in print and their use in government.[9] The debate over orthography and dialect operates at two levels. Within Nunavut it is a largely a question of dialect usage, whereas between Nunavut and the rest of the Inuit community the proposed adoption of the more widely used Roman orthography, instead of the syllabic orthography used in Nunavut, is central to the debate. Language is a highly symbolic feature of any nation and the contentious nature of language in Nunavut implies differing interests over space and highlights the ongoing nature of the nation-building process.

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[9] See Harper (2000) for an overview of the Inuktitut orthography debate within Nunavut.

2.3   Characteristics of Inuit Nationalism

The language of nationalism is particularly familiar in Canada.[10] The national unity debates in Canada (Bashevkin, 1991; Laponce, 1996), as well as a strong rhetoric of multiculturalism (Kalin, 1996; Watts, 2000), have influenced the development of an Inuit political movement (Elliot, 1984).   The discussion surrounding devolution of power, particularly in the case of Aboriginal land-claims, has strongly internalised the idea of nations and national rights (Cassidy, 1993).   The Royal Commission's Report on Aboriginal People emphasises this in its conclusion:

> Self-government does not mean bringing Aboriginal nations into line with predetermined Canadian norms of how people should govern themselves. It is the reinstatement of a nation-to-nation relationship.   It is the entrenchment of the Aboriginal right of doing things differently within the boundaries of a flexible Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and international human rights standards (RCAPa, 1996: 665).

However, the Canadian experience of nationalism, particularly in relationship to Quebec, has caused the Inuit to articulate their own sense of nationalism in a slightly different way.

Rosemarie Kuptana, an Inuit political leader, asserts that the Inuit sense of nation differs from other nationalistic struggles for sovereignty.

> It is important to understand the different uses of the term "nation." Inuit of the circumpolar world regard themselves as a nation, as a people having a common language, values, traditions and kinship ties. Inuit within Canada also regard ourselves as a single nation of people that are united across internal boundaries in Canada…the word "nation" refers to our status as a people distinct from others in the world, having a common history, culture and a desire, really, to share a common future (Kuptana in Mitchell, 1996: 431).

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[10] See Brownsey and Howlett (2001) for an overview of the Canadian system of government, particularly in exploring tensions between the provincial governments, which retain significant autonomy, and the federal government.

Although Kuptana asserts that the Inuit understanding of the word 'nation' differs from a concept that implies sovereignty, the political struggle for self-determination included all of the fundamental characteristics of nationalism explored in Chapter One: ancient connections to a homeland, national narratives of unity and uniqueness, and the development of political, legal and economic institutions to protect and reflect group identity.

2.3.1   Homeland and Ancient Occupancy

The idea of a homeland was central to the struggle for self-determination and the concept of land rights was the fundamental and driving force behind the creation of Nunavut.   Homeland is an integral facet of nationalist projects and the concepts of nationhood and authority over land are inextricably linked. Dorais demonstrates the pervasiveness of this perspective:

> Most Canadian [Inuit] now consider that they constitute a specific nationality, within Canada…Naturally enough, as legitimate representatives of a specific nationality, the Inuit associations promote the establishment of political entities where the [Inuit] would form the majority of the population: a province called Nunavut (1988: 28).

The homeland is an integral part of ascendant national narratives as both a geographical testament to an ancient Inuit occupation of the land and as a space for the expression of a uniquely Inuit future.

Jose Kusugaq, another Inuit leader, articulates eloquently the sense of connectedness between the land and people. 'The Inuit have been, and the Inuit remain, the aboriginal people of Nunavut. We have lived in the Arctic for many thousands of years…We are part of the Arctic landscape and seascape and [they] are part of us' (Kusugak, 2000: 20). The Nunavut Tourism website further emphasises the centrality of land by linking it closely with history and tradition: 'when one speaks of traditional Inuit

culture, they are really speaking of *iliqqusiq* – the Inuit way…at the heart of *iliqqusiq* is the Inuit's intimate knowledge of, and respect for, the land and all that dwell on it.' In this statement, culture, land, history and tradition conflate to legitimate a claim to space on a multiplicity of levels.

The souvenir book 'Nunavut 99,' issued in celebration of the official establishment of the territory, provides an example of the construction of a national history – a history that 'inevitably' led toward the attainment of self-determination. In particular, the chapters discussing the ancient history of the region illustrate the way in which Nunavut, a newly chosen name for a new political territory, is projected onto the past as a kind of perennial geographic space. In covering the physical geography of the region, the place name Nunavut is used in discussion about the distant glacial period of the region, and periods occupancy by other peoples up until the 'ancestral Inuit came to Nunavut from another homeland' (Soublière and Coleman, 1999: 13). Thus the homeland existed before the 'family' as a kind of geographic destiny waiting to be fulfilled.

2.3.2 *Distinctiveness, Unity, and National Narratives*

Information published by Inuit organisations, both in print and on the web, provide highly useful auto-ethnographic statements that express the national story in a clear and uncomplicated way. The Pauktuutit (the Inuit Women's Organisation) web site contains several such clear statements. Under the section 'Who are Inuit?' they state that Inuit are a 'distinct and unique people…[who] speak in one tongue…[with] traditions and values that are passed down generation after generation…[who] have always governed [them]selves.' The national story must be clear and triumphant and leaves little room for complexities and nuances. One such clear statement (that Inuit speak in 'one tongue') highlights the role of language as a powerful tool of solidarity and masks the problematic

nature of language in Nunavut. For example, the sheer variety of Inuktitut dialects across thousands of miles has made communication between different Inuit groups difficult. Former Tunngavik president Jose Kusugak commented, 'When we have these Inuit Circumpolar Conferences, we have like six different interpreters for one language – Inuktitut. I think soon, we will have to consider developing a Queen's Inuktitut – one dialect for the working language' (in Mitchell, 1996: 419). Thus, these national narratives of belonging serve to project a surface cohesion of national unity upon the complexities of everyday life.

Struggle and the idea that some sacrificed themselves for the collective in the negotiations for Nunavut are both highly present in narratives of Inuit identity. Negotiating the land claim required the negotiators to spend long periods of time away from home, facing discrimination and hostile governments in the South. Alcohol abuse, burn-out, and family break-ups were serious problems for many involved in negotiating and bridging two cultures. John Amagoalik wrote, in *Nunavut 99,* that 'the weight of responsibility and the amount of effort it took to make progress took its toll on Inuit leaders...to all those who sacrificed for the benefit of future generations, your loneliness and struggle will not go unrecognised' (in Soublière and Coleman, 1999: 29). In this sense, the suffering of past generations is seen as an abstract sacrifice for future generations and creates a national narrative that connects the collective through time as well as space.

2.3.3   Institutions

The establishment of national institutions was also an integral part of the land claim project. Chief Justice Berger, an influential advocate for Canadian native rights, stated:

> If...we try to force Native development into moulds that we have cast, the
> whole process will end in failure...Native peoples must have distinct

social, economic and political institutions. At the same time, they must have access to the social, economic and political institutions of the dominant society...What Native peoples in Canada are asking for is the right to their own institutions (in Elliot, 1984: 241).

Much of the call for self-government was rooted in the idea that the Inuit identity was challenged and subverted by their participation in essentially foreign governance structures. The existence of governmental departments like 'Department of Culture, Language, Elders and Youth' reflects the institutionalisation of identity that Smith (1999) highlights as a characteristic of nationalism. The creation of these institutions is a forum in which the nation-building project can be carried out (Breuilly, 1996).

The Inuit autonomy movement adopted and internalised the rhetoric of nationalism, particularly in the discourses of land, tradition, and institution-building. Nations are, as the brief history of the emergence of a collective Inuit identity revealed, continuously in a process of construction. The boundaries are being drawn constantly and reinforced, a practice intimately related to the control of the behaviour of members of the nation. In this exercise of control, the roles of men and women, symbolically and practically, are highly implicated. Thus, gender is at the heart of the nation-building project and deeply relevant to construction of the political institutions through which national identity is expressed, as will be explored theoretically in Chapter Three. The 1997 debate over whether or not to ensure gender parity in the territorial assembly, a dialogue which will be examined in Chapter Four, highlights the central role of gender in both the national *home*land and in the 'legislative house.'

CHAPTER 3: GENDER AND NATION

3.1   Introduction

Nation and gender, although gaining legitimacy through apparent naturalness and permanence, are both constantly reworked products of collective and institutional power. Gender and nation are vital categories that 'speak to the conflicted urges of the human community. For both…help construct a fiction of "innateness" [even as their] fragile, endangered status is evidenced in the fierceness with which they are defended' (Mayer, 2000: 2). Gender is not only similar in nature to 'nation,' but also deeply important to nationalist discourse, a relationship I will explore in this chapter. First, I will present theorisations of gender, focusing upon the role of repeated actions and institutions in creating gendered identities and relationships. Secondly, I will illustrate how the nation is itself a gendered institution that enforces gender relationships through internal suppression of difference and through gendered symbolism. Thirdly, I will demonstrate the way in which gender is implicated in the governmental institutions through which national identity is expressed, particularly in understandings of the public and private spheres and the concept of universal citizenship. Finally, I will explore the influence of gendered nationalist rhetoric in the postcolonial world and argue that the study of gender is a crucial way in which the unitary politics of the nation-state can be opened to a heterogeneity of experience.

3.2   Gender: Power and Institutions

Gender, like nation, is a category that gains discursive power through its seeming naturalness and inevitability. The debate over gender as a biological or sociological

category has continued for over much of the past century and has culminated in several different theories.[11] Overall, however, a consensus has been reached that gender is not only determined by biology and that understandings of gender vary cross-culturally. Gender is, fundamentally, the cultural elaboration by different societies of the biological differences between the sexes (Connell, 1987; Kimmel, 2000; Okin, 1998; Yuval-Davis, 2000), a difference that is created and reinforced through the daily repetition of certain acts and performances, or 'performativity' (Butler, 1990). However, gender is not simply a characteristic possessed and expressed by individuals – it is also a 'mode of discourse which relates to groups of subjects whose social roles are defined by their sexual/biological difference as opposed to their economic positions or their membership in ethnic or racial collectivities' (Yuval-Davis, 2000:9).

Gender is also a relationship of power that is perpetually constituted and exercised through societal interactions. Kimmell (2000) argues that gender difference is the *product* of differentiated power relationships within societies, not simply an expression of those power relationships. These power relationships between groups of subjects and the construction of masculinities and femininities are 'significant not only because they locate and identify male and female persons, but because they give powers to act in various political contexts' (Radcliffe, 1993: 200). However, the contexts in which masculine and feminine persons are enabled to or restrained from acting are also gendered settings with inherent hierarchies of power concealed by the perceived neutrality of institutions.

The apparent neutrality of social institutions succeeds in masking their constructed nature and internal power structures. Social institutions, like the nation, are often built by the powerful to create spaces in which the power relationships that benefit them are reproduced (Breuilly, 1996; Kimmel, 2000; Parker et al, 1992; Yuval-Davis,

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[11] See Connell (1987) for a detailed history of the field of gender studies.

2000). The ease with which these dominant groups subsequently occupy and act within these institutions further testifies to their neutral structure. Within these 'neutral' institutions, gender difference is perceived to be a difference between gendered individuals, not a distinction that is created, highlighted and reinforced by the institution itself. Kimmel, however, sums up the arguments of many in arguing that 'the social institutions of our world…are gendered institutions, sites where the dominant definitions are reinforced and reproduced, and where "deviants" are disciplined. We become gendered selves in a gendered society' (2000:16). I argue that the nation and the public sphere of political decision-making can be understood as gendered institutions in which gender roles and relationships are contested and enforced.

3.3 Internal Hegemony[12] and Gendered Imaginings in Nation-Building Projects

The nation, a geographical expression of unity, necessarily establishes, exalts and reinforces certain national acceptable and commendable behaviours (Gellner, 1993; Mayer, 2000; Parker et al, 1992; Smith, 1999; Yuval-Davis, 2000). Some theorists, drawing upon Durkheim, argue that controlling the behaviour of members of a collective is one of the fundamental ways of marking boundaries (Sarup, 1996). The construction of a modern unified nation requires the suppression of internal differences and in this way, nationalism is often the 'exercise of internal hegemony' (Mayer, 2000: 1; Morley, 2000).

The affirmation of unity and the concept that members of the nation are of the same kind, with shared characteristics like those within one family, are central features of modern nationalism (Gellner, 1993; Johansen in Morley, 2000: 31; Smith, 1999; Yuval-Davis, 2000). Ignatieff eloquently captures this yearning for unity, writing that

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[12] Dybbroe (1996: 43) provides a succinct definition of hegemony as a 'constraint of the imagination mediated through lived experience and the institutional distribution of power and dominance.'

nationalism can be understood as 'the dream that a whole nation could be like a congregation; singing the same hymns, listening to the same gospel, sharing the same emotions, linked not only to each other, but to the dead buried beneath their feet' (in Morley, 2000: 213). Nationalism is a constructed narrative that tells a story of belonging and thus necessarily defines and controls who belongs and how.

Contrary to the nationalist rhetoric of universality, egalitarianism and unity, access to power within the nation remains highly differentiated (Mayer, 2000; Yuval-Davis, 2000). Nations are often built to serve the needs and aspirations of the elite group that created them (Anderson, 1991; Connell, 1987; Hobsbawm, 1983), an elite that has, historically, been largely male. The nation-building project is thus a masculine activity and the nation becomes a fraternity – something that exists between brothers (Anderson, 1991; Mayer, 2000; Parker et al, 1992). Perhaps the masculine authority encoded in the institution of nationalism is a product of the historical dominance of men in European nationalisms from which emerging nationalisms, arguably, take their form. In this way, nationalist movements have often emerged out of men's rather than women's experiences, springing from 'masculinized memory, masculinized humiliation and masculinized hope' (Enloe in Walby, 1996: 241).

The masculine authority in nation-building is deeply intertwined with and maintained by the gendered symbolisation that runs throughout nationalist rhetoric. Within the nation, men and women are assigned different national roles. Often, women 'rather than being seen as the symbols of change...are constructed in the role of the "carriers of tradition"'(Yuval-Davis, 2000: 61) responsible for the physical and cultural reproduction of the nation rather than its imagination or defence (Mostov, 2000). Women become 'symbolic border guards' of culture (Anderson, 1991) within the home while men tend to the nation in the public sphere. Even the space of the nation is gendered, in that nations are often symbolised as feminine entities in need of protection

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by nationalist males (Mayer, 2000; Mostov, 2000). If space gains its significance from the patterns and content of human interactions and relationships within it (Massey, 1994; Lefebvre, 1991) and the most highly visible form of activity within the nation is the political activity of men, the space of the nation will be perceived as a masculine realm (Dahlstrom, 1996).

The role of gender in nationalist discourse is particularly clear through the lens of the national '*home*land.' The nation, in almost all its projections, is conceptualised as a home, a territory in which the national 'family' can enjoy freedom and strengthen group identity and belonging. McLintock (in Morley, 2000: 108) notes that the term nation derives from natio (to be born) and highlights the gendered nature of nationalist speech, i.e. motherlands, fatherlands, brothers and sisters. These images of the nation as home draw upon an 18th century bourgeois domesticity in which the home symbolises security, equality, and communion (Morley, 2000).

However, the home as a centre of power relationships and potential inequalities rarely figures into the idealised imaginings of the nation. Sibley (in Morley, 2000: 56) argues that 'what is missing from the "house as haven" thesis is a recognition of the …tensions surrounding the use of domestic space which have become part of the problem of domination within families.' The idea that both homes and nations are places in which all parties enjoy equality and safety masks the internal divisions and power hierarchies of both spaces. Yuval-Davis (2000) argues that the home, like the nation, becomes the ideological site in which gender relations, imagined as crucial and fundamental essences of the collective itself, are reproduced and transmitted to future generations.

The veneration of the 'home' in nationalist rhetoric and the symbolic roles of women within it also may be a foundation of power for women within national movements. For example, Connie DeVall, a First Nation leader in Canada, argues:

> Our purpose in life, as women, is to insure our families to become strong
> and there is unity in our homes, extended families, communities, and our

Nations...Unity among Aboriginal leaders across Canada is of priority. All Aboriginal organisations and their political leaders must work together (1993: 167).

In this quotation, the power of women is rooted in the home, but expands to the national level. Again, the nation as an extension of home in some ways may strongly locate and affirm the centrality of women to the nation-building project. However, in reaffirming the home as the centre of female strength, women further distance themselves from the public sphere – a space of power that is integral to modern politics.

3.4 Public and Private Spheres[13]

The public/private divide powerfully characterises modern politics. The foundations of this divide can be traced to some of the early political theorists who contrasted the particularity and subjectivity of power relations within the home to the impartial reason of the state. Hegel and Rousseau both used contrasts between men and women in order to elucidate the difference between the public political world and the private domestic world. Locke actually *defines* political power by contrasting it with power relationships within the household (Okin, 1998). Rousseau also delineated between the rarefied and rational sphere of the state and the impetuous and unpredictable state of nature with which women, as biological reproducers, were and are most closely identified (Frazer, 1998). Thus, the idea of the public sphere is actually predicated upon a contrast with the privacy of the domestic sphere (Phillips, 1998: 6). In these divisions, men are presumed to be responsible for the public spheres of economic and political life, while women are occupied with the private sphere concerns of domesticity and

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[13] See Calhoun (1993) for a succinct summary of Habermas' influential work on the public and private spheres. Habermas explores and also (to the detriment of his argument) reinforces the conceptualisation of the home as an unproblematic private sphere from which individuals could emerge and express private concerns and opinions as part of a critical-rational public discourse.

reproduction (Okin, 1998). Within this political paradigm women's issues occupy an ambiguous place, as they generally refer to public concerns that encroach on the private sphere of social life, especially those concerns linked with children and caring (Sapiro, 1998).

Thus, feminist theorists argue that the public/private divide not only excludes women, but also women's interests, from the public sphere. The construction of a nation takes place primarily in the public sphere and the positioning of women outside this public domain often has resulted in their exclusion from participation in nation-building and formal politics (Okin, 1998; Pateman, 1989; Phillips, 1998; Yuval-Davis, 2000). As a political institution, the power of the public/private divide lies in its power to define the domain and idiom in which issues are to be discussed, a power that deeply influences perceptions of who can participate and how (Connell, 1987; Phillips, 1998).

The glorification of domesticity in nationalist rhetoric and the association of women with the private sphere can restrict the mobility necessary for political participation (Frazer, 1998). Cynthia Enloe argues that in 'many societies being feminine has been defined as sticking close to home – masculinity, by contrast, has been the passport for travel…A principal difference between men and women in countless societies has been the license to travel away from a place thought of as "home"' (in Morley, 2000: 68). Often, women's political activity is more local and less nationalist than that of men and women are more likely to be found in local rather than national governments (Franberg, 1996; Walby, 1996). The public sphere, in which national politics is played out, entails a geography of power in which men are often the primary occupants and participants (Ghani in Morley, 2000: 68, Wolf in Morley, 2000: 67; Young, 1998).

Another crucial foundation of modern democratic politics is the idea of universal citizenship and its ability to ensure equality and fairness in access and representation.

However, Pateman (1989) argues that, even in societies in which citizenship has been universalised and the traditional idea of the 'patriarchy' subsumed under a rhetoric of democratic involvement, the power of men over women remains. In the patriarchy the father ruled over other men *and* the women but in the fraternity the 'men get the right to rule over their women in the private domestic sphere, but agree on a contract of a social order of equality among themselves within the public, political sphere' (in Yuval- Davis, 2000: 7).

The discourse of universality, Pateman argues, requires the suppression of experience and difference from public discourse in the name of objectivity, a practice that reinforces the privileges of the already dominant groups. Iris Marion Young (1998: 401) argues that the idea of citizenship and democracy 'transcend[ing] particularity and difference' and the myth of institutional neutrality further reinforces the expectation that good citizens set aside their own perspectives and concerns. Under a veil of neutrality and objectivity, the expression of specific interests, such as women's interest, is seen to be undemocratic, reactionary, or ill suited to the public political sphere. Morley (2000: 124) argues that the 'difficulty with the conventional view of citizenship is that the idea of the "same for all" is often translated, in practice, into the requirement that all citizens should be the same.' In this way, citizenship, as a symbol of political belonging, requires the kind of homogeneity and surface unity that also characterises national membership.

However, Yuval-Davis (2000) urges caution when relating feminist literature on the public/private divide to non-western institutions. Likewise, it is important to note that the rhetoric of nationalism is highly fluid and deeply dependent upon economic, class, and political structures that vary both over time and space (Yuval-Davis, 2000). Connell (1987) argues that ideologies, such as nationalism, need to be understood as practices that occur in and adapt to different contexts. However, Connell also notes an increasing standardisation of gender roles due, partially, to the spread of capitalism and the

increasing cultural prestige of the 'Western' family. Continuing with my argument that nationalism is a gendered institution that necessarily carries with it certain hierarchies and relationships of power, I assert that nationalism influences perceptions and relations of gender in the postcolonial societies that use nationalism to articulate their sense of identity and assert their political goals.

3.5   Gender and Postcolonial Nationalisms[14]

The positioning of women in relationship to the national home is particularly problematic in postcolonial nationalisms. Chatterjee (1996: 220) highlights this challenging positioning in his discussion of Bengali nationalism:

> the domain of the family and the position of women underwent considerable change in the world of the nationalist middle class. It was undoubtedly a new patriarchy that was brought into existence, different from the 'traditional' order but also explicitly claiming to be different from the 'Western' family. The 'new woman' was to be modern, but she would also have to display the signs of national tradition and therefore would be essentially different from the 'Western' woman.

Thus, gender in postcolonial/anticolonial nationalisms required a negotiation not only with existing gender roles but with modernity as well. Further, in relationship to the imperial state, the colonised were often seen as effeminate and an essential aspect of many postcolonial nationalisms has been an emphasis on strength and masculinity. In these senses of nationalism, the concerns of women are often subsumed into the national rhetoric of unity and feminine characteristics are excluded from the public national discourse (Parker et al, 1992). Lewis (2000: 277) in his study of nationalism and

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[14] 'Internal colonialism,' or the assertion that state domination of indigenous groups can be understood as a colonial, imperialist project, remains a problematic concept. By addressing postcolonial and indigenous nationalisms in the same section, I am simply grouping both nationalisms as 'non-traditional' or 'non-western' nationalisms, rather than asserting that both are products of similar colonial experience.

Caribbean masculinity, writes 'Caribbean men seemed to have been so caught up with defining their [nationalistic] project in accordance with the examples set down by European men, that they left themselves little room for creative alternatives,' a process that has delayed the improvement of women's lives and political participation.

The emergence of powerfully masculinised nationalist projects is also present in indigenous national movements. Radcliffe and Laurie (2001), in their study of nationalism, gender and development amongst the indigenous people of the Andes, argue that gender hierarchies and 'institutionalised masculinities' in indigenous movements are doubly masked because the 'feminisation of indigenous men vis a vis mestizo white men [makes] indigenous men's role in reproducing indigenous gender hierarchies invisible' (Laurie and Radcliffe, 2001: 2). These hierarchies of gender and nation are also doubly difficult for female indigenous leaders to navigate as they are caught between two potential tensions: as minorities in a dominant society and as women in a masculine-dominated indigenous movement. Michele Rouleau, of the Quebec native Women's Association speaks eloquently to this point in the Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples:

> We must never stop demonstrating forcefully our solidarity with the major
> Aboriginal demands, which, fundamentally, concern the right to life and to
> dignity. But at the same time, we must not confuse solidarity with a false
> superficial unanimity that excludes thinking and debate. On the contrary,
> it is important to stimulate thinking and discussion if we, as women and
> men on an equal footing, are to succeed in defining our future together
> (RCAPb, 1996: 71).

To negotiate these complicated hierarchies, indigenous female leaders often highlight the feminine in indigenous symbolism to validate themselves within indigenous organisations and create a place in the movement for women that is both 'traditional' and influential.

Perhaps indigenous women find this traditional and influential place by bringing the concerns of the 'home' or private sphere, with which they are actively identified, to the public sphere. This idea reverberates in many political statements by First Nation leaders in Canada. For example, Cindy Polchies, a First Nation leader, writes that the 'native women of Canada in their role as the guardians of our nation, the grandmothers and mother's of her nation's people, can no longer be minimised by any government, Canadian, Aboriginal or otherwise' (1993: 160). In this way, Polchies asserts the centrality of women to the nation-building project by drawing upon the gendered nature of nationalist discourse itself. Brantenberg and Minde (1993), speaking generally about the 'indigenous movement,' argue that women have had a significant role in the indigenous movement, sometimes organising themselves in opposition to the established indigenous male leaders. They have 'presented new and alternative perspectives...a view from the very centre of indigenous *home*lands – from communities and families where indigenous problems like health, discrimination, alienation and domestic violence are real and tangible' (Brantenberg and Minde, 1993: 7, emphasis added). Thus, the incorporation of gendered rhetoric in national projects can both inhibit and enable the participation of women in the public national sphere.

3.6   Why Gender?

Nationalism and national institutions are built upon and evoke gender difference, yet speak a language of unity and universality that requires an effacement of diversity. A politics based upon a rhetoric of universally shared identity can easily repress the plurality and multiplicity that generates political action and open debate. Political theorist Hannah Arendt, in expressing her hostility to the nation-state, argues that the suppression of plurality and multiplicity within states will result in the 'abolition of the

public realm itself…[and the]…arbitrary domination of all others…' (in Honig 1992: 227). So it is the 'self's agonistic ill-fittedness,' or the recognition of individual and group difference within collectives, that is the source of 'power…from which to generate (alternative) performativities' (Honig, 1992: 27). In this fashion, the acknowledgement of difference within a nation, rather than weakening it, can be a forum in which political energy and vigour are created. Gender is one such perspective from which the unitary politics of the nation state can be evaluated critically, perhaps facilitating an incorporation of difference in the politics of the nation-state.

CHAPTER 4: NATION, GENDER AND PARTICIPATION IN NUNAVUT: THE 1997 GENDER PARITY VOTE

4.1   Introduction

The 1997 Nunavut gender parity debate was a forum in which national identity and gender relationships were contested. I propose to explore the debate sparked by the proposal as part of a nation building project in which gender is implicated. First, through a general review of literature addressing gender amongst indigenous peoples in the circumpolar north, I will present views of 'traditional' gender relations and also create a picture of how gender is talked about and studied by scholars working in the North. Secondly, I will explore the present political participation of Inuit women in Nunavut. Thirdly, the dialogue surrounding the gender parity vote, particularly as took place in the print media, will be examined. I argue that the themes central to the gender parity debate are also the ones fundamental to nationalism: tradition, unity, national homelands, and the assertion of the universality and neutrality of institutions through which national identity is expressed.

4.2   'Traditional' Gender Relationships in the North: Complementarity, Work, and Identity

Ethnographic analyses of indigenous northerners' gender relations emphasize the complementary division of labour between men and women in traditional activities, such as hunting, and the mutual awareness and appreciation of this interdependent relationship (Bodenhorn, 1990; Guemple, 1986; Reimer, 1996; Seurujarvi-Kari, 1996). Dorais (1988:25) argues that 'contrary to the Europeans, the Arctic natives did not postulate any intrinsic superiority of humans over animals, of men over women, or of their own race

over all other populations.' Saladin d'Anglure (1994) further argues that the flexibility of gender in some northern communities requires an expansion of Western dichotomous understandings of gender. Perhaps social scientists working in the North frequently project their own Western understandings of gender and look mistakenly for binary understandings of gender and inequality within Inuit society. My goal here, however, is not to prove whether or not 'traditional' roles were equal or unequal, but rather to provide necessary background information and to explore scholarly literature as a source of authoritative knowledge that may influence native peoples' conceptualisations of their own past.

Work is central to understandings of gender amongst the indigenous peoples of the circumpolar north, supporting Butler's (1990) concept of gender as a construction constantly recreated through repeated actions. Guemple (1986) discusses the ways in which Inuit understandings of gender, particularly on Belcher Island, Quebec, are rooted in the concept of work and the ability to engage in work appropriate to one's gender. Guemple (1986) argues that this division of labour by gender was not related to a differentiation in skill, but, rather, was maintained solely by convention. In this case, traditional gender divisions were ways of transmitting and maintaining the normative behaviours necessary for the continued functioning of the group.

Gendered types of work are also closely associated to certain environments: men are more closely associated with the outdoors world of hunting while women are linked strongly with the home. These traditional domains seem to translate into the present day. For example, women in contemporary Yup'ik society have superior power, authority and status in the domestic sphere, while men, as authorities of the world outside the home, appear to have greater access to the political sphere, particularly in terms of group decisions. Much of the power of indigenous women in influencing political decisions

seems to be in their ability to persuade male decision-makers informally (Ackerman, 1990; Dybbroe, 1988).

It is also important to highlight that the types of work in which men and women can engage have changed, as have relationships between the genders (Reimer, 1996). Being a 'real' indigenous person involves engagement in activities that are 'traditional,' especially subsistence activities. In her study of Yup'ik women in the community of Gambell on St. Lawrence Island, Alaska, Zane-Jolles (1997) notes that the rhetoric of tradition, which is central to Yup'ik community identity, deeply influences the value assigned to work activities and, by corollary, the respect accorded to workers. Although wage work within the community is an essential aspect of women's lives, involvement in traditional activities appropriate to women is more instrumental to Yup'ik identity and entails greater prestige within the community.

While asserting that women are generally more involved in the 'modern' sector of wage work than men, Condon and Stern argue that women's traditional roles within the home, such as caring for children and maintaining the household, have remained more constant than the roles of males.[15] They assert that this greater activity stability, along with the glorification of the home as the hearth of Inuit culture, has created a more secure locus of identity for women, a place in which they can still be 'real.' As a result, Condon and Stern believe that women are surer in their identity as Inuit than young Inuit males, who have fewer opportunities to participate in traditional male activities.

Dahl (1997: 46) highlights this insecure identity as one of the reasons that men may have rejected the gender parity vote.[16] He argues that the traditional male hunter was the one who went out into the world and returned:

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[15] I argue that Condon and Stern's assertion as the home as a stable and secure place can perhaps be challenged in light of the changing nature of the home and the family, such as the rapid increase in single-parent families or the high incidence of domestic abuse.
[16] See p. 52 for details

Not only with food but with experiences, information and new knowledge about other people and about nature. It is man who passes on his knowledge – the woman listens. In many ways the last decades have witnessed a break in this monopoly. Women have become wage earners; many have a good education; and it is now often men who are unemployed and must stay home...It can be assumed that many men perhaps came to consider the proposal to be the essence of the process that has deprived them of their role as provider.

Thus, the domains of Inuit work and authority, irrespective of their ongoing transformation, remain central to understandings of appropriate gender relationships.

However, Bodenhorn (1990) seeks to open up these definitions of separate work and separate domains by expanding understandings of what it means to partake in an activity. Exploring the inter-related roles of men and women in the Iñupiat whale hunt on the Alaskan North Slope, Bodenhorn argues that hunting is not only a male activity. Rather it is a process that is carried out on many different levels by the entire community, both men and women. Bodenhorn seeks to challenge the idea that separation of work is commensurate with inequality and asserts that, although the work remains gendered, equal prestige is assigned to the contributions of all participants. Further, Bodenhorn states that, due to the flexibility required to survive in a hostile environment, relationships of gender remain more flexible than in Western society. She argues:

> Today a woman with specialist political knowledge may be sent to the legislature to represent Iñupiaq interests. The principle that knowledge should be shared and put to community use, regardless of whose knowledge it is, has meant that women assume positions of responsibility much more easily on the North Slope than in Cambridge, England (1990: 68).

I believe that this argument about a flexible approach to knowledge facilitating the involvement of women in politics leaves unexplored the question of how and where knowledge is gained. I question whether or not there is differentiated access to places in which 'specialist political knowledge' is acquired and exercised. Further, I argue that the

translation of traditional gendered domains of control into present-day political institutions must be examined.

4.3 Political Participation of Women in Nunavut: Changing Domains and Geographies of Power

The complementary relationship described above is founded upon understandings of work and traditional activities that have changed drastically over the past century (Mitchell, 1996) - changes that have influenced highly the positioning of Inuit women in the political realm today (Thomsen, 1988; Reimer, 1996). Initially, participation in formal leadership was a matter of facility - Inuit men were more prepared to gain employment and political office due to their collaboration with Europeans in the whaling industry (Reimer, 1996).

However, Euro-Canadian perceptions of gender also greatly affected the emerging power structures in Inuit society (Reimer, 1996). Formal leadership was first introduced to men by the Canadian government and local government officials favoured the participation of men in their bureaucratic structures and decision-making processes. The Euro-Canadian traders, merchants, missionaries and government authorities who controlled the North established structures and organised activities according to Euro-Canadian ideas of male and female roles. Thus, in part, the 'exclusion of Inuit women is...a result of a foreign structure, built up over many years and imposed on them by Euro-Canadians' (Thomsen, 1988: 86). Simona Arnatsiaq-Barnes, the Economic Development Officer of Pauktuutit, argues:

> most government economic development programs and strategies are
> designed to assist those few individuals who can manoeuvre the system;
> they are not designed with community development in mind...Moreover,
> they are not designed with women in mind (RCAPb, 1996: 91).

However, Reimer (1996) also asserts that, while male dominance in the political realm can be seen as a result of Euro-Canadian influence on leadership and governance structures, it is also consistent with the ultimate male authority in traditional Inuit society.

The bureaucratisation and professionalisation of decision-making deeply impacted women's participation in leadership. The idea that official decision-making was a foreign process requiring Western expertise inhibited the involvement of women, who felt that their experiences and knowledges were not applicable to the political process. Thomsen (1988: 86) argues that when Inuit organisations became bureaucratic and professional and expanded to national and international scales they came to involve a hierarchy that was 'alienating to everybody, but in particular to the women who were brought up not to be competitive.' The rhetoric of decision-making in Inuit society, however, continues to emphasise the importance of consensuality as part of the Inuit tradition. Dacks (in Thomsen, 1988) notes that a need for unity casts aboriginal politics as a consensual project that includes all adult members of a given group. Consequently, decisions are often viewed as mutual agreements that express the best interest of the group rather than the imposition of will of the most powerful party. This symbolic consensuality could further mask hierarchies of power in the decision making process and present Inuit politics as a project in which all, regardless of difference, participate equally.

Irrespective of the ongoing transformation of men's and women's roles, the traditional dichotomies between the camp and the land and their attending divisions of labour seem to have translated into the public political sphere, according to some 'predetermined division of labour' (Thomsen, 1988: 87). As the symbolic and real power of women is concentrated in the spheres of domesticity, women tend to be more active within the communities in which they make their homes, drawing upon an intimate knowledge of community problems to address 'domestic' issues, such as housing and

health. In this way, by building upon the 'traditional' sphere of influence within the home and local community Inuit women may be able to make a place for themselves in the modern political processes of the new territorial government. However, much of this potential relies upon how these new public spheres of power, such as the legislature, come to be symbolised and understood. As of now, the public sphere of territorial government in Nunavut remains a male domain (Thomsen, 1988), a dominance that is noteworthy light of the active political participation of women at both the local and international levels.

The power and participation of Inuit women varies according to scale, particularly between the Nunavut 'homeland' and the outside world. This is evidenced by the relatively high number of women leaders within pan-Inuit international organisations and the low level of female MLAs (Members of the Legislative Assembly) in the Nunavut Assembly. Thomsen (1988) cites the considerable and highly visible involvement of Inuit women in pan-Inuit organisations. Women such as Nellie Cournoyea, Rosemarie Kuptana, and Mary Simon have all served at high levels in the Inuit Circumpolar Conference, Pauktuutit, and the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada. However, on the territorial level, participation remains low. In the Government of the Northwest Territories at the time of the parity vote only 2 out of twenty four seats in the legislative assembly were held by women. Presently, in the Nunavut territorial government, only two of nineteen MLAs are female. The Nunavut Implementation Commission (1995:A-8.4) argues that 'the reason why women are less politically active at the territorial level than at the municipal level could be that the systemic barriers to participation in politics are weaker in women's home communities than they are at the territorial level.' However, the authority of males in the territorial government of Nunavut perhaps also alludes to the dominance of males in 'imagining' the Inuit nation.

The movement to create Nunavut, like other national movements, greatly emphasised the right to exercise authority over the land, a traditionally male domain of activity (Cassidy, 1993). The economic and political emphasis on renewable and non-renewable resources (Thomsen, 1988) has positioned masculine concerns at the centre of nation-building and political structures within Nunavut. The centrality of the image of the hunter (Dybbroe, 1988; Thomsen, 1988) and the subsequent economic and cultural focus on the continuation of subsistence practices has placed women in a situation where, as primary wage earners (often in the 'modern' service sector), their activities are no longer viewed as 'traditional' and are, perhaps, less valued (Nuttall, 1998; Zane-Jolles, 1997).

Further, the emphasis on women as keepers of the home and 'symbolic border guards' of culture has placed domesticity at the centre of Inuit womanhood, creating another level in which the mobility of political office is problematic. Nancy Karetak-Lindell, a Nunavut MP, described the difficulty of breaking into higher-level politics.

> I ran for KIA [Kivalliq Inuit Association] and lost by 63 votes because I knew there were some men out there who absolutely did not want to see a woman in the KIA presidency. I proved that by running the next time for secretary-treasurer and I won that overwhelmingly because there were some people in the community who felt that secretary-treasurer position was a woman's job, but not the presidency (in Nunatsiaq News, 9 November 2001).

Karetak-Lindell further cites the criticism faced by women who travel away from home for their jobs as a disincentive for women to participate in politics. As Enloe (1989) stated, masculinity is often a 'passport to travel' - an idea that appears to be equally pertinent in the case of Nunavut. Thus, there is a geography of gender and power within Inuit politics, in which women, while active on the local and international scales, are less likely to play a political role in the 'homeland' government - the territorial government of Nunavut.

However, the need to include Inuit women figures prominently into Inuit international politics. Nuttall cites a speech given by the former president of the Inuit Circumpolar Conference, Caleb Pungowiyi, that highlights the need to reincorporate women into new structures of power, which have supplanted other more 'traditional' forms of decision-making.

> Much of the fabric of our communities and our economies is due to the strength and talents of our women. This is something that we men do not openly acknowledge...I believe we should once again bring elder women[17] with us to meetings of the International Whaling Commission, to the meetings of the Convention on International Trade of Endangered species and to the IUCN...In particular we should let our elder women once again tell the story of what life was like, what life can be like and what it still continues to be like in many of our communities (Pungowiyi in Nuttall, 1998: 71).

This speech attempts to link the strength of the women in their own communities to the capability to participate in politics at the territorial and international levels.

The argument that the largely male government cannot and does not address women's needs is expressed clearly in a letter written to Premier Paul Okalik by Pauktuutit president Veronica Dewar. This letter, written in response to a situation involving an MLA convicted of sexual assault intent on keeping his seat in the Nunavut legislature, states:

> Inuit women have been saying for many years that our priorities and concerns are not adequately addressed by elected representatives and other decision-makers...there are many reasons why more women don't run for public office, including family and community responsibilities, the need to maintain on-going employment and lack of access to resources for

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[17] Pungowiyi's emphasis on 'elder women' highlights the fact that 'women' cannot be understood as a unified group with shared interests. In particular, Inuit women, due to the rapid change of the past century, have had vastly different experiences in lifestyle (settlement/camp), education, and work and have come to participate in and regard the political process from varying perspectives (Mancini Billson, 1990; Reimer, 1996; Thomsen, 1988).

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campaigning...The Government of Nunavut must work with and provide resources to...encourage and actively support women to run for public office to create a legislature that more truly reflects the population of Nunavut (Dewar, 2000).

This view, that the Nunavut government cannot adequately represent the interests of all Inuit if it consists almost entirely of males, was one of the guiding principles behind the conception of the gender parity proposal.

4.4   The Gender Parity Proposal: Structure and Presentation

The gender parity proposal was first published in 'Footprints in New Snow,' a publication of the Nunavut Implementation Commission that outlined practically how the Nunavut land claim should be implemented.[18]   While many Inuit leaders supported gender parity, it was decided that the proposal should be evaluated by public plebiscite, a referendum that was held on May 26, 1997. The ballot was straightforward: 'Should the first Nunavut Legislative Assembly have equal numbers of men and women MLAs, with one man and one woman elected to represent each electoral district? Yes, No.' Prior to the vote, political leaders in favour of gender parity mounted an extensive 'Yes' campaign, touring villages, publishing articles and distributing information widely. Subsequently, a smaller 'No' campaign was established in opposition. However, all meetings about gender parity had relatively low attendance and the turnout for the final vote, in which gender parity was rejected 57% to 43%, was only 39% of eligible voters (Dahl, 1997).[19] However, the vociferousness with which gender parity was discussed in the press and radio and the wide range of opinions expressed provides useful data for exploring perceptions of gender and nation in Nunavut.

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[18] See Appendix 2 for full text of the gender parity proposal.
[19] See Appendix 3 for a chart of voting patterns in different districts.

The Nunavut Implementation Commission's proposal for gender parity initially avoided making sweeping claims about the cultural merits of the proposal or its role in traditional Inuit culture. Their stance was that the people of Nunavut would be best governed if the two 'abiding subsets' of humanity were represented. The proposal highlighted the political under-representation of and discrimination against women throughout the world, the systemic barriers inherent to certain types of electoral and governance systems, and the need for balanced representation. The official proposal read, as Gombay (2000) describes it, like a political treatise, not as a commentary on Inuit culture. An early press release outlined the results of a meeting of Nunavut Leaders and evidences the early presentation of the gender parity concept.

> All participants agreed that an ideal political system for Nunavut would be one where the systemic barriers to women's participation in politics had been eliminated, where balance and mutual respect between the sexes had been restored to the decision-making process, and where women were full and equal participants in political life…It should be noted that 22 of the 25 participants in the meeting were men – so it was an overwhelmingly male leadership which supported a concrete plan to establish gender parity in the make-up of the first Nunavut Legislative Assembly (Press Release, 1996).

The idea of systemic barriers to participation as part of the political process and governance structures[20] was central to the proposal, whereas Inuit culture and tradition were not. However, in Nunavut, where political institutions are intended to integrate the fundamental characteristics of being Inuit (Hicks & White, 2000), the creation and adaptation of political structures can be seen as a central feature of the nation-building process and as a reflection of and influence upon emerging Inuit 'national character.' Ultimately, by the time of the vote, John Amagoalik wrote that 'this [gender parity] vote will largely reveal what kind of society we are' (1997b).

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[20] See Young (1996) for an evaluation of the constitutionality and potential efficacy of the Nunavut gender parity proposal.

4.5 Gender, Nationalism, and National Institutions: An Analysis of the Gender Parity Debate

I argue that the immediacy with which the gender parity debate swung into the realm of tradition, unity, home and homeland, and institutional legitimacy demonstrates the centrality of nationalism in the imagining of new political communities and the symbolic importance of women within this nationalist discourse. I assert that the gender parity vote of 1997 exemplified the implication of gender in nationalism and in the governance structures through which national identity is expressed. An analysis of the debate revealed four primary themes, all of which are central to nation-building projects: tradition, unity, national families and the homeland, and the construction of legitimate national institutions

4.5.1. Sources

In my study of the dialogue surrounding the gender parity debate, I will rely heavily upon the public record as reported in secondary sources and upon my own analysis of primary sources, particularly print media. There are potential pitfalls in depending upon print media to elucidate attitudes about and understandings of gender, nation, and politics. Newspapers are a form of communication and a platform of influence through which the literate, experienced and vocal are most equipped to communicate their ideas. As a result, the voices represented in print, particularly in letters to the editor, are likely to be those that are already involved and dominant in the political process. However, the media both echo and enforce opinions and therefore reflect and influence the perceptions of silent consumers as well.

The mass media occupy a central role in the creation of the texture of everyday life in much of the world. Media can powerfully legitimise and present opinions and are particularly influential in the moulding of political and moral consciousnesses (Einsiedel

and Coughlan, 1993; Nancoo and Nancoo, 1996; Szersynski, Urry and Myers, 2000). The media reflect dominant social paradigms, as they must be commercially and socially acceptable to the majority of consumers, and influence public opinion by appealing to and constituting shared realities, narratives, and 'structures of feeling' that are ubiquitous and powerful at a less than rational level (Cottle, 1993: 119, 126; Rutherford, 1976). McQuail (1993: 3) writes that the media

> ...provide a location where increasingly the affairs of public life are played out, both nationally and internationally...they have become a dominant source of definitions and images of social reality for individuals, but also collectively for groups and societies; they express values and normative judgements inextricably mixed with news and entertainment.

Mass media, as a site in which public life is constituted and enacted, strongly influence and 'enable the construction of the imagined community of the nation' (Billig in Morley, 2000: 34) and are largely responsible for creating cultural narratives that become internalised on individual and group levels (Valaskakis, 1996).

The construction of group identity through media is particularly prominent in the Aboriginal press, in which political information is not 'simply relayed through media to a remote public, but is part of a forum in which politicians and leaders engage in intimate dialogue with the whole community' (Alia, 1999: 39). The discussion of gender parity was largely carried out within the pages of *Nunatsiaq News,* an English-Inuktitut weekly newspaper based in Iqaluit – the capital city of Nunavut. Although there is same-day access to many Southern Canadian newspapers, *Nunatsiaq News* has the largest circulation of any newspaper in Nunavut and is a primary source of news and information (Alia, 1999). The letters to the editor, editorials, and articles within the pages of *Nunatsiaq News* both represented and established the opinions about the gender parity proposal and thus are a useful and legitimate source for exploring attitudes about identity, gender, and governance. I argue that the debate over gender parity evidenced the Inuit

political project to be a nation-building one in which gender is highly implicated, as it centred around themes integral to nationalism: tradition, unity, homeland and national families, and national institutions.

4.5.2   Tradition

The use of tradition to construct new narratives is central to nation-building projects (Anderson, 1990; Breuilly, 1996; Chatterjee, 1996; Gellner, 1993; Hobsbawm and Ranger,1983; Smith, 1999) and tradition figured prominently into the discussion of gender parity and the creation of a new national institution, the legislature.

The idea of traditional and inherent gender equality within Inuit society was used by both supporters and opponents of gender parity. Those against the proposal hearkened to traditional gender relationships as a firm foundation assuring mutual respect, which made the proposal itself superfluous. Paul Arreak, in a letter to the editor of *Nunatsiaq News,* argued that 'women do not need to earn respect, because they already have our respect' (1997). Peter Ivalu of Igloolik wrote 'the notion of women as being equal to men is a relatively new thereby isn't much of a concern to the public. The Inuit do not fully understand the concept of gender parity…the majority are not really concerned about the issue' (1997). This letter highlights that some Inuit do not view gender parity, or the issue of gender at all as an important factor in the construction of Nunavut or in understandings of Inuit tradition. Also, Christianity has come to be incorporated as part of Inuit 'tradition' across the North (Brody, 2000; Chance, 1990) and being a 'real Inuk' is now bound up with being a Christian. A relatively conservative interpretation of Christianity played an important role in the conceptualization of the proper relationship between men and women and a vocal minority, particularly through the radio debate, used religion as a basis for opposition to the gender parity proposal (Dahl, 1997; Gombay, 2000).

However, many parties asserted that gender parity would be crucial to restoring a tradition of respect and equality. They argued that the traditional relationships between males and females were undermined deeply by contact with Euro-Canadian society. Martha Flaherty, former president of Pauktuutit, highlighted the impacts of rapid change upon balance between the sexes.

> Unfortunately, the imposition of southern values, laws and institutions in Inuit society has resulted in social, political, and economic chaos in our communities. Women have suffered doubly for we lost status in our own society and were subjected to the patriarchal institutions born in the south. Until a proper balance is achieved among Inuit men and women, mechanisms must be put into place to ensure that women are equally represented in all decision-making processes and on all decision-making bodies (RCAPb, 1996:72).

Mary Simon, the Canadian Polar Ambassador, further emphasized the idea that traditional gender equality in which 'men and women...were always equal [as] neither could survive without the work performed by the other' had been lost (in Bourgeois, 1997e). She represents the opinion that gender parity in the Nunavut legislature would ameliorate the inequalities caused by contact with outside cultures.

The recovery of a more idyllic traditional past within new institutions was seen as a primary goal of the gender parity vote. Rita Arey, president of the Northwest Territories Council on the Status of Women, stated that women provided balance and harmony within the community and 'we must regain this balance by making sure that women's voices are equally heard in the legislature' (in Bourgeois, 1997b). John Amagoalik, one of the key supporters of the plan, writes regularly in *Nunatsiaq News* and used the paper as a platform from which to support the proposal.

> We all know that our society is in a mess. It's in a mess because we have been out of kilter...In the old days when we were living in the camps, the father and the mother always had equal value. Their work was considered to have equal value...That was disrupted when Inuit began to move from

their outpost camps into communities about thirty years ago…men and women found they didn't necessarily need one another…But if the people of Nunavut are to fix their society, they have to restore the importance of the family and of equal respect for men and women (in Phillips, 1996).

Amagoalik frequently referred to gender parity as a process of healing, reconciliation and reestablishment of traditional relationships.

The most vocal supporters of gender parity, like Amagoalik, were frequently those already active in the political process with the experience necessary to publicly and persuasively argue their point. Gombay (2000) argues that, since non-interference is an important characteristic of more traditional Inuit leadership, the apparent lack of interest, as demonstrated by the low turnout of voters, and active opposition to the proposal was a reaction to the 'bossiness' of the Inuit leadership. Therefore, rejection of the proposal could be construed as a form of resistance to a style of leadership perceived to be 'non-traditional' (Dahl, 1997; Gombay, 2000). Tellingly, Theresie Tungilik, one of the leaders of the 'No' movement against the parity vote, stated, upon rejection of the proposal in the plebiscite, that 'it's a relief to know that this kind of consensus is coming from the people and not being dictated to them' (in Bourgeois and Wilkin, 30 May 1997).

Perhaps the different life experiences of the Inuit leadership, their active participation with and opposition to the Canadian government and extensive time periods outside of their communities led to their strong support of the parity proposal. Gombay writes:

> It might be that the political leaders of Nunavut who supported the proposal so strongly, and who called to traditional emblems to support their view, were in effect trying to shore up the walls of difference in order to establish a clearly defined Inuit identity, while the general public…balked at the creation of boundaries that they felt did not need to be drawn (2000: 141).

Ironically, those in favour of gender parity saw the proposal as a means through which to create a functioning, respectful, and clearly bounded Inuit unity, while others argued that the proposal would shatter a unity that already existed.

4.5.3   Unity and the Nation

Nations and emerging collectives require a sense of oneness, of communion and of deep commonality based upon tradition. The importance of the collectivity over the individual is demonstrated by an article written by Paul Quassa, former president of the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada.

> You look at the Nunavut land claims final agreement, we talk about 'beneficiaries,' we talk about collective ownership of lands, we talk about collective rights. These were done in such a way that we knew this was the way our ancestors would have done things. They did things collectively in order to survive. Will our women, or in fact men, get better representation if this gender parity becomes a reality…It is not that I am against the fact that we have to view everybody the same and to treat everybody equally, but I believe that this trend will only make the Inuit think and act as if there are two distinct groups rather than viewing us all as one…(1997a).

From this perspective, gender parity could introduce dangerous feelings of difference where none had previously existed. Paul Arreak (1997) further argued that this kind of proposal goes against 'Inuit spirit' that is 'communally based and individualism is second to it.' Women cannot be viewed as a separate collective, or even division within the collective, without jeopardising the tenuous viability of the whole.

Women's native groups, such as Pauktuutit and the Council on the Status of Women, have often emphasised complementarity to pan-Inuit organisations, rather than active opposition (Thomsen, 1988). Dahl (1997) proposes that the opposition of Inuit women to the gender parity proposal reflects the unwillingness, present in many aboriginal movements, to focus on gender as a separate issue from self-government

because of a concern that it would undermine the viability of the collective movement. Like indigenous women elsewhere, women's organisations, like Pauktuutit, search for a place in which they can represent the needs of women in a manner that is seen to strengthen the collective, rather than weaken it (Thomsen, 1988).

However, others argued that gender parity in the legislature would lead to a greater sense of unity. Pauloosie Qulitalik, at a public meeting in Pond Inlet sponsored by the travelling 'Yes' tour prior to the parity vote, supported gender parity stating that there is too much division between men and women in the world now and that 'looking at the past and looking at the present there's no other way to go but for the proposal' (in Bourgeois, 1997d). Peter Ernerk, the Nunavut Implementation Commission Commissioner, supported gender parity, asserting that 'this is about a reconciliation between men and women. It is about sharing responsibilities and rewards more evenly' (7 March 1997). Amagoalik echoes this sentiment in many statements made at public meetings and in articles written for *Nunatsiaq News*. He stated:

> [gender equal] leadership will better reflect society as a whole...It will foster better understanding, respect and co-operation between men and women...there needs to be a strengthening of the family. We need to express our faith in each other. Having gender parity in our legislature would be a good beginning (1997a; also see Bourgeois, 1997c).

In this statement, Amagoalik employs the familiar gendered symbolism of nationalism. However, unusually, he uses this symbolism to challenge the Western public/private divide by implying that the legislature can be a place in which gender differences are acknowledged as a means of strengthening the whole, the entire national family.

4.5.4   Homelands and National Families

Much of the Nunavut nation-building and autonomy process has focussed on securing rights over the land, an emphasis that centralised male activities, such as

hunting, in the autonomy movement. Therefore, the politics of Nunavut would seem to fall mainly outside of the female realm and into the traditional masculine domain of authority. One woman from Pond Inlet exemplified the sentiment than men control the land in explaining her opposition to the proposal:

> I see when women leave the house there's an empty feeling and the household is not whole. If we were following our culture, women don't make decisions about the land or animals, but they do with other issues (in Bourgeois, 1997d).

These domains of different interest, however, were also used to argue for the implementation of the proposal.

The conceptualisation of women as the carriers of tradition responsible for the care of the national family is central to nationalist discourse and echoes throughout the rhetoric of Inuit 'womanhood.' One Igloolik woman said that social issues, often seen as women's issues, would have a higher priority if the Nunavut legislature had gender parity. She argues that 'if we don't make a change, I don't see these types of problems going away...Nobody talks about them in the present government' (in Bourgeois, 1997d). This view was repeated in Pond Inlet, where one man stated that because men and women have different points of view that gender parity could only strengthen the representative capability of the new government (in Bourgeois, 1997d).

The role of women as 'givers of life, custodians of culture and language, and caretakers of children' (RCAPb, 1996: 64) was emphasised as a primary reason for women to become more involved in politics. Many argued that women's wealth of knowledge about their communities could be used to solve problems relating to health and education. Leetia James Aivik, of the Baffin Regional Women's Shelter, draws upon the traditional female domain to assert the need for women's greater involvement in the public sphere: 'Women have always been responsible for family relationships. Family relationships are the basis of Inuit culture. Therefore, women must have a voice in how

the culture is developed...' (RCAPb, 1996: 64). However, the centrality of the family which is argued to be the 'foundation of Inuit culture, society and economy' (Obed in RCAPa, 1996: 11) was also used as a primary reason to reject the proposal.

Many voiced concern that the absence of women in the home, while travelling and participating in formal politics, would lead to a deepening of the social problems afflicting many communities in Nunavut (Dahl, 1997). One elder in Pond Inlet voiced his concern about women being elected members of the legislative assembly as children would be left alone at home. 'I see kids who are left alone at home...I think they're the ones committing suicide when they get older. What's going to happen to those kids when their mothers are at the capital?' (in Bourgeois, 1997d). Some callers to a radio debate over the proposal also emphasised that the woman's place is in the home and that men seemed to be smarter than women (in Ernerk, 7 March 1997).

However, Nunavut itself is symbolised as the Inuit *home*land – a conceptualisation that conflates the separate spheres for men and women and alludes to the involvement of all national members. This 'home' is to be created and protected in national institutions – a project that can challenge the Western conceptualisations of the public and private spheres. Amagoalik uses this ambiguity to assert a place for women in the legislature:

> There is a good reason why legislatures are referred to as houses. It is because the affairs of the human family are discussed and debated. They are the living rooms of peoples and nations. When Nunavut's house opens in 1999, will it be run by a single parent? We believe that most people want to see both a father and a mother. Things just work better that way (1997c).

One speaker on the CB radio system, which serves as an open forum for discussion throughout Nunavut, stated that 'if the legislative assembly is to be a home, there should be room for both a mother and father figure' (in Dahl, 1997: 44).

The creation of institutions that reflect national identity is a crucial part of the nation building process (Breuilly, 1996; Smith, 1999) and the emphasis on traditional Inuit male and female domains makes the symbolic conceptualisation of the legislature of primary importance. The image of the legislature as a home proved to be problematic as the home is the site of many of the power relationships and issues presumed to be absent in 'neutral' and legitimate government structures. Thus, the rejection of the proposal was also a rejection of the legislature as a home, which reflects deeply rooted ideas about the institutions through which national identity can be expressed legitimately.

4.5.5   The Rhetoric of Institutional Universality and Neutrality

The perceived neutrality of political institutions and the rhetoric of universality that is central to nationalism played important roles in the discussion surrounding the gender parity proposal. Paul Quassa (1997a), the former ITC president, argued:

> if [men and women] each had the same role within the family, Inuit surely would not have survived to experience the signing of the Nunavut land claims agreement and the creation of a new territory with its own government. It seems that pro-gender parity group or politicians are making an issue with one eye closed, for there is such a thing as the Charter of Rights under Canadian law...Each and every able Canadian elector has always had the right to run for office...We don't elect people just because they are men or women, but because they have experience and have proven their ability to their constituents.

This statement expresses aptly the belief that institutions, such as government institutions, are value free and ungendered forums. As discussed in Chapter 2, many scholars argue that these institutions are themselves gendered and constructed by and serve the dominant power group (Connell, 1987; Kimmel, 2000; Young, 1998). The lack of obstacles facing men's participation in masculinised structures further masks

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institutional and societal barriers facing women – a process that casts women's low levels of participation in government as a lack of ability or interest.

The rhetoric of inclusion that typifies nationalism, or that everyone participates in the nation-building project, is echoed in the ideas of universal citizenship and suffrage that characterise Western politics. However, the concept that universal citizenship constitutes equality obscures the existence of barriers to participation (Pateman, 1989; Young, 1998). This view implies that elected offices are open to all and the most suitable candidate will be elected, regardless of gender. At a public meeting on gender parity in Pangnirtung, a small community on Baffin Island, one participant states that 'all Canadians are equal, and we can become priests or presidents – even women' (quoted in Dahl, 1997: 44), highlighting the perceived superfluity of the proposal in light of enshrined equality in Canadian law. Others, largely in letters to the Editor of *Nunatsiaq News,* argued along these lines, with statements such as 'let men and women stand on their own, as equals' (Carey, 1997) or asserting that ensuring gender equality would be demeaning to women (see Wilson, 1997; de Melo, 1997; Napayok, 1997). In these arguments, institutions are seen as neutral structures devoid of internal hierarchies controlling power and participation.

However, supporters of gender parity attempted to stress the institutional barriers inherent to some governance structures (Nunavut Implementation Commission, 1995). Martha Flaherty, then Pauktuutit president, highlighted an irony of the emerging Nunavut government. She stated that 'Inuit have been fighting for democracy for a long time for human rights, Inuit rights, aboriginal rights, and yet our government is still practising discrimination against women' (in Bourgeois, 28 February 1997). Rita Arey, President of the NWT Status of Women Council asserted that the 'division of the NWT has created a wonderful opportunity to take a big step toward righting the political inequalities facing northern women' (in Bourgeois, 1997b). Supporters of the proposal, like John

Amagoalik (see Bourgeois, 1997d), saw the proposal as a way of ensuring that Southern institutions of governance did not bring new inequalities as part of their structural 'baggage.' Many saw the creation of Nunavut as a mandate for creativity. However, the discourse surrounding the legitimacy of different ways of governance highlights the power of institutions in setting the scope of possibility and the parameters of debate.

The creation of the government of Nunavut witnessed many calls for creativity. Paul Quassa, arguing ultimately against gender parity, wrote that the creation of the government, 'is a matter of being creative and innovative…enough to explore other means of running the first –ever aboriginal government' (1997b). In searching for a government that was 'made in Nunavut' (Ernerk in Bourgeois, 1997a), supporters of the gender parity plan saw the proposal's rejection as a major setback in innovation. One woman, at a public meeting on the Yes tour's Rankin stop, expressed frustration, stating 'I can't understand those northern people who want change, but suddenly want to be like the rest of Canada' (in Bourgeois, 1997f). A Pond Inlet man presents the counter-view, stating: 'I like the way elections are held today in the legislative assembly and other organisations…it's a democratic process we're practising today and I'd like to continue practising it' (in Bourgeois, 16 May 1997d). An informational leaflet, produced by the Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated, the Nunavut Implementation Commission, and Pauktuutit and distributed in an issue of *Nunatsiaq News,* emphasised the need for innovative institutions.

> If you vote YES on May 26, you will be agreeing that Nunavut doesn't have to be a copy of the existing government. Instead, the Nunavut government will be a better, healthier government than we have now…People around the world would say, "What a brave step forward – a better way to elect a legislature" (For Our Families, For Our Future, n.d.: n.p.).

The quest for legitimacy in the Inuit autonomy movement, it seems, entailed an adherence to existing forms of government and an adoption of structures of power of the

'colonising' state – institutions already accused of disenfranchising and disadvantaging members of minority groups.

Supporters of gender parity attempted to incorporate the gendered rhetoric of nationalism, which glorifies the home, into the 'neutral' public sphere of politics. The rejection of the legislative body as a 'home' in which difference and unity can coexist highlights the ways in which institutions, like nationalism, can powerfully legitimise and reproduce relationships of gender and power. Thus, the paradox is that gender and home have been central to the 'imagining' of Inuit nationalism, like all nationalisms, yet these foundations of identity cannot be incorporated into the 'neutral' institutions of the state designed to express and protect Inuit identity and culture. However, this debate and its conflation of public and private space highlights the fact that the Inuit nation- and institution-building projects are ongoing and the ideas of public space in Inuit society are by no means foreclosed. In this way, perhaps we can look to Nunavut to address the question posed by Partha Chatterjee – what do new nationalisms have left to imagine? Perhaps, Nunavut will demonstrate the ways in which a strong national identity, rather than becoming an exclusionary project, can be a secure platform from which to relate to difference both within the nation and outside of it.

CONCLUSION

I argue that the construction of Nunavummiut political identity was and is nationalistic in nature. I further assert that the debate surrounding and ultimate rejection of the 1997 gender parity proposal was influenced deeply by the gendered ideology of nationalism and the gendered nature of the state institutions through which national identity is articulated. The gender parity vote can be seen as a moment in which re-imaginings of nationalism and governance collided with the accepted authority and legitimacy of Western nationalism and 'neutral' political institutions. The rejection of the parity proposal highlights the ways in which these institutions are durable and capable of reproducing and upholding hierarchies of gender and power inherent to their structure. However, the debate surrounding the gender parity proposal also alluded to some of the potential internal flexibilities of these institutions.

The nation-state is an awkward construction. Nationalism is a gendered ideology that incorporates strongly domestic symbols of home and family. Yet, national identity is to be administered and maintained in the 'neutral' and 'rational' public sphere, which was initially constructed *in opposition to* the private domestic sphere. Thus, in the nation-state, an identity centered on gendered ideas of 'family' and 'home' is to be articulated in institutions built as an antithesis to those very concepts.

In Nunavut, supporters of gender parity highlighted systemic barriers inherent in political institutions and attempted to envision the legislature as a home. This conceptualisation could have perhaps created a new understanding of political space, a place in which gender difference could be acknowledged and utilised to strengthen the collective. In this way, supporters were employing the gender difference evoked powerfully through the ideology of nationalism and attempting to incorporate that

difference into state structure. I believe that the rejection of the conceptualisation of the legislature as a 'home' elucidates the enduring power of institutions, like state structures and nationalism, to restrict creativity and flexibility.

The fact that gender parity – a unique idea even by global standards – was proposed at all argues for further study of the nation and institution building projects in Nunavut. The ongoing and self-conscious development of institutions and the awareness of the implication of gender in both nationalism and structures of governance may open a space in which the muted counter-discourses of Inuit identity can emerge. Perhaps these processes will demonstrate the possibilities and benefits of re-inventing political institutions and re-imagining a nationalism capable of acknowledging and deriving strength from difference.

APPENDIX ONE: Maps of Nunavut
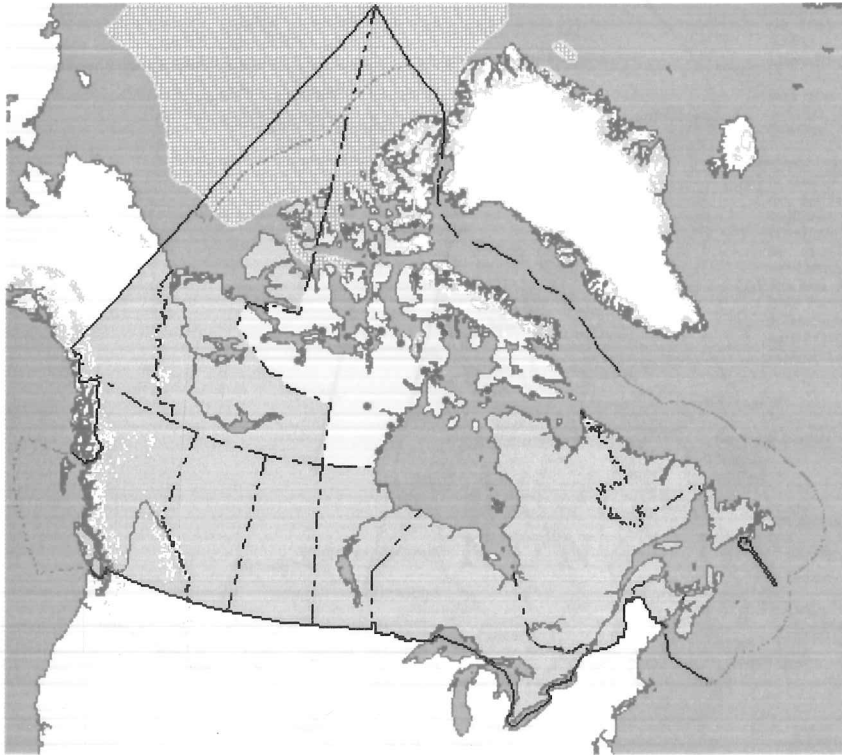
Map Key:
● Communities

■ Nunavut

■ Canada

Retrieved 10 June 2002, from:

http://atlas.gc.ca/site/english/maps/peopleandsociety/nunavut/people/communities

North Pole ✷ Pôle nord

CANADA

ARCTIC OCEAN
OCÉAN ARCTIQUE

Nunavut consists of:
(a) all of Canada north of 60°N and east of the boundary line shown on this map, and which is not within Quebec or Newfoundland and Labrador; and
(b) the islands in Hudson Bay, James Bay and Ungava Bay that are not within Manitoba, Ontario, or Quebec.

Nunavut comprend :
(a) la partie du Canada située au nord du 60°N et à l'est de la limite indiquée sur cette carte, à l'exclusion des régions appartenant au Québec ou à Terre-Neuve -et-Labrador; et
(b) les îles de la baie d'Hudson, de la baie James et de la baie d'Ungava, à l'exclusion de celles qui appartiennent au Manitoba, l'Ontario ou au Québec.

Ellesmere Island
Île d'Ellesmere
Alert

North Magnetic Pole
Pôle nord magnétique

N

Grise Fiord

Baffin Bay
Baie de Baffin

Devon I
Resolute

KALAALLIT NUNAAT
(GRØNLAND)
(Denmark / Danemark)

Arctic Bay
Pond Inlet
Nanisivik
Clyde River

Davis Strait
Détroit de Davis

Victoria Island
NUNAVUT
Baffin Island

Arctic Circle
Cercle Arctique

Cambridge Bay
Kugluktuk
Gjoa Haven
Taloyoak
Igloolik
Qikiqtarjuaq
Île de Baffin
Panghirtung

Hall Beach
Umingmaktok
Pelly Bay
Repulse Bay

Back River

Iqaluit

Coral Harbour
Cape Dorset
Kimmirut

NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
TERRITOIRES DU NORD-OUEST

Baker Lake

Hudson Strait Détroit d'Hudson

NFLD & LAB
T-N-et-LAB

LEGEND / LEGENDE
○ Territorial capital /
Capitale territoriale
● Other populated places /
Autres lieux habités
—··—··— International boundary /
Frontière internationale
——— Provincial boundary /
Limite provinciale
— — — Dividing line /
Ligne de séparation
(Canada and/et Kalaallit Nunaat)

Rankin Inlet
Chesterfield Inlet
Whale Cove
Arviat

QUEBEC
QUÉBEC

Ungava Bay
Baie d'Ungava

Hudson Bay
Baie d'Hudson

MANITOBA

Sanikiluaq

Scale / Echelle
200 0 200 400 600
km   km

ONTARIO

James Bay
Baie James

© 2001. Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada, Natural Resources Canada.
Sa Majesté la Reine du chef du Canada, Ressources naturelles Canada.

Retrieved June 10, 2002, from:

http://atlas.gc.ca/site/english/maps/reference/provincesterritories/nunavut

Appendix A-8

Nunavut Implementation Commission

Two-Member Constituencies and Gender Equality: A "Made in Nunavut" Solution or an Effective and Representative Legislature

Discussion Paper Released by the Nunavut Implementation Commission revised version -February 15,1995

Introduction

In designing a new Nunavut government, with its own Legislative Assembly, the Nunavut Implementation Commission (NIC) and the people of Nunavut have a unique opportunity to find ways of ensuring balanced representation of men and women at the highest political level.

The important thing is not that the Nunavut Legislative Assembly look and operate exactly like most other legislatures in the world: the experience of the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories shows that for a legislature to best serve the people of the north, it has to reflect the needs and aspirations of the people of the north. In order to do so it may have to be structured-and it may have to operate-somewhat differently than other legislatures.

The important thing is that the Assembly must reflect the needs and aspirations of the people of Nunavut.

One of those needs is for an effective legislature. A very small legislature would likely have problems functioning effectively. For this reason, this discussion paper begins by asking "How Large Should The Nunavut Legislative Assembly Be?"

One of those applications is for a **representative** legislature. The most under-represented group in politics-in Nunavut, in Canada, and in much of the world is women. The Commissioners are committed to the principle of gender equality. For this reason, this discussion paper then asks, "Why Is Equal Representation For Women In Politics An Issue?", "Are Women Full Participants In Decision-Making In Nunavut?" and "What Has Been Done to Try and Achieve Balanced Participation In Politics Between Men And Women?"

These questions are separate but related, as it is difficult to imagine a system which could provide balanced representation for men and women in a legislature that only has 10 or 12 seats.

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A-8.1

The section "How Could The Design Of The Nunavut Legislative Assembly Guarantee Balanced Representation Of Men and Women?" suggests that a system of two-member constituencies, with all the voters in each electoral district electing both one male MLA and one female MLA, would be the fairest, simplest, and most effective way to design a Nunavut Legislative Assembly which is both effective and representative. *The section* "Can Two-Member Constituencies Work?" shows that two-member constituencies work well in many countries, including Canada.

This would be a "Made in Nunavut" solution that is (as a participant in the NIC's regional consultation in the Kitikmeot put it) "simply the right thing to do."

How Large Should The Nunavut Legislative Assembly Be?

How many MLAs should there be in the Nunavut Legislative Assembly? This is a serious question, as political scientists have advised the NIC that an assembly of less than 15 to 20 members will likely experience serious operating difficulties due to its small site - especially if 'party politics' comes into play.

Background: The Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories is composed of 24 members, 10 of whom represent constituencies in Nunavut. Three of the 24 MLAs are women, and one of the 10 Nunavut MLAs is a woman. Greenland's Home Rule legislature, the *Landsting, is* composed of 31 members, five of whom are women.

This discussion paper therefore takes as its starting points that:

- the legislature should be composed of at least 15 to 20 MLAs; and

- people **are generally satisfied with the existing electoral boundaries.**

If NIC's consultations with the Nunavut Caucus, Nunavut Tunngavik Inc., regional and community leaders and the general public suggest that people want a legislature with fewer than 15 to 20 members, or a legislature with significantly different electoral boundaries, then these assumptions would no longer be valid.

The size and make-up of the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories has evolved over time, in recent years as a result of recommendations made by the

Electoral Boundaries Commission. The 10 members of the Nunavut Caucus are currently elected to represent the following electoral districts:

Baffin region
- Amittuq
- Baffin Centre
- Baffin South
- High Arctic
- Iqaluit

Keewatin region
- Aivilik
- Keewatin Central
- **Kivallivik**

Kitikmeot region
- Kitikmeot
- Natilikmeot

There are any number of options for structuring the Nunavut Legislative Assembly. For discussion purposes, let's assume that after consulting with the communities the NIC concludes that the present structure of 10 electoral districts plus a separate electoral district for Sanikiluaq-a total of 11 membersl-is the preferred option.

Would this legislature be large enough to function smoothly, keeping in mind that a Cabinet of five would leave only six MLAs to serve as 'ordinary members' and that a Cabinet of six would be larger than the five 'ordinary members'? If party politics were to be implemented, it would be possible for the governing party to elect just six MLAs-and each of them would have to be in the Cabinet!

This is a serious point. The first Nunavut Cabinet can only be as effective as the 'talent pool' from which it is selected.

If one agrees that an 11 seat legislature is too small to function smoothly, then one needs to ask: in what other fashion might he Nunavut Legislative Assembly be structured?

One method would be to use the 10 existing electoral districts 'as is; give Sanikiluaq back its own electoral district, but give each constituency two seats. This would result in a legislature of 22 members.2

This method of structuring the makeup of the legislature would:

- result in the legislature being a reasonable size-large enough to function smoothly but small enough to be cost-effective;

make life a little easier for each MLA; and

offer a simple, effective and fair way to achieve something that many people in Nunavut would like to see: balanced representation for men and women in the new Nunavut Legislative Assembly.

Why Is Equal Representation For Women In Politics An Issue?

The answer to this question has been neatly summed up by Canada's Deputy Prime Minister, Sheila Copps: *The main answer is obvious.* **Plain fairness** 3

Women make up just over half the population, but are systematically under-represented in politics-not just in Nunavut, but across Canada and all around the world. Why? The Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Financing agreed that women face a number of barriers to participation in politics, including:

- sex-stereotyping;

- the difficulty of juggling career, family and political responsibilities, including;
  - inadequate child-care facilities, and
  - a tendency to hold jobs that are less flexible with respect to taking time off to participate in political activities;
- negative attitudes within political parties;

- the fact the men tend to have better political "networks"; and

- negative stereotypes of women in the media.

Because these barriers form part of a system of "systemic (or structural) discrimination,"

practices and attitudes that have, whether by design or impact, the effect of limiting an individual's or group's right to the opportunities generally available because of attributed rather than actual characteristics, they are often referred to as "systemic barriers"

barriers to people realizing opportunities or receiving equal protection/benefit of the law. These barriers are understood to be communicable to the social, economic, political and cultural arrangements in a society.

If these systemic barriers could be completely eliminated, then one can assume that women would run for-and be elected to-political office in equal numbers with men. But we must be clear: nowhere in the world have these systemic barriers been eliminated, and as a result nowhere in the world is there balanced participation in politics between men and women.

As groups, men and women have had different relationships with the laws and institutions created through public policy, and have had different life experiences. As a result, there are differences in the ways in which men and women approach politics. Collectively, women place greater emphasis on the ways in which public policy impacts on the family and the community. Some individual men and women do, of course, have different opinions.

These points suggest that women have shared interests in their day-to-day lives, and therefore have shared interests in seeking equal representation in politics.

One can go a step further, however, and acknowledge that women's under-representation in politics helps explain why they are more likely to be poor (especially if they're single parents) than men are, earn lower wages for work of equal value, face other forms of discrimination in the workplace, are discriminated against by pension systems, and have limited access to affordable child day-care. The call for balanced representation in politics is therefore more than a call for recognition of shared interests, it is a call for recognition for equality for a historically mistreated group in society.

Canadian society has long recognized that certain groups of people-the Quebecois and Francophones outside Quebec for example-should be recognized as having group rights. More recently, Canadian society has recognized the existence of aboriginal rights: the Nunavut land claim and the future Government of Nunavut are in fact products of that recognition. The human rights of women can also be understood-,and implemented-as a form of group rights.

Some critics of equal political representation for women criticize the idea by asking whether there shouldn't be equal representation for other groups in society: elders and youth, the disabled, etc. Some even try and make a bad joke out of it by adding tall and short people, long-haired and short-haired people, blue-eyed and brown-eyed people, etc., to the list.

This discussion paper is premised on the idea that our gender differences overlay all of our other individual, cultural or socio-economic characteristics. The male/female grouping is unique in that men and women

A-8.3

exist in roughly equal numbers, tend to approach politics somewhat differently, have different levels of access to the political system, and are currently able to participate in **politics to very different degrees.**

This is not to say that human beings identify solely as men and women, or that all men and all women think exactly the same way. Not at all. But society as a whole can hardly benefit from a political system that fails to provide balanced representation for as universal, abiding and numerically equal subsets of humanity as men and women.

This model presented in this discussion paper is therefore not an attempt to create divisions in society -rather, it is an attempt to recognize differences and address the systemic inequality and unfairness which already exist in society.

There's no need to blame anyone for this situation - and no one person or group of people is really to blame. But more and more women (and men) are saying that there is a need to remedy the situation by taking steps to address the systemic barriers to women's participation in politics and ensure that women are full and equal participants in the political process at all levels.

It is also important to distinguish between participation in "formal" (i.e. electoral) politics and participation in "informal" politics (women and men volunteering their time and talents to cooperatively make the communities better places to live), because it is the people who participate in the "formal" politics of legislatures who determine the level of resources that people who participate in "informal" politics have available to work with. Participation in electoral politics is therefore particularly important during times of fiscal restraint

Are Women Full Participants In Decision Making In Nunavut?

Women have always played a prominent role in Inuit society. There can be no denying that the communities in Nunavut today could not function without the contributions made by women-in the home, in the workplaces, and in a wide range of organizations. And women in Nunavut certainly do participate in the full range of decision-making processes at the community, regional, territorial and national levels.

Indeed, northern women in general-and Inuit women in particular - have earned national attention for their strength and commitment to public life. Only Inuit could (and did) field a team like the 'Mothers of Confederation'-Rosemarie Kuptana, Nellie Cournoyea and Mary Simon-during the constitutional reform process.

But **women in Nunavut remain significantly under**represented in electoral politics at the territorial level: only one of the 10 Nunavut MLAs is a woman. The reason why women are less politically active at the territorial level than at the municipal level could be that the systemic barriers to participation in politics are weaker in women's home communities than they are at the territorial level.

What Has Been Done To Try And Achieve Balanced Participation In Politics Between Men And Women?

Women continue to struggle to increase their levels of participation in politics-both in Canada and around the world.

The *Globe and Mail* recently reported that the governing Australian Labour Party has committed itself to make sure that women make up 35 per cent of its candidates for parliament by the year 2002. "When half our population is more adequately represented in our party and our parliament, we'll be stronger for it," the Australian Prime Minister said. Currently only 10 per cent of the members of Australia's House of Representatives are women.

The part of the world where the most progress has been made with respect to ensuring equal representation of women in politics is Europe, especially the Nordic countries-Norway, Sweden, Finland, Denmark and Iceland 4 But not every country in Europe has tried very hard to achieve this goal, and as a result women in the different European countries have very different levels of representation.

This graph shows the degree of gender equality in selected legislatures in Europe, the United States and Canada:
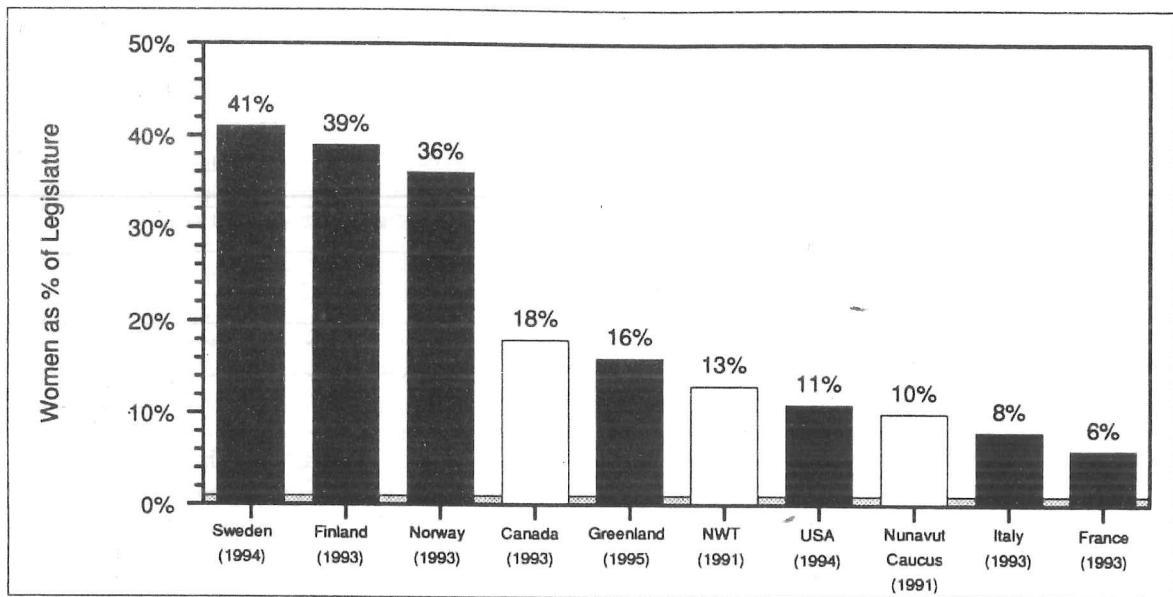
and this graph shows the degree of gender equality in the legislatures of Canada's provinces and territories"

A-8.5
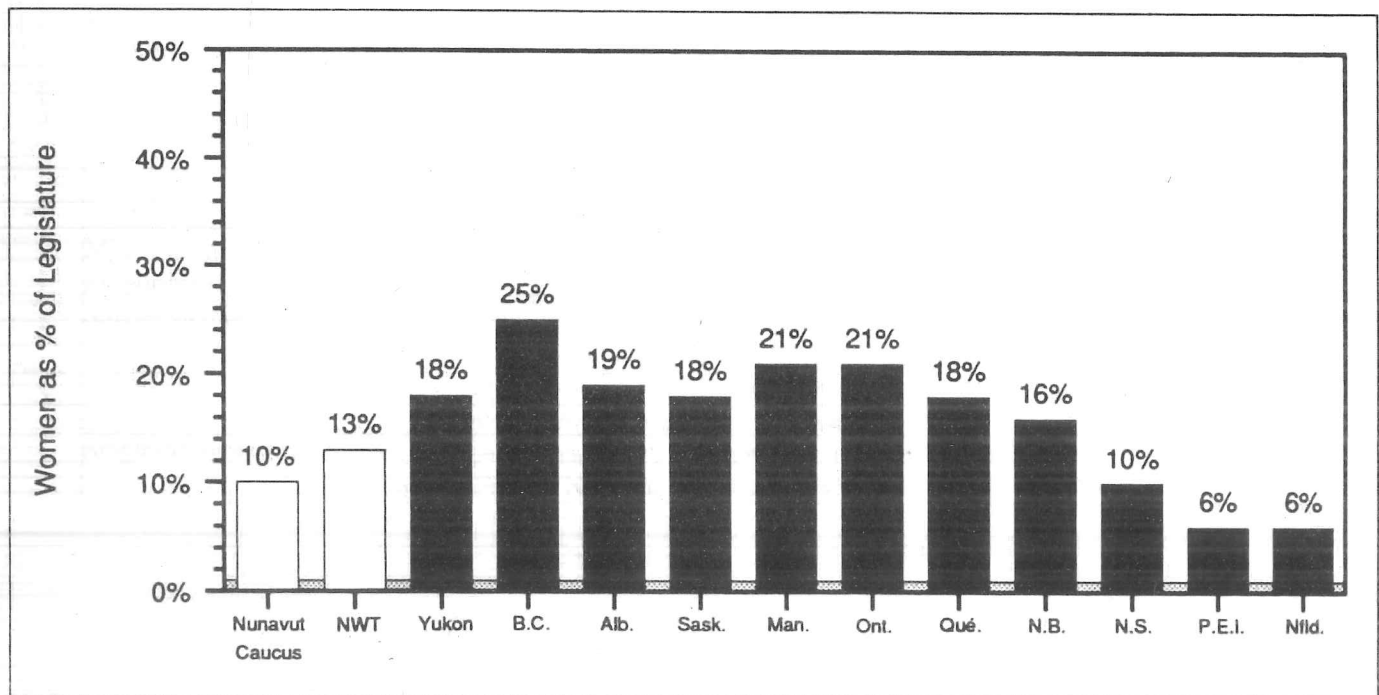
Lisa Young, a Ph.D. candidate in Political Science at the University of Toronto, has extensively researched women's representation in politics and notes that:

few voters are aware of the extent to which, at a practical level, electoral systems shape electoral outcomes . ... A study of factors (including electoral structures, political parties, and socio-economic conditions) contributing to the election of women in 23 democracies found that the type of electoral system is the most significant predictor of the number of women elected. 5

Some of the different electoral systems used in western democracies include:

- **single-member plurality** (the system used most often in Canada), where the candidate who receives the most votes in a constituency is elected (even if they don't have anywhere near a majority of

- **single-member majority**, where either: voters rank the candidates in order of preference, and candidates with the least votes have their votes redistributed according to the ranking until one candidate achieves a majority; or a "run-off election" of the two top candidates is held if no candidate wins a majority of votes in the first election; and

- **proportional representation**, where parties present a list of candidates and voters cast their ballots for their favourite party. (There are many different kinds of proportional representation systems, too many to be described here.)

This chart shows the degree of gender equality in selected legislatures, grouped by type of electoral system:

Electoral System	Country, Legislature (Year of Election)	Women as % of Legislature
Proportional Representation	Sweden, *Riksdag (1994)*	41 %
	Norway, *Storting (1993)*	39%
	Finland, *Eduskunta (1991)*	39%
	Denmark, *Folketing (1990)*	33%
	Greenland, *Landsting (1995)*	16%
	Italy, Chamber of Deputies *(1992)*	8%
Mix of Single-Member and Proportional Representation	Germany, *Bundestag (1990)*	20%
Single-Member Plurality	New Zealand, House of Representatives *(1993)*	21%a
	Canada, House of Commons *(1993)*	18%
	United States, House of Representatives *(1994)*	11%
	United Kingdom, House of Commons *(1992)*	9%
Single-Member Majority	Australia, House of Representatives *(1993)*	8%
	France, National Assembly *(1993)*	6%'0

What trends do we see when we look at the results of using these different systems?

Among West European and North American countries, the countries with the greatest proportion of women in their legislatures - Finland, Norway and Sweden employ proportional representation systems, white the countries with a lower proportion of women-the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada - employ single-member systems.

Proportional representation systems offer political opportunities for women primarily because the various political parties know that it is in their best interest to "balance the ticket" by listing both men and women on their list of potential legislators. Many parties, beginning with the Norwegian Labour Party in 1983, have recently adopted guidelines or quotas for women's representation on the party list. This has been an important development, as the outcome of an election in a proportional representation system is only as representative as the lists put forward by the parties.

For example, during the run-up to the recent general election in Sweden a coalition of women's groups made it clear that if the political parties didn't do a better job of including women on their lists then they would form a "women's party" (as was done in Iceland). Each of the main Swedish parties promised to do better, and they did: 41 per cent of the MPs elected were women, and both of the main parties promised to have women make up half of their cabinet.

However, simply adopting a proportional representation system doesn't guarantee balanced political participation of men and women: some countries which use proportional representation systems lag far behind the Nordic countries -where the under-representation of women is widely considered to be a public problem, against the interests of women and ultimately as a disadvantage for the society as a whole.

It is no exaggeration to suggest that women have only been elected in significant numbers "in countries where major political parties have made commitments to achieving representative outcomes. Generally, parties have made these commitments only after women both inside and outside the party have exerted pressure on the party to implement affirmative action programs, such as reserving half of the places on the party list for women."7 Political parties have also played a crucial role in increasing the level of women's participation in politics in Canada.

Canada is a signatory to the United Nations' *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination*

Against Women, which states that "women shall be entitled to hold public office ... on equal terms with men, without any discrimination,'8 and women's participation in formal Canadian politics certainly has increased significantly in recent years. But women are still a very long way from being equal participants in the Canadian political system.

It was only 12 years ago that a female MP stood up in the House of Commons and began a speech on violence against women... and was heckled and laughed at. Since that day, women in Canada-north and south-have learned a lot about using the political system to make positive changes on issues of concern to them. As MP Mary Clancy has noted, "At least they're not laughing any more:'

Most Canadian women received the right to vote in federal elections in 19179, not long after women in the Nordic countries, but the number of women elected to the national legislature increased much more slowly here: to 13 per cent of MPs elected in 1988 and 18 per cent of MPs elected in 19931 Similar trends can be found in provincial and territorial legislatures 11

Lisa Young notes that:

The three main parties holding official party status in the House prior to the 1993 election... demonstrated at least a nominal commitment to increasing the number of women holding office. When a proportional representation system was being discussed in the context of an elected Senate during the 1992 constitutional round, there was support for using such a system to increase the social representativeness of the Senate. All three parties represented in the Special Joint Committee on a Renewed Canada agreed that "parties should use the opportunity presented by multiple nominations to promote gender equality and the representation of Canada's social and cultural diversity within the political process."i2

Each of the political parties which elected MPs to the House of Commons in 1993 were contacted for information about the manner in which they currently promote the participation of women.

The **Liberal Party** endorses a campaign, chaired by Deputy Leader (and Deputy Prime Minister) Sheila Copps, to recruit female candidates in "winnable" constituencies. The Liberals also have an active National Women's Liberal Commission (NWLC). According to the report of the 1994 NWLC biennial meeting.

The mandate of the NWLC is to represent and promote the interests of women within the Liberal Party of

Canada and to encourage the active participation of women at all levels of the Party. By the turn of the century, they anticipate that at least fifty percent of all members of Parliament and the Senate will be women. The NWLC strives to ensure that federal policies do not discriminate against women. 13

This is worth noting: the goal of the NWLC, an official body of the Liberal Party, is "to bring about equal representation in the House of Commons, the Senate and the provincial and territorial legislatures by the end of the century" as well as "at all levels of the party." An assessment of the gender representivity of the various party bodies and committees must be presented at each party convention.

Perhaps in part due to the work of the NWLC, the Liberals elected 36 female MPs in 1993-the largest number of women that any caucus has ever held in Parliament.

The **Bloc Quebecois** was unable to respond to NIC's request for information within the tight time frame required for the preparation of this discussion paper.

Reform Party MP Diane Ablonczy stated that the Reform Party believes in treating all its members, candidates and MPs equally, and as a result there is no formal women's network or association within the party, although she acknowledged that women make up far fewer than half of the Reform MPs or high-ranking party officials. 4

New Democratic Party leader Audrey McLaughlin stressed that the NDP has made encouraging equal participation of women a priority for many years. The NDP has been more willing to use quotas than the other parties: during the last election the NDP divided the federal electoral districts into regions, and then insisted that each region ensure that 50 per cent of the NDP candidates were women. 15

The **Progressive Conservative Party** also has a women's commission, however the party office informed NIC that it was more of an informal 'network' than anything resembling the National Women's Liberal Commission.

The Liberals, the NDP and the Conservatives also carry out fund-raising (through the Judy LaMarsh, Agnes McPhail, and Ellen Fairclough funds, respectively) to provide women candidates with additional resources (usually amounting to a few thousand dollars) during the election campaign.

In summary;

- all four of the political parties who responded to NIC's request for information acknowledge that women face system barriers to full participation in politics (the Reform Party's acknowledgment coming from an individual MP);

  three of those four parties have internal structures and/or policies which attempt to assist women in
- overcoming those barriers; and

  despite the significant advances that have been made, women cannot yet be considered to be full
- and equal participants in any of these Canadian political parties.

The participation of women in politics has also been addressed by the Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Financing (RCERPF), which submitted its final report to the government in 1991. It made a number of important statements on the participation of women in Canadian politics. The RCERPF found that "women are the most under-represented segment of Canadian society," being under-represented by 66 per cent relative to their presence in the electorate. 16 That statistic supports the claim of the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women that "the voice of government" remains "a man's voice," 20 years after the Royal Commission on the Status of Women.

The "virtual exclusion" of several segments of the Canadian population, especially women, is "no longer acceptable," the RCERPF concluded, because "the full range of Canada's interests" will remain unrepresented until they begin more "reasonably" to reflect the actual composition of society.

Specifically, the RCERPF acknowledged the sex-bias in existing electoral practices, supported the use of gender-neutral language in Canada's *Elections Act,* and introduced the notion of under-representation as a catch-phrase and reform slogan. In summary, the most important factors in increasing the participation of women in politics have been:

the use of electoral systems which increase women's political opportunities;

political parties which actively support increasing women's participation in legislatures; and

effective and credible women's movements and organizations in the society as a whole, and broad support in the society as a whole for the participation of women in politics.

The work of Pauktuutit (the Inuit Women's Association), the informal network of prominent Inuit women leaders, and the support of the many Inuit men who believe in equal participation of women in politics have all helped create a social and political climate which
allows the current discussions to be **taken** seriously. As Martha Flaherty, Pauktuutit's President, recently commented, "We do not seek power over men but, rather equality with men-respect, fairness, and openness.

How Could The Design Of The Nunavut Legislative Assembly Guarantee Balanced Representation Of Men and Women?

Nunavut does not yet-and may never-have party politics, so we can't assume that progressive political parties will help close the political "gender gap" in Nunavut as they have elsewhere.

Among the three most important factors in increasing the participation of women in politics, this leaves the use of an appropriate electoral system as a critical factor in any strategy to increase women's political opportunities in Nunavut.

One simple and effective way of structuring the Nunavut Legislative Assembly both:

- to ensure that it is of sufficient size to function smoothly; and

- to guarantee balanced participation of men and women;

would be to have two-member constituencies for the existing electoral districts, with one seat being held by a man and the other seat being held by a woman.

When election time approaches, the returning officer would keep two lists of candidates instead of one-one list of male candidates and one list of female candidates. If party politics were to emerge in Nunavut, each party could run one man and one woman in each constituency. On election day, each voter could cast votes for two MLAs-one from the list of male candidates and one from the list of female candidates. The male candidate with the highest number of votes and the female candidate with the highest number of votes would both be elected.

Each constituency would then be represented by two MLAs, with equal rights and equal responsibilities. They may agree on some issues and disagree on others,

but it is reasonable to assume that they would work together to promote the interests of their constituency as a whole in addition to focusing on the issues of particular interest to them as individual legislators. It is also reasonable to assume that the women MLAs would co-operate to ensure that issues of particular importance to women get the attention they deserve.

The model presented in this discussion paper would be simple and effective. It operates on the "single-member plurality" system that people are used to. There would be no need for quotas, or proportional representation, or any other methods that people might find complicated or too "different" from the electoral system we've had to date. It would work with either 'consensus government' or party politics. It would be a fundamental step forward for both men and women, and it would lay the foundation for a better future for our children.

Can Two Member Constituencies Work?

The model presented in this discussion paper suggests using two-member constituencies as a tool to meet the goals desired for the design of the legislature. This is not a new or an untested tool: Canada has actually had quite a lot of experience with two-member (and mufti-member) constituencies, and they are very common in Europe today.

Canada's House of Commons had five, two-member constituencies in 1921, four, two-member constituencies until 1930, and two, two-member constituencies from 1935 until 1966.

At the provincial level, nine of the 10 provinces have used two-member or mufti-member constituencies in the past 50 years 18, and Prince Edward Island still does so today (see below). Most provinces were still doing so as recently as the 1960s, when some 20 per rent of all members of the provincial legislatures were elected from districts returning more than one member. Some provinces combined proportional representation systems for their larger, mufti-member constituencies with simple plurality single-member systems in the smaller constituencies.

PEI's Legislative Assembly has historically been structured on the basis of 16 two-member constituencies - for a total of 32 MLAs. Like many systems using two-member and mufti-member constituencies, PEI's system has as its historical roots the notion of representation for different groups in society as well for individuals.

Landholders elected Assemblymen and nonlandholders elected Councilors, however over the years the two positions effectively became the same.19 (This is similar to the difference between Britain's House of Lords and House of Commons, except that in PEI's case the two types of representatives operate within the same legislature.)

The use of two-member constituencies in Canada has its origins in England. The historical pattern of representation in the British House of Commons before 1832 was for each country and enfranchised borough to elect two MPs. Two-member and multi-member constituencies remained the rule (with some exceptions) until 1885, and Britain continued to have 15 two-member constituencies until 1945.

It should be stressed that nothing in the political science literature indicates that there has ever been problems with two-member or multi-member constituencies.

Some - but certainly not all - countries have, over the years, developed electoral systems which emphasize individual representation at the expense of group representation. Others developed electoral systems which also allow for more representation by various groups in society, and many of them use multi-member constituencies as a tool to achieve that goal.

Indeed, multi-member constituencies are the norm in most Western European countries today. Switzerland, for example, has five single-member constituencies and 21 constituencies which elect between two and 35 members. Sweden, Norway, Finland, Denmark, The Netherlands, France, Germany, Austria, Spain, Greece and others have widely differing legislative systems, all of which use multi-member constituencies. The Greenlandic *Landsting*, with the Danish *Folketing* as its model, also operates in this manner.

Most European countries have found a way of meeting both the nineteenth century demand for equality of representation and the other principle of community representation by varying numbers rather than drawing boundaries. In the same manner, the model presented in this discussion paper would satisfy both the demand for equality of representation and the principle of balanced participation by men and women by increasing the number of MLAs rather than by redrawing the electoral boundaries.

Conclusion: *Simple, Fair, Effective, And "Made in Nunavut"*

Democracy is best served when the composition of a legislature closely mirrors, in terms of social characteristics, the composition of the population represented. This is true on the level of day-to-day government decision making and resource allocation, and this is also true on a symbolic level because legislatures which are supposed to be representative institutions-re-present society to itself.

In designing a new Nunavut government, with its own Legislative Assembly, the Nunavut Implementation Commission has been challenged to find ways of ensuring balanced representation of men and women at the highest political level. The people of Nunavut have a rare and wonderful opportunity to create a legislature and a government which are appropriate, innovative and progressive.

What we learn from studying women's representation around the world is that the structure of the political system makes a big difference. The evidence from across Canada and around the world suggests that if balanced participation for man and women is not designed into the very make-up of the legislature, then women in Nunavut are unlikely to achieve full and equal participation in politics.

Two-member constituencies-with both one male **MLA and one female MLA representing** each constituency-could be a simple, fair, **effective and "Made in Nunavut"** solution for designing a Legislative Assembly that is both effective and truly representative.

The Nunavut Legislative Assembly could be a model for democratic peoples everywhere. Nunavut could have the first legislature in the world to have balanced representation of men and women designed right into its make-up.

The Nunavut Implementation Commission welcomes your comment on this discussion paper.

A-8.10

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Appendix: In Response To Critics

In late 1994 and early 1995 the possibility of gender equality in political representation in Nunavut has received a brief flurry of attention from the northern media, and has become a subject of discussion in the communities. All one can say for sure is that some people are in favour of it in principle, some people are opposed to it in principle, and with the release of this discussion paper all Nunavut residents have an opportunity to consider an actual model of how balanced participation between men and women might be implemented.

What kinds of criticisms have been expressed about gender equality, and how does the model presented in this discussion paper address those criticisms?

- One criticism is that having two MLAs for each constituency would be more expensive that having one MLA for each constituency.

But this is only true if one compares (for example) a 22-seat Assembly to an 11-seat Assembly. 1 f one agrees that an Assembly should have at least 15 to 20 MLAs to function smoothly, then it doesn't matter how those 15 to 20 MLAs are chosen... the cost is still the same. Besides, the NIC is emphasizing elected bodies over non-elected boards and agencies, and the money saved by doing so could go towards operating a Legislative Assembly which is both a reasonable size and which ensures the balanced representation of men and women in formal politics.

- A second criticism that people might make is that this would be a "quota system," when it is better to have representatives elected on the basis of merit.

But this isn't a "quota system." All MLAs would be freely elected, presumably on the basis of merit (or party affiliation, or both). It wouldn't be a system where men only vote for men, and women would only vote for

women - both MLAs would be elected by both men and women. It would bea system consistent with fundamental democratic principles.

- A third criticism is that some people like the system "just the way it is."

To accept this criticism one must not be too concerned by the systemic under-representation of women in politics, both in Nunavut and elsewhere. One must not be too concerned that the issues that women tend to care most about tend to get less attention by male politicians. And one must not be too concerned about---as Sheila Copps put it-"plain fairness."

An editorial in News/North ("Women don't need a leg up," October 3, 1994) identified several of the obstacles which will have to be overcome if the model presented in this discussion paper is to become a working reality:

- The editorial implies that the handful of prominent northern women politicians it names is proof that our political system is OK the way it is.

Our existing political system is not OK. One women member in the 10-member Nunavut Caucus is not good enough. Northern women face the same systemic barriers to participating in politics as women everywhere else in the world do, and as a result women are significantly under-represented in formal politics in the north.

- The editorial suggests that people who want equal participation for women "should have the confidence to allow women to be treated on individual merits."

The model presented in this discussion paper does that - but it also recognizes that there is a big difference between a political system that talks about gender equality and a political system that delivers gender equality.

The model also recognizes that merit is not a value-free concept: different groups in society assign merit differently. For example, the Government of Nunavut can be expected to value the ability to speak Inuktitut more than a government which represents a primarily English or French speaking population. The Government of Nunavut would therefore arrive at a different calculation of the relative "merit" of different job applicants than governments who do to place the same value on the ability to speak Inuktitut.

- The editorial concludes that guaranteeing equal representation is not the best way for women to be represented in the Nunavut legislature.

The editorial supports using limited measures to reduce some of the systemic barriers to women's participation in politics-a timid appro"h which has not resulted in balanced participation in politics anywhere in the world. There is no reason to believe that it would do so in Nunavut.

This discussion paper suggests that a simple, fair, and effective way of designing the Nunavut Legislative Assembly is to create a system of two-member constituencies, with alt voters in each electoral district electing both one maleMLA and one female MLA.

Endnotes

1. 12 if the Premier were to be directly elected, instead of chosen from among the MLAs.

2. 23 if the Premier were to be directly elected, instead of chosen from among the MLAs.

    Copps (1992), p.3.

4. seeNordicCouncilofMinisters(1994)foraremarkablythorough assessment of the status of men and women in the Nordic countries.

    Young (1994), p. 4.

    Young (1994), p. 40. We all know the expression "one man, one vote," but the reality appears to be "one vote, one man."

7. Young (1994), p. 33.

    this sentence is from Article 7 of the convention, which was adopted by the UN General Assembly on December 18,1979 and ratified by Canada on December 10,1981.

9. all residents of the Eastern Arctic-Inuit and non-Inuit alike-were disenfranchised until the federal election of I%2. The area we know today as Nunavut had no representation in the House of Commons, and therefore neither men nor women could vote. As well, First Nations women did not receive the right to vote until the *Indian Act* was amended in 1960.

10. the record of the Canadian Senate-an appointed body-is rather worse. For example, it has only been 65 years since women have been *allowed* to sit in the Senate-they were not considered "persons" in the law before a 1929 decision of the British Privy Council overturned Canadian courts in the famous "Persons Case." But during the 65 years since the "Persons Case," 92 per cent of the Canadians appointed to the Senate have been men -and today only 13 per cent of Senators are women.

11. getting women elected to national and provincial/territorial legislatures is particularly important in Canada, where Cabinet ministers can only be selected from the elected MPs or MLAs. (or, at the federal level, unelected Senators). This is not the case

in many European countries: in Greenland, for example, the ruling Siumut party recently appointed to the *Lands"* (cabinet) a woman who was not elected to the *Landsting* (legislature.

12. Young (1994), pp. 36-7.

13. National Women's Liberal Commission (1994), especially the sections "Historical review of the NWLC," 1VIission statement of the NWLC,' and "Liberal Party of Canada: gender assessment, May 1994."

14. Ms. Ablonczy also stated that she completely agrees that women face systemic barriers to participation in politics. Where "Reform women" differ, she said, is that they choose to overcome these barriers as individuals.

15. New Democratic Party (1993?).

16. 75% at the time their report was issued; the statistics improved slightly after the 1993 election.

17. Flaherty (1994), p. 8.

18. only Qu6bec has never done so.

19. the 1993 election in PEI was the last to use two-member constituencies. The legislature recently passed a law establishing a system of 27 single-member electoral districts to come into effect when the writ is issued for the next provincial election. According to the office of Premier Catherine Callback, the change was not in response to any unhappiness with the traditional arrangement. Rather, the residents of PEI had expressed a desire for fewer politicians generally, and the government responded by creating a Royal Commission which recommended the new system.

APPENDIX THREE: Voting Results by Community (Dahl, 1997)

Region / Community	Eligible Voters	Votes Cast	Yes	No	% Yes	% No	% Turnout
Nunavut	11,943	4,640	1,978	2,662	42.6%	57.4%	38.9%
Baffin	6,146	2,491	1,149	1,342	46.1%	53.9%	40.5%
Keewatin	3,466	1,338	361	977	27.0%	73.0%	38.4%
Kitikmeot	2,311	739	420	319	56.8%	43.2%	32.0%
Arctic Bay / Nan	444	134	64	70	47.8%	52.2%	30.2%
Broughton Island	304	151	83	68	55.0%	45.0%	49.7%
Cape Dorset	579	170	90	80	52.9%	47.1%	29.4%
Clyde River	341	87	40	47	46.0%	54.0%	25.5%
Grise Fiord	82	45	17	28	37.8%	62.2%	54.9%
Hall Beach	289	88	33	55	37.5%	62.5%	30.4%
Igloolik	559	281	119	162	42.3%	57.7%	50.3%
Iqaluit	1,741	715	387	328	54.1%	45.9%	41.1%
Kimmirut	227	121	49	72	40.5%	59.5%	53.3%
Pangnirtung	610	291	122	169	41.9%	58.1%	47.7%
Pond Inlet	530	209	68	141	32.5%	67.5%	39.4%
Resolute Bay	110	53	22	31	41.5%	58.5%	48.2%
Sanikiluaq	330	146	55	91	37.7%	62.3%	44.2%
Arviat	789	273	81	192	29.7%	70.3%	34.6%
Baker Lake	741	207	94	113	45.4%	54.6%	27.9%
Chesterfield Inlet	169	126	9	117	7.1%	92.9%	74.6%
Coral Harbour	313	104	25	79	24.0%	76.0%	33.2%
Rankin Inlet	1,065	417	112	305	26.9%	73.1%	39.2%
Repulse Bay	276	159	16	143	10.1%	89.9%	57.6%
Whale Cove	133	52	24	28	46.2%	53.8%	39.1%
Cambridge Bay	652	192	105	87	54.7%	45.3%	29.4%
Gjoa Haven	396	143	90	53	62.9%	37.1%	36.1%
Kugluktuk	635	134	68	66	50.7%	49.3%	21.1%
Pelly Bay	225	80	32	48	40.0%	60.0%	35.6%
Taloyoak	353	152	93	59	61.2%	38.8%	43.1%
Umingmaktok / BI	50	38	32	6	84.2%	15.8%	76.0%
Inmates	142	72	48	24	66.7%	33.3%	50.7%

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