

Made with Love:
Tracing Personal and Cultural Resilience in Annie Pootoogook's Drawings

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A major research paper submitted to OCAD University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Master of Arts
in
Contemporary Art, Design, and New Media Art Histories

Toronto, Ontario, Canada, April 2018

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Abstract

Looking at the drawings of Kinngait-born Inuk artist Annie Pootoogook (1969–2016), this major research paper foregrounds deep readings of the artist’s work beyond other narratives that have historically eclipsed such analyses of Inuit art. Through examining a series of Pootoogook’s drawings pertaining to matriarchal love and Inuit-specific recurring imagery such as the *amanti* (mother’s coat), I propose that these works reveal a way of expressing love, doubly marking the artist’s own personal and cultural resilience. Following the groundwork laid by Inuk art historian Heather Igloliorte, I draw on tenets from Inuit *Qaujimagatuqangit* (living knowledge or that which Inuit have always known to be true) to suggest ways in which Pootoogook uses the medium of drawing to express love for family and culture while simultaneously strengthening relations with both. By placing Pootoogook’s drawings in dialogue with broader Indigenous theory and Inuit-specific epistemology (to the best of my own non-Inuit or *qallunaat* ability), I hope to suggest new avenues through which more expansive scholarship on Pootoogook’s work can continue to develop.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to my primary advisor, Dr. Dot Tuer, for her always constructive critical perspective and guidance, particularly on my use of voice as a *qallunaat* scholar. Her endless encouragement and confidence in me throughout this process has been incredibly motivating. Without it, this paper would not have come to fruition.

I am very grateful for the expertise of Dr. Gerald McMaster, my secondary advisor, whose experience working in the field of Inuit art and knowledge of Inuit *Qaujimajatuqangit* has been crucial to this paper's framework. His guidance and the remarkable art historical scholarship done on the subject by Dr. Heather Igloliorte were fundamental during my research process. Thank you.

I would also like to thank Dr. Jim Drobnick for his always thorough and helpful editorial advice and support. Thanks also to Dr. Keith Bresnahan for graciously caring for our small cohort throughout what was the crunch-time of this process.

I am immensely grateful to OCAD University and the Ontario Graduate Scholarship, whose generous funding has made the production of this major research paper possible.

Lastly, thanks to my tremendously intelligent fellow cohort members and friends, Kate Kolberg and Louie Liu, who prove that the process is much less daunting when undergone with friends.

This major research paper was written in commemoration of the life and work of artist Annie Pootoogook (1969–2016).

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Introduction: Love Obscured

The framework and problematic for this major research paper on Inuk artist Annie Pootoogook (1969–2016) came to fruition in September 2017 during a visit at the McMichael Canadian Art Collection. I was there to see the exhibition *Annie Pootoogook: Cutting Ice*, the first posthumous retrospective celebrating the artist’s life and work. Born and raised in Kinngait (ᑭᓄᓄᓂᓂᓂ, Cape Dorset), Nunavut, Pootoogook became recognized as one of Canada’s foremost contemporary Inuk artists in 2006, the same year she rose to national acclaim after winning the coveted Sobey Art Award.¹ Her renown as an artist entered the international realm in 2007 when she exhibited at the quinquennial contemporary art exhibition Documenta 12 in Kassel, Germany, and soon after made the South her permanent home.² Pootoogook first lived in Montreal and then Ottawa, where she would spend the rest of her life away from Kinngait (ᑭᓄᓄᓂᓂᓂ) before tragically and suddenly passing away in September, 2016.³ Reflective of the artist’s desire to draw what surrounded her, the McMichael retrospective featured a range of works made during both periods of Pootoogook’s life.⁴ The matchbox house interiors and snow covered Kinngait (ᑭᓄᓄᓂᓂᓂ) mountain which are indicative of her Arctic hamlet community, figured prominently in a

¹ Throughout this MRP I refer to regions within Inuit Nunangat (the Inuit Regions of Canada) according to their recognized Inuktitut place names, converted back from English place names in 1999 after the Territory of Nunavut was established. I refer to names by their Roman orthographic spelling in Inuktitut, followed by (in brackets) the name in Inuktitut syllabics, then the former English name. All succeeding mentions of the orthographic name are followed by the Inuktitut syllabic spelling in brackets only.

² Within the Canadian field of Inuit art studies, the term “South” is used to refer to southern Canada; “North” refers to communities in Arctic Canada.

³ Nancy Campbell, *Annie Pootoogook: Cutting Ice* (Fredericton: Goose Lane Editions and McMichael Canadian Art Collection, 2018), 97.

⁴ Pootoogook stated “I must draw what surrounds me” in the documentary *Annie Pootoogook*, film, directed by Marcia Connolly (Mississauga: Site Media, 2006), 4:00. This phrase was translated from Inuktitut.

bulk of the drawings on display. This pointed to the fact that Pootoogook made a majority of her drawings while living in the North and far fewer, featured at the very end of the show, while residing in the South.

To get to Pootoogook's show I first had to walk through another exhibition, billed as a "passionate love letter to Tom Thomson and Canada" that featured the patriotic art of Canadian feminist artist, Joyce Wieland (1930–1998).⁵ Some of Wieland's works in the exhibition drew upon Inuit culture, a recurring theme for the artist who advocated for Indigenous rights as a member devoted to Canada's New Leftist Party in the 1970s.⁶ Her bookwork, for example, *True Patriot Love*, (1971) which appropriates a Canadian government publication on Arctic flowers, was propped open to a page where a block of Inuktitut syllabics lyricizing the Inuit song *The Great Sea* overlaid the publication's logic-and-reason laden English-language text describing the flora of the Canadian Arctic Archipelago (fig. 1). At the time of its creation, *True Patriot Love* surely represented Wieland's sympathy for Inuit and the Arctic environment, ecologically threatened by corporate interests in the region's natural resources. But in this specific context, her works conflating patriotism with Inuit culture served as a peculiar but perhaps strategically placed precursor for an Inuk artist's solo exhibition. The love-themed thread that wove through Wieland's show continued in Pootoogook's retrospective in the back galleries though in an entirely different way: fraying and branching out from patriotic love to encompass love of many varieties including the

⁵ McMichael Canadian Art Collection, didactic panel to accompany the exhibition "Passion Over Reason: Tom Thomson and Joyce Wieland," Kleinburg, ON, 1 July–19 November 2017. Visited on 20 September 2017.

⁶ In addition, Wieland as a New Leftist also advocated for the rights of women, the working class, French Canadians, and other marginalized groups within Canada. Kristy A. Holmes, "Imagining and Visualizing 'Indianness' in Trudeauvian Canada: Joyce Wieland's 'The Far Shore' and 'True Patriot Love,'" *Canadian Art Review* 35.2 (2010): 48.

familial, communal, cultural, and colonial (romantic and Christian conceptions). While Wieland's artworks constructed ideals of love that positioned the national within the global, Pootoogook's drawings gave voice to the local through her depiction of personal memory representing a tangible reality where love, for her, seemed to function.

The work *Composition (Plucking the Grey Hair)* (2004–05) (fig. 2) is a good example of Pootoogook's representation of love: a woman sits on the floor with a man's head in her lap, the intimacy indicating a bond linked by actual familial ties or a family-like relation. The woman uses tweezers to pluck a grey hair from the man's head marking the scene as one of care and love. The man's bicep tattoo that reads "LOVE" reinforces this sentiment, while a radio on the left side of the scene blasts either music or a news report in Inuktitut. The drawing reveals the entwinement of familial love with cultural resilience that figured prominently in the exhibition, and that is characteristic of Pootoogook's oeuvre in general. In contrast to the artist's scenes of trauma that were also featured in the show, scenes like this of love and care often linked to maintenance of cultural values (in this case, the fortification of native language is visualized through the Inuktitut syllabics emanating from the radio), mark love as something both intrinsic yet explicit in Pootoogook's drawings. This offers a starting point for refiguring how we approach the complexity of this artist's work that is most often discussed in terms of trauma rather than resilience.

This major research paper aims to foreground how love becomes manifest in Pootoogook's drawings. Through this analysis, I prioritize the potential for deeper readings of the artist's work which otherwise have often been obscured by dominant cultural narratives: whether framed by Canadian nationalism or contemporary discourses that misguide public conceptions about Indigenous communities (particularly women) within

Canada. I analyze a thematic cluster of the artist's drawings, particularly those depicting memory of family intertwined with markers of Inuit culture that signify its maintenance, in order to highlight how love takes shape in Pootoogook's work, particularly her love for family and culture that is interwoven with Inuit resilience. In so doing, I follow Inuk art historian Heather Igloliorte's observation that Inuit artistic expression functions as cultural resilience that has both the ability to transmit and maintain Inuit knowledge and values (called Inuit *Qaujimajatuqangit* or "that which Inuit have always known to be true"), and to serve as a tool for healing from the reverberating effects of colonial trauma.⁷ Because Pootoogook was born into an intercultural settlement community in 1969 rather than on the land as her mother and grandmother had been less than sixty-five years prior, many of her drawings very much emphasize how familial and cultural love (both fundamental integral parts of being Inuit) continuously persist as integral aspects of life in the North, despite an encroaching influence from the South.

The Canadian government's colonizing activities in the Eastern Arctic and on Qikiqtaaluk (ᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭ, Baffin Island) where Pootoogook's home community Kinngait (ᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭ) is located, began in 1939 when a court decision ruled Inuit a "federal responsibility."⁸ The fur trade had collapsed, which Inuit had become increasingly reliant on for subsistence hunting, thus hitting them with hardship.⁹ The government then took over most social and educational services previously handled by Christian missionaries,

⁷ Heather Igloliorte, "Inuit Artistic Expression as Cultural Resilience," in *Response, Responsibility, Renewal: Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Journey* (Ottawa: Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2009), 125–136; Shirley Tagalik's definition of Inuit *Qaujimajatuqangit* cited in Heather Igloliorte, "Curating Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit: Inuit Knowledge in the Qallunaat Art Museum," *Art Journal* 76.2 (2017), 102.

⁸ Mini Aodla Freeman, "Inuit," *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, ed. Anne-Marie Pedersen et al., June 8, 2010, accessed April 19, 2017, <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/inuit/>.

⁹ Nelson H. H. Graburn, "Inuit Art and Canadian Nationalism," *Inuit Art Quarterly* 1.3 (Fall 1986): 5–7.

transported pre-fabricated housing up North to occupy their new federally-managed settlement communities, and established Kinngait (ᐱᕐᕐᕐᕐᕐ) as a cash economy—the same economic system that continues today. Federal intervention in the Eastern Arctic was in fact two-fold in its objectives: “rescuing” Inuit served as an impetus for the Canadian government to assert national sovereignty over the region then under threat by the Soviet Union and the United States in the wake of the Cold War.¹⁰

Within a decade, the grafting of Inuit art and culture onto symbols of Canadian national identity began to take hold, and *qallunaat* artist-turned-government advisor James Houston played an integral part.¹¹ After travelling North in 1948, meeting Inuit for the first time and learning of their carving skills, Houston encouraged Inuit to make sculptures out of soapstone.¹² This art form went on to be used as iconic symbols for a newly forming Canadian national identity, as the first of many public diplomatic gestures featuring an Inuit artwork gifted from Canada to another country took place not long after in 1951.¹³ Eight years later in 1959, Houston helped establish Kinngait Studios (formerly the West Baffin Eskimo Cooperative Studios) in Kinngait (ᐱᕐᕐᕐᕐᕐ): a government owned art studio that functioned (and continues to function today) under a co-operative model. Inuit were provided with art materials, supplies, working space, and payment for their work produced in

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Qallunaat* is an Inuktitut term used to describe those who are non-Inuit, typically white people of European descent. I myself am *qallunaat*. Inuk author and translator Mini Aodla Freeman has explained that the Inuktitut term does not actually reference whiteness directly (though the usage of the term continues to change over time) but rather likely originally meant “people who pamper their eyebrows,” reflective of how Inuit first perceived Europeans and Southerners to be fussy and materialistic. Freeman, *Life Among the Qallunaat* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2015), 86–87.

¹² Graburn, “Inuit Art and Canadian Nationalism,” 6.

¹³ *Ibid.*; This particular gesture involved the Canadian government gifting then-princess Elizabeth a sculpture made by Inuk artist, Munamee Shaqu. Norman Vorano, “Inuit Art: Canada’s Soft Power Resource to Fight Communism,” *Journal of Curatorial Studies* 5.3 (2016): 314–15.

exchange for a way to make a living within the newly imposed cash economy. Along with sculptures, prints that came out of Kinngait Studios would feature the vibrantly beautiful motifs and imagery distinctive to Inuit culture, and would gain national and international appeal as the nation harnessed them further to forge a distinctive national identity. The linking of Canadian identity specifically to Inuit was done in order to uniquely distinguish Canada from the United Kingdom and the United States. Simultaneously, the Canadian government asserted its national sovereignty over the Eastern Arctic by using Inuit art as “evidence” that Inuit lived there and were under the government’s responsibility, subsuming the agency of Inuit art and artists to a narrative propelled by Canadian nationalism.

As Wieland (perhaps naïvely) ended up emulating in *True Patriot Love*, the narrative of love in the name of the nation-state has historically compromised the ability of Inuit artworks and artists to speak for themselves. In fact, two loves are in conflict within this context: the love that underpins Canadian nationalism and drives acts for national sovereignty, and the love that motivates Inuit resilience and cultural sovereignty *within* the nation-state through media such as art. This has prompted a need in the field of Inuit art studies to foreground the Inuit voice by studying art as a product of the particular settler-colonial contexts it comes out of—a call to action set forth by Igloliorte, leading scholar in the Canadian field.¹⁴ Love for culture is an integral motivating component needed in order for Inuit to regain “cultural sovereignty,” a phrase coined by Tewa/Diné film scholar Beverly Singer that encapsulates the act of trusting in the “older ways” and adapting them to life in

¹⁴ Heather Igloliorte, “Sovereign Nations: Canada and the Inuit of Northern North America,” in *Negotiations in a Vacant Lot: Studying the Visual in Canada*, ed. Lynda Jessup et al. (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s/Beaverbrook Canadian Foundation Studies in Art History: 2014), 150–170.

the present, in order to demonstrate one's culture as being sovereign against others that may be encroaching.¹⁵ The idea that the strengthening of cultural sovereignty takes shape in Indigenous visual art is indebted to Tuscarora visual historian Jolene Rickard, who in 1995 declared the cultural arena where visual art exists as a space where the otherwise ambiguous term of "sovereignty" could function: as a marker of Indigenous-specific assertions of sovereignty in terms of cultural production.¹⁶ In addition to the fortification of Inuktitut¹⁷ languages, Inuit traditions and cultural practices, Igloliorte identifies Inuit art production as a primary means through which this strengthening happens.¹⁸ In Pootoogook's case, both the act of drawing and the content of the drawings themselves can serve to strengthen Inuit cultural sovereignty by marking Inuit resiliency which, at its core, is seemingly motivated by love.

Several exhibitions and re-hangs of Pootoogook's work in recent years have been curated according to the themes of family and culture, yet the scholarship on these particular themes in her work remains underdeveloped.¹⁹ A handful of Canadian *qallunaat* writers/curators including Leslie Boyd and Nancy Campbell have produced the bulk of exhibition catalogues on Pootoogook's work since 2006, focusing largely, though not exclusively, on how her drawings importantly disrupt the viewer's colonial gaze by

¹⁵ Beverly R. Singer, *Wiping the War Paint off the Lens: Native American Film and Video* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 2.

¹⁶ Jolene Rickard, "Sovereignty: A Line in the Sand," *Aperture* 139 (Summer 1995): 51.

¹⁷ Not to be mistaken with "Inuktitut," "Inuktitut" is a term that encompasses all Inuit languages spoken within the Inuit Regions of Canada. For example, the two official Inuktitut languages spoken in Nunavut are Inuktitut and Inuinnaqtun.

¹⁸ Igloliorte, "Sovereign Nations," 153.

¹⁹ Exhibitions include (but are not limited to): *Akunnittinni: A Kinngait Family Portrait* curated by Andrea R. Hanley, IAIA Museum of Contemporary Native Arts, Santa Fe, NM, 2016–present (touring); *Annie Pootoogook: Cutting Ice*, curated by Nancy Campbell, McMichael Canadian Art Collection, Kleinburg, ON, Sept. 2017–Feb. 2018; a re-hang of works by Annie Pootoogook featuring pieces by Pitseolak Ashoona and Napachie Pootoogook, curated by Wanda Nanibush, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, ON, Nov. 2017–Apr. 2018.

documenting an unmediated glimpse at real life in the North, rather than catering to Southern visions of imagined primitive authenticity.²⁰ While it is true that Pootoogook's ability to disrupt the dominant cultural gaze is monumental for contemporary Inuit art, the repetitious discourse about her work and the gaze runs the risk of creating an echo chamber of ideas that further trap readings of Pootoogook's work within a Western art historical analytical framework, rather than granting the work agency to speak for itself. To achieve fresh readings that are truly emancipatory, Pootoogook's works, along with a majority of Inuit drawings made at Kinngait Studios, must be explored through a contextually-specific frame that perhaps deprioritizes the gaze, though still acknowledges its presence.

Igloliorte's recent scholarship has offered a way forward: approaching Inuit art-making as expressing resilience and cultural sovereignty encourages deeper and more locally-specific readings of Inuit art work using frames other than those offered by the Western art historical tradition, such as approaching art production through the tenets expressed through Inuit *Qanjimajatuqangit*: the principles that Inuit have always, and continue to, live by. Because of the specificity of its production, history, and culture, critical research must similarly adapt a new critical frame through which to study Inuit art. Admittedly as a *qallunaat* scholar, I do not possess the integral Inuit knowledge needed to fully catch all of the nuances that an Inuk scholar may extract from the artist's work, yet I hope that this major research paper can contribute to the field by proposing a new perspective through which to consider this

²⁰ Notable others who have written critical pieces on Pootoogook's work include curator Jan Allen, art journalist Sarah Milroy, critic Leah Modigliani, and art historian Deborah Root.

remarkable artist's work, as is deserved.²¹ Writing by Inuit and Indigenous scholars lead the way in this paper in order to best formulate a frame related to love for Pootoogook's work.

My understanding of love as I apply it in this paper draws primarily from the writings of Anishinaabe scholar Leanne Betasamosake Simpson. Simpson situates love as a motivating action within an Indigenous context and speaking specifically from an Anishinaabe point of view, she suggests that love may be her peoples' greatest resistance.²² Her Indigenous theory is rooted in decolonial thought based in stories from Elders that can only fully be understood through the embodiment of culture and native languages by way of oral storytelling: where Indigenous cultural resurgence can emerge within the Canadian nation-state.²³ The fundamental motivation for this is a love for culture that informs the need for cultural resurgences so that cultural sovereignty may be strengthened through the act of art creation.

In the first chapter I consider Pootoogook's act of drawing family, including the drawings themselves, as inherently linked to the motivation of maintaining familial bonds and providing for family. I look to the artist's drawings of her matriarchs, grandmother Pitseolak Ashoona (1904–1983) and mother Napachie Pootoogook (1938–2002), which demonstrate how the medium of drawing brings the living past into the changing present through their tradition of drawing life experiences. As exemplified through the familial

²¹ Despite scrupulous efforts to prevent errors or misinterpretations of Inuit *Qaujimaqatuqangit* and broader Indigenous theory and terminology within this paper, I acknowledge that my non-Inuit/non-Indigenous positionality makes their existence possible and I take full responsibility for any errors that may arise.

²² Tanaya Winder, "Falling Into Decolonial Love: An Interview with Leanne Simpson, Author of *Islands of Decolonial Love: Stories and Songs*," *As/Us* 4 (2014), <https://asusjournal.org/issue-4/interview-with-leanne-simpson/>.

²³ Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, *Dancing on Our Turtles Back: Stories of Nishnaabeg Re-Creation, Resurgence and a New Emergence* (Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring Publishing, 2011).

tradition of drawing, I observe how the medium serves as a platform for the strengthening of Inuit cultural sovereignty foremost through the family unit, which is fundamentally motivated by acts of love. The second chapter focuses on Pootoogook's expressions of love in the visual content of her work, looking specifically at the *amauti* (mothers's coat) as a significant recurring image in her drawings. I argue that this symbol demonstrates Inuit cultural, familial, and personal resilience, analyzing how Pootoogook's drawings demonstrate the distinctive strength of Inuit within their ever-shifting living situations and extremely unique colonial relations with the Canadian government and Southern culture. By examining both the act of drawing and the content of the drawings themselves as markers of Pootoogook's personal and cultural resilience, both chapters focus on the role of familial love in her work and explore how family and culture are inextricably linked by love for both.

Drawing Family & Drawing with Family: Fostering Resilience Through Matriarchal Love

“Making prints is what has made me happiest since [my husband] died. I am going to keep on doing them until they tell me to stop.”
—Pitseolak Ashoona²⁴

“I draw almost like my mother’s drawings. Perhaps the reason why is because I used to watch my mother drawing.”
—Napachie Pootoogook²⁵

“My grandma was an artist, and my mom. I should try, I should try and keep them, their work, alive.”
—Annie Pootoogook²⁶

The 1971 autobiography *Pitseolak: Pictures Out of My Life* is where celebrated Inuk graphic artist Pitseolak Ashoona, grandmother to Annie Pootoogook and mother to Napachie Pootoogook, recalls her memories of the early years of Kinngait Studios. Among the first generation of Inuit artists to make work at the government-run co-operative headed by *qallunaat* artist and government advisor James Houston, Pitseolak’s words give voice to how this familial legacy of Inuit drawers began: out of the necessity to adapt, make money, and provide for her family—familial love.²⁷ After living most of her life semi-nomadically, Pitseolak moved into government implemented settlements in the 1950s–60s when she was

²⁴ Pitseolak Ashoona and Dorothy Eber, *Pitseolak: Pictures Out of My Life* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1971), 93.

²⁵ Blodgett, Jean, Leslie Boyd, Marybelle Mitchell and Pat Tobin, *Three Women, Three Generations: Drawings by Pitseolak Ashoona, Napachie Pootoogook and Shuvina Ashoona* (Kleinburg, ON: McMichael Canadian Art Collection, 1999), 77.

²⁶ *Annie Pootoogook*, film, directed by Marcia Connolly (Mississauga: Site Media, 2006), 5:35–5:44.

²⁷ When referring to Inuit artists besides Annie Pootoogook I identify them by their first names (e.g. Pitseolak, Napachie), as is customary in Inuit communities as well as in scholarship on Inuit art. However, I refer to Pootoogook by her last name in order to highlight her as the central artist discussed in this MRP.

in her fifties, suddenly needing to acclimatize to an alien environment where earning a wage was necessary to survive.

Taking after Pitseolak, Annie Pootoogook began to draw almost forty years later through Kinnigait Studios. She was heavily influenced by both her grandmother and mother whom she frequently observed drawing during childhood and depicted these memories many times in her own work. While for Pitseolak drawing became an act necessary for survival for both herself and her family during a time of upheaval and transition, Pootoogook's drawings can be framed instead as made in response to the reverberating effects of this transition that remains in flux more than sixty years later. The act of drawing appeared to function as a way to bridge generational gaps between herself and her forebears, still possessing the fundamental significance that helped keep family connected through a common craft. Though drawing itself is not an art form native to Inuit, the way Pootoogook has adapted and innovated the *qallunaat* medium in the same way that her matriarchs did, demonstrates how the act of drawing marks resilience: both in maintaining and expressing familial love, as well as transmitting and enacting Inuit knowledge and values under threat by an increasingly intercultural community.

Beginning with matriarch Pitseolak, I trace the trajectory of motives, values, and knowledge associated with the act of drawing that carries on in Pootoogook's own drawings of familial love. The act of drawing, which initially came out of Pitseolak's need to innovate and adapt without choice to a new way of life, also became an act that strengthened the family unit continuously under threat from Southern-influence. Three of Pootoogook's memory drawings that depict her matriarchs engaging in the act of drawing—*Pitseolak Drawing with Two Girls on the Bed* (2006), *My Mother and I* (2004–05), and *My Grandmother*,

Pitseolak Drawing (2002)—demonstrate familial love as inextricably linked with the act of drawing, simultaneously operating as a medium that aids in transmitting Inuit *Qaujimajatuqangit* across generations. I observe how within this line of matriarchs, drawing contributes to the strengthening of Inuit cultural sovereignty through the strengthening of the familial unit, considered to be at the core of Inuit philosophy.

Pootoogook’s drawings that recollect childhood memories of watching her grandmother and mother draw, usually in bed, visualize a legacy of familial love linked to the act of drawing. Pootoogook explained this was something she did often: “I used to go see my grandma drawing. She used to tell the stories that came with the drawings and those were true stories.”²⁸ *Pitseolak Drawing with Two Girls on the Bed* (fig. 3) depicts one of these childhood memories. The drawing takes place in a bedroom where an elderly Pitseolak sits in bed, half under the covers, working on a drawing-in-progress on her lap. She draws what looks to be a familial scene as suggested by the size difference between two Inuit figures that walk in the snow (a parent and child), likely a family memory from Pitseolak’s past. Two young girls sit on the edge of the bed. Though speculative, the girl in the pink parka and blue headband may likely be a young Pootoogook, seeing that the artist has depicted her young self also wearing a headband in other works.²⁹ Her gaze and head tilts up toward Pitseolak’s face, suggesting that she is listening to something, perhaps to Pitseolak recollecting a memory or story related to her drawing. The girl in the purple coat, who may be a sibling or a cousin to Pootoogook and related to Pitseolak in some way, sits in the foreground of the

²⁸ *Annie Pootoogook*, film, 8:20–8:41.

²⁹ Two comparative examples include *My Mother and I* (2004-05) (fig. 4) and *Three Generations* (2004-05) (fig. 9). See Appendix A.

scene. The direction of her gaze is not as obvious, looking either at the drawing or at Pitseolak directly. This ambiguity suggests the scene could perhaps be one of both listening to stories from Pitseolak's past while simultaneously learning drawing skills through observing her grandmother creating the drawing itself.

The visualization of the act of drawing and the drawing as an object itself (frequently appearing as a drawing-within-a-drawing) recalls a key aspect of familial love that recurs in the artist's oeuvre: that drawing strengthens familial love by bringing together generations through a common interest in art-making, doubling as a bonding experience. Similar drawings of Pootoogook's, either where she has included herself in the scene as a young girl watching her mother and grandmother draw, or observing from an external vantage point along with the viewer, include *My Mother and I* (fig. 4) and *My Grandmother, Pitseolak Drawing* (fig. 5). Both drawings follow a similar format: Pootoogook's mother or grandmother completes a drawing in bed that usually depicts "life in the past"³⁰ including scenes where Inuit are outside wearing traditional caribou skin outerwear; during Pootoogook's lifetime, this was less common. These drawings-within-drawings, which follow both Pitseolak and Napachie's legacy as two artists who reflected on their own roles as artists by depicting drawings-within-drawings, evoke life before the cash economy settlement when Inuit knowledge was more easily transmitted to and practiced by the younger generations.³¹

Pootoogook was born into an environment vastly different from grandmother Pitseolak's and mother Napachie's; one very clearly defined by interculturalism between

³⁰ Pitseolak's way of describing what James Houston told her to draw during the early years of the co-op.

³¹ Examples include Pitseolak Ashoona, *The Critic* (c. 1963) (fig. 13) and Napachie Pootoogook, *Napachie Drawing in her Tent* (1984–85) (fig. 14). See Appendix A.

North and South. Inuk writer and illustrator Alooook Ipellie writes about this environment in his poem *Walking Both Sides of an Invisible Border*, which expresses the pain and confusion of living in a community where both Inuit and Southern ways may exist side-by-side, but not necessarily in tandem.³² Both sides clearly demarcated, Ipellie voices concern over whether North and South will ever fully integrate, or “swallow one another whole.”³³ In his comprehensive overview of the colonization of the Arctic, Ipellie cites the widening generational gap between Inuit Elders, their children, and their children’s children as one of the most traumatizing and reverberating effects of colonization, particularly after the first Southern education school was built on Qikiqtaaluk (ᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭ) in 1955:

Uniforms replaced their familiar clothes, and classes were taught by English teachers. Traditional Inuit customs and skills were forgotten as southern educators replaced the children’s parents as role models and teachers of life skills. This meant culture shock and acute loneliness until the new language, structure and values were learned. However, many Inuit children could not adapt and became trapped between Inuit and settlers’ ways. Parents became alienated from their children, and a phenomenal generation gap developed.³⁴

Pootoogook’s work *My Mother and I* suggests that drawing functioned during the artist’s own childhood as an adaptive tool helping to bridge the generational gap between herself and her mother, by serving as a bonding activity through which Inuit knowledge and values were passed down to Pootoogook. Though Napachie has voiced that in her later years she preferred to draw alone in order to maintain focus, *My Mother and I* visualizes one of the perhaps few memories Pootoogook has of watching her mother draw at home.³⁵ The

³² Alooook Ipellie, “Walking Both Sides of an Invisible Border,” *Studies in Canadian Literature* 21. 2 (1996): 155.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Ipellie, “The Colonization of the Arctic,” in *Indigena: Contemporary Native Perspectives*, ed. Gerald McMaster and Lee-Ann Martin, 39-57 (Vancouver: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 1992), 51.

³⁵ In a 1999 interview with Leslie Boyd, Napachie Pootoogook stated: “When I am doing art sometimes my children have asked ‘what is this?’ and I find that so distracting I just tell them to leave me alone; so these days when I’m working on my art they leave me alone.” Jean Blodgett, Leslie Boyd, Marybelle Mitchell and Pat

drawing may document one of those moments where Napachie was distracted by her daughter, but Napachie is not the author of this image. Rather, Pootoogook recollects the memory as she knows it, one where she appears fully entranced by her mother's drawing, seemingly absorbing knowledge (both about drawing and Inuit *Qaujimajatuqangit*) through observation.

As in many of Pootoogook's works, the scene she depicts in *My Mother and I* is almost entirely dominated by objects of the South: the clothes they wear, the drawing tools Napachie uses, the medium of drawing itself as depicted *within* a drawing. Beyond young Pootoogook and her mother, the most distinguishable marker of being Inuit is the content of Napachie's own drawing-in-progress of two Inuit ice fishing. The placement of the drawing in the scene spatially bridges the distance between her and her daughter, indicative of the crucial role the drawing plays in maintaining the familial bond, and as the site of representation where the transmission of Inuit knowledge and values occurs. Even though Napachie and Pitseolak did not draw in a performative manner for their children for the sake of transmitting values (on the contrary, both have said that they preferred to work alone in order to maintain focus), the drawing functions as a medium that *remediates*. Instead of going out to ice fish, Napachie draws ice fishing and the story that goes along with that drawing still gets transmitted to Pootoogook in the form of Inuit knowledge, learning through observation.

By visualizing her own memory as a young girl watching her mother draw in bed, Pootoogook evokes the Inuit principle of *pilimmaksarniq*: the development of skills through

Tobin, *Three Women, Three Generations: Drawings by Pitseolak Asboona, Napachie Pootoogook and Shuvina Asboona* (Kleinburg, ON: McMichael Canadian Art Collection, 1999), 42.

observation, mentorship, and effort.³⁶ The drawing *My Mother and I* exhibits the fruition of Pootoogook's mother's and grandmother's mentorship, foregrounding the importance of the drawing object in bridging the colonially-induced ruptures forged between familial generations—this fact itself represented through a drawing. The recurrence of drawings-within-drawings in Pootoogook's oeuvre signals that the artist herself acknowledged the importance these familial moments played in her life, leading her to become a renowned artist herself. Therefore, *My Mother and I* is a work that makes visible the space in which familial love and cultural love adapt amongst Southern influences. Pootoogook achieves this by embodying her mother's and grandmother's newfound craft (drawing) to evoke their memory and knowledge through an act motivated by love (for both family and culture), highlighting the important role the act of drawing and the drawing object itself has played in her life which simultaneously enacts *pilimmaksarniq*—an important pedagogical tenet of Inuit knowledge.

The act of drawing within the Ashoona/Pootoogook family as imbued with the motivating act of love is inherently linked to the three women's ability to adapt and innovate according to their specific, ever-shifting, social, economic, and cultural circumstances, using drawing as a tool to do so. Pitseolak, the first in the family to take up drawing, dealt with the greatest transition in her lifetime. As she states in her autobiography, she went from being born in a skin tent to living to hear about the first moon landing.³⁷ The colonization of the Arctic rapidly accelerated while Pitseolak would have been in her 20s (the 1920–30s) when Anglican and Catholic missionaries sought to Christianize the Arctic—a period Ipellie calls

³⁶ Gerald McMaster, *Inuit Modern* (Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario, 2011), 34.

³⁷ Ashoona and Eber, *Pitseolak: Pictures Out of My Life*, 82.

“the beginning of the end of traditional Inuit ideology.”³⁸ In the years leading up to the Second World War, the fur trade had collapsed and Inuit faced extreme hardship after becoming reliant on Hudson’s Bay Company trading posts for subsistence. The Canadian government then stepped in, implemented a federally-managed wage economy settlement community in Kinngait (ᑭᑎᑎᑭᑦᑎᑦ), and encouraged Inuit to move in to alleviate their situation.³⁹

Along with the settlement community came Kinngait Studios: established in 1959 by *qallumaat* James Houston, the art-making studio cooperative materialized out of the need to generate an economic base for Kinngait (ᑭᑎᑎᑭᑦᑎᑦ). The Arctic co-op system served, and continues to serve, Inuit by providing them with employment: catering and building on the base skills they already honed (carving, sewing skins, embroidery) with which they could use to adapt to the newly enforced way of life. The co-op supplied materials, studio space, and monetary compensation to Inuit in exchange for Inuit-made artworks to be sold in the Southern market.⁴⁰ Kinngait (ᑭᑎᑎᑭᑦᑎᑦ) artists such as Pitseolak and Napachie have expressed their gratitude to the co-op for allowing them to provide for their families and themselves through drawing (in Napachie’s words translated from Inuktitut: “I am very grateful that I am being taken care of through my drawings”), however the colonial underpinnings of its structure and Houston’s vision of Inuit art as serving the Southern market’s obsession with

³⁸ Ipellie, “The Colonization of the Arctic,” 44.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ The disparity between the amount of money artists receive from the co-op and the much larger amount their final works are sometimes sold for in the South exposes an enduring problem within the co-op’s structure, lingering from its original intentions in 1959 to catalyze a cash economy in Kinngait. As Inuit art has now entered the realm of contemporary art, and more artists than ever are receiving national and international acclaim, there perhaps calls for a rethinking of the co-op’s minimum payment system regulations. I acknowledge these are not simple structural fixes, but am curious to see how the co-op model adapts to the artists’ changing desires for more economic autonomy over their artwork sales in the future.

imagined primitive authenticity does not go unnoticed.⁴¹ In *Pitseolak: Pictures Out of My Life*, Pitseolak recalls Houston advising her to “draw the old ways,” particularly in bright colours, as was what sold well in the Southern market.⁴² We see this continue throughout Pitseolak’s oeuvre as a majority of her drawings depict memories of the “old ways” in Pootoogook’s drawings of her grandmother drawing, such as *My Grandmother, Pitseolak Drawing* (fig. 5). Indicated by the calendar on the wall, the year is 1982, the year before Pitseolak’s passing—evidently she continued to draw “the old ways” until the very end of her life.

Yet, to pass off Pitseolak and other Inuit artist’s drawings simply as a result of following *qallunaat* co-op managers’s orders disregards the artist’s own agency for decision making in order to survive in a new environment—an application of *qanuqtuurniq* (being innovative and resourceful in solving problems) to be able to enact *pjiitsirniq* (serving and providing) for her family. Rather, as Pitseolak explains in her autobiography, she made a conscious decision to switch from handicrafts work (sewing parkas and duffel socks) to drawing after seeing the amount of money her cousin Kiakshuk was making with the new medium; income now necessary for her to provide for her family.⁴³ After expressing dissatisfaction early on regarding the small amount of money she received for her very laborious handicraft work—“it was always \$12 for a parka, even though it was hard to do”—Pitseolak noticed a value increase—“I think it was \$20”—after bringing Houston her first drawings, and continued to work primarily in the medium of drawing from that point on.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Leslie Boyd Ryan, *Napachie Pootoogook* (Winnipeg: Winnipeg Art Gallery, 2004), 7; Heather Igloliorte, “Influence and Instruction: James Houston, Sunuyuksuk: Eskimo Handicrafts, and the Formative Years of Contemporary Inuit Art,” MA thesis, Carleton University, 2006, 3.

⁴² Ashoona and Eber, *Pitseolak: Pictures Out of My Life*, 74, 79.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 71–72.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 70, 72.

Giving birth to seventeen children in her lifetime, Pitseolak's motivation to draw becomes inherently bound with the act of familial love as drawing provided Pitseolak with the means to, first and foremostly, provide for her extensive family.⁴⁵

The switch from handicrafts to drawing demonstrates Pitseolak's resilience in the form of *qanuqtuurniq* as a mother devoted her family through her willingness and ability to adapt by switching to the new medium of drawing; and innovate by drawing in a new semi-autobiographical form never before explored by the few Inuit drawers that preceded her. Described by Igloliorte as perhaps the single most important trait valued by Inuit, *qanuqtuurniq* encompasses the Inuit ability to be resilient, adaptive, and innovative as peoples who have survived in the harsh climate and relatively barren environment of the Arctic for thousands of years.⁴⁶ Living at a time of intense social, cultural, and economic change, Pitseolak adapts using the resources available to her: embracing the *qallunaat*-introduced medium of drawing out of economic necessity, fundamentally motivated by familial love.

Thus, Pitseolak's drawings of the "old ways" should not be defined by Houston's vision of imagined primitive authenticity but rather that Houston's initial vision marked a departure point or the point of adaptation for artists like Pitseolak, Napachie, and eventually Pootoogook to document life and culture through the lens of their own experience using the medium of drawing. These artists have further exercised their ability to be adaptive, innovative, and resourceful (*qanuqtuurniq*) using drawing to fulfill their own personal, familial, cultural, and economic needs. A need that can be traced in each family member's work,

⁴⁵ While Pitseolak gave birth to seventeen children, only six lived with her until adulthood. Others passed away during childhood or were adopted out to other families as is common in Inuit communities. Christine Lalonde, *Pitseolak Ashoona: Life & Work* (Toronto: Art Canada Institute, 2015), 7–8.

⁴⁶ Heather Igloliorte, "Curating Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit: Inuit Knowledge in the Qallunaat Art Museum," *Art Journal* 76.2 (2017): 110.

especially Pootoogook's, is the use of drawing to heal from traumatic experiences, particularly the loss of loved ones or the pain inflicted through intergenerational trauma initiated by the rapid colonization of the Arctic. Pitseolak and Napachie both expressed that drawing helped them heal, particularly after their respective husband's deaths, and Pootoogook has demonstrated and explained that drawing has similarly helped her cope with bad memories.⁴⁷ In the documentary *Annie Pootoogook* (2006), the artist discusses her drawing *Memory of My Life: Breaking Bottles* (2002) where she depicts herself smashing alcohol bottles out of frustration with alcoholism in her community:

It's not just a drawing—I know it's just a drawing but when I put my heart [in]to my drawing... that [memory shouldn't] come back again. Or I won't think about it anymore. So I love my work sometimes because it really helps my life feel better. Maybe I would [always] think bad things if I didn't start drawing. But it really helps my life. It lifts my life a lot.⁴⁸

Drawing as an act of healing cultivates self-love: building one's own self-esteem which is fundamental in strengthening relations with those around them.⁴⁹ While self-love is not necessarily a part of the core Inuit belief system, I posit that the need to cultivate self-love arises after the infliction of colonial trauma and encroaching influence from the South. To care for one's self yet maintain familial and communal ties at the same time, which contributes to the cultivation of self-esteem, became necessary within the dynamic and ever-changing environments Pootoogook and her matriarchs lived in. Drawing memory served as a way to adapt to and deal with such changes like the widening gap between generations and instability of the familial unit threatened by the Southern influence on Inuit ways. While the

⁴⁷ Pitseolak recounts this is in: Ashoona and Eber, *Pitseolak: Pictures Out of My Life*, 93; Napachie in: Leslie Boyd Ryan, *Napachie Pootoogook* (Winnipeg: Winnipeg Art Gallery, 2004), 7.

⁴⁸ *Annie Pootoogook*, film, directed by Marcia Connolly (Mississauga: Site Media, 2006), 14:00–15:50.

⁴⁹ African-American feminist scholar bell hooks is particularly well known for her writing on self-love; see: bell hooks, *All About Love: New Visions* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2001).

content of the healing drawings may vary between depicting “life in the past,” traumatic memories, or even nostalgia for stories never actually experienced by the artist herself, it is the act of drawing that cultivates self-love through catharsis: through purging bad memories or evoking good ones by drawing them on paper. Additionally, drawing builds self-esteem as the artist produces a work of art that doubly provides them with income while maintaining a grounding in family and culture, as the strengthening of Inuit knowledge and values through both visualizing them and participating in drawing environments where the same knowledge and values are transmitted and enacted.

Pootoogook made art both physically within and without Kinngait Studios. For Inuit artists residing in Kinngait (ᐱᕐᕐᕐᕐᕐ), artmaking at the studios has always served as a practical solution to alleviate hardship: from the collective hardship catalyzed by the collapse of the fur trade in the 1940s, to more recently functioning as a site for self-healing from the reverberating effects from colonial activity in the North. What is especially beneficial is that the transmission of Inuit knowledge occurs concurrently and in accordance within this self-healing process at the studios. I consider this both within the content of the artworks themselves as well as the communal “making” environments that constitute Kinngait Studios, frequented by storytellers and the transmission of Inuit values like *tunnganarniq*: fostering good spirit by being open, welcoming and inclusive; and *inuqatigiitsiarniq*: respecting others, nurturing relationships and caring for people.⁵⁰ Drawing at the co-op studios, for example, served Pootoogook well as a way for her to cultivate both self-love on a personal level by purging traumatic memories onto paper, and through conjuring the

⁵⁰ McMaster, *Inuit Modern*, 34.

presence of her mother and grandmother through the embodiment of their matriarchal drawing tradition.⁵¹

The communal aspect of drawing at the studios seemingly served a dual purpose for Pootoogook, as the transmission of core Inuit values within the studios replicated an environment Pootoogook likened to her memories of familial love. After moving South to Ottawa, the artist recalled her affinity for drawing with Elders at Kinngait Studios, likening them to her family:

It's fun to be with Elders; you're drawing and they're talking. It's like they're my parents... I miss that. When I go up [to Kinngait] I'm gonna go [to the] print shop and sit with Elders and draw with them.⁵²

Pootoogook's experience of drawing at the co-op studios, a communal space for drawers within Kinngait (ᑭᑎᑎᑭᑎᑭᑎᑭ) to gather, make art, and share stories, casts Kinngait Studios as a place where self-love, communal ties, and the strengthening of cultural knowledge flourished simultaneously. Importantly, Pootoogook expresses that her interaction with Elders at the studios reminds her of family, signaling that a familial love aspect remained valuable to the artist while drawing in a communal environment after her matriarchs had passed away.

Anishinaabe scholar Leanne Betasamosake Simpson suggests that the resurgence of Indigenous culture (traditions, languages, practices, thought) is a mode of self-love and healing for Indigenous communities.⁵³ Pootoogook's works show us that the act of drawing at the studios as well as at home with family function as sites where the resurgence and maintenance of Inuit *Qaujimajatuqangit* and cultural values take place. While the content of

⁵¹ *Annie Pootoogook*, film, 5:44–5:51.

⁵² *Kinngait: Riding Light Into The World*, film directed by Annette Mangaard, (Mississauga: Site Media, 2006), 27:05–27:35.

⁵³ Winder, "Falling Into Decolonial Love," <https://asusjournal.org/issue-4/interview-with-leanne-simpson/>.

Inuit drawing is dynamic and ever-shifting, the act of drawing continues to mark Inuit resilience as a self-decolonizing act about healing, undergone either independently or amongst others.

What was key in Pootoogook's situation is that drawing served as an activity for healing through introspection, which was an act also passed down from her grandmother and mother. While the artist enjoyed drawing with community members, even likening them to her own familial relations, her depictions of her matriarchs drawing independently in bed reveal how drawing aided with self-reflection within her family. *My Grandmother, Pitseolak Drawing* demonstrates this: Pootoogook does not depict herself directly in the scene this time but rather as an outsider, taking the same vantage point as the viewer, observing her grandmother at work. Pitseolak drawing in her bedroom in isolation does not convey drawing as an activity that promotes individualism, which would go against core Inuit beliefs centered around family and community, but rather demonstrates that drawing was perhaps just as much an introspective and cathartic activity as it was an opportunity to share stories and pass on knowledge. In fact, both seemed necessary: the introspectiveness and cultivation of self-love was fundamental in helping the artist strengthen ties with her family, community, and culture, each occurring concurrently through drawing.

Wind-Swept & Amauti-Clad: Finding Love and Resilience in Pootoogook's Recurring Imagery

"I hope the culture stays there for a long time. I hope, I wish, I hope. But I don't know, I don't know."
—Annie Pootoogook⁵⁴

"Because it seems to me, that despite everything, we are here today, living as Indigenous peoples because our Ancestors had a tremendous capacity to love their families, friends, lovers, their land, their culture and their community. That in some ways, is our greatest resistance."
—Leanne Betasamosake Simpson⁵⁵

For Inuit, the resistive power of love Leanne Betasamosake Simpson outlines in the quote above is better understood as resilience or *qanuqtuurnig*: the ability to adapt, be innovative, and harness resources to do so, which Inuk art historian Heather Igloliorte describes as the single most valued trait of Inuit.⁵⁶ Simpson, an Anishinaabe scholar and activist, uses the term “resistance” to describe how Nishnaabeg love, deeply personal and stemming out of creation stories, serves as the most powerful force to counter the continuous colonial subjugation of her people.⁵⁷ She writes that Nishnaabeg people, culture, and thought embody love, and this embodiment drives action: to act in the name of love in order to maintain something that one deeply loves—in this case, her culture and all of its relations.⁵⁸ Inuit-specific resilience is motivated by the same love for culture, for family, and for self,

⁵⁴ *Annie Pootoogook*, film, directed by Marcia Connolly (Mississauga: Site Media, 2006), 11:14–11:30.

⁵⁵ Winder, “Falling Into Decolonial Love,” <https://asusjournal.org/issue-4/interview-with-leanne-simpson/>.

⁵⁶ Heather Igloliorte, “Curating Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit: Inuit Knowledge in the Qallunaat Art Museum,” *Art Journal* 76.2 (2017), 104.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, *Dancing on Our Turtles Back: Stories of Nishnaabeg Re-Creation, Resurgence and a New Emergence* (Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring Publishing, 2011).

ultimately to maintain and strengthen each. These concepts of love and resilience coalesce in Annie Pootoogook's drawings, and can be analyzed through a close reading of an image that recurs in the artist's drawing oeuvre: the wind-swept Inuk woman who wears an *amauti* (mother's coat). Through analyzing this recurring image which possesses longstanding meaning linked to Inuit *Qaujimajatuqangit*, as well as dynamic meanings that adjust according to the artist's continuously changing intercultural environment, I explore how Pootoogook's use of the *amauti* image becomes representative of Inuit cultural resilience motivated by love.

The *amauti* is often depicted in Inuit artwork made by women, and its recursive use reinforces the centrality of familial love in Inuit life.⁵⁹ *Amautiit* (plural) were designed specifically for mothers to carry infants in a hood-like pouch that hangs off their back (*amauti*), made with widened shoulders for the mother to easily move the infant from back to front for breast feeding, fully shielding the infant from the Arctic elements (fig. 6).⁶⁰ Traditionally, *amautiit* were made from the skins and furs of local fauna, such as caribou, that lived within the region, though the *amauti* Pootoogook commonly depicts in her drawings is likely not made entirely from natural materials but rather with Grenfell cloth (polyester and cotton)—a marker of changing times.⁶¹ The *amauti* as a visual symbol of Inuit *Qaujimajatuqangit* encapsulates the principle of *qanuqtuurnig* specifically by providing material evidence for an Inuit woman's innovativeness, adaptability, and resourcefulness, which becomes manifest in the *amauti* as a marker of physical resiliency. Inherently linked to family, specifically mother and infant, the *amauti* is inextricable from the idea of familial love and the

⁵⁹ Igloliorte, "Curating Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit: Inuit Knowledge in the Qallunaat Art Museum," 107.

⁶⁰ Betty Kobayashi Issenman, *Sinews of Survival: The Living Legacy of Inuit Clothing* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997).

⁶¹ Issenman, *Sinews of Survival*, 150.

importance of close family bonds. In these ways, the *amauti* is symbolic of both a love and resiliency that is specifically Inuit.

Though Pootoogook uses the image of the *amauti* in her work much less than her maternal forebears, her images become symbolic of themes of love and resilience in ways that are entirely unique to the intercultural environment that the artist grew up in, yet still build on the core associations with *qanuqtuurnig* and love that I outlined prior.⁶² One specific iteration of the *amauti*-clad woman that is unique to Pootoogook's oeuvre is the woman depicted as "wind-swept." This figure, who does not represent any one person in particular, wears an *amauti* and is always depicted walking against the cold Arctic wind holding her *amaut* close to her head to prevent it from blowing over, likely also to protect an infant nestled inside (as seen in Pootoogook's drawing *Composition [Mother and Child]* [2006] [fig. 7]). This recurring figure draws us in because it embodies the act of resilience by walking *against* something—the invisible Arctic wind, suggesting the resistive (in addition to resilient) symbolic associations of the image.

A good example of the wind-swept, *amauti*-clad woman appears in Pootoogook's drawing *Skinning a Seal in the Kitchen* (2004–05) (fig. 8). The drawing takes place inside of a home and features five Inuit getting ready to prepare a meal. The *amauti*-clad woman is the sixth figure in this scene; Pootoogook does not place her within the interior but rather outdoors, on the land. We, the viewers, catch a glimpse of her through a small window in the kitchen. The woman walks outside in the snow with difficulty, moving against the cold Arctic wind, again holding up her hood to shield her face from the freeze. Being physically resilient

⁶² Examples include *Composition (Windswept)* (2005–06) (fig. 15) and *Windy Day* (2006) (fig. 16). See Appendix A.

against the Arctic wind with the help of her *amauti*, the woman personifies Inuit environmental activist Sheila Watt-Cloutier's idea of "the right to be cold:" that through a deep love for a culture inextricably bound with the land that Inuit have cared for and lived with for thousands of years, the act and motivation to be resilient in the face of harsh Arctic conditions (rather than, for example, moving South) reflects the power of love as motivating resilience.⁶³ This is reflective of the fundamental cultural love, the "greatest resistance" that Simpson speaks about in relation to her own Anishinaabe roots. The wind-resilient *amauti*-clad woman embodies a very distinctive Inuit love and resilience.

The specific details and shapely elements that distinguish the *amauti* against the more commonly worn parka adds to the already symbolic associations with the object. The interior that Pootoogook depicts in *Skinning a Seal in the Kitchen* is predominantly laden with Southern influences and the wind-swept, *amauti*-clad woman appears as the most obvious indicator of "Inuit-ness" in the scene due to her culturally distinctive clothing. With this in mind, the meaning of resilience associated with the *amauti* shifts according to the intercultural space it is placed within. Inside the Southern-style home the five other Inuit wear seemingly Southern-influenced parkas which appear more formally minimal in comparison to the wind-swept woman's *amauti*, its more elaborate form emphasized by its wind-swept-ness. The *amauti* then serves as a symbolic marker and visualizes a principle embedded within the crafting of the *amauti*: *sanattiaqsimajut* which refers to "these things that are finely crafted."⁶⁴ The other parkas worn in the scene lack the intricate detail of the *amauti* with its elongated

⁶³ Watt-Cloutier's quote is also heavily impingent upon the ever-increasing threat of climate change in the North. For further reading on this topic see: Sheila Watt-Cloutier, *The Right to Be Cold: One Woman's Story of Protecting Her Culture, the Arctic and the Whole Planet* (Toronto: Allen Lane, 2017).

⁶⁴ McMaster, *Inuit Modern*, 34.

round-cut tail, sewn-in stripes, and enlarged *amaut*—distinguishing her coat as markedly different from the rest.

When Pootoogook depicts the wind-swept *amauti*-clad woman walking amongst an environment heavily influenced by the culture of the South, the *amauti* emblemizes also as a symbol of Inuit cultural resilience/resistance through the visual contrast that drawing an intercultural environment reveals. The woman in her *amauti* moves against the cold wind, but she also moves against the Southern influence in the North: not in hostility to (as would be likewise with the wind) but as an act of resilience in the form of visibility—the *amauti* as a marker of cultural identity. The presence of the windswept *amauti*-clad woman within the heavily Southern influenced scene underlines Inuit cultural resiliency through the presence of the *amauti* which carries with it Inuit cultural knowledge and values into the intercultural present.

The *amauti* in *Skinning a Seal in the Kitchen* is not meant to represent the way things used to be, but rather cultural knowledge as embedded within material cultural objects like the *amauti* which aids in their continuous transmission as the image moves fluidly between different media. For Pootoogook, including depictions of *amautiit* in her drawings of contemporary Kinngait (ᐱᓐᓴᓴᓴ) life demonstrates that her use of the drawing medium enables the continuous transmission of meaning and knowledge into her present community. The four meanings and principles associated with the *amauti*—familial love, cultural love, *qanuqtuurnig*, and *sanattiaqsimajut*—cannot be divorced from the *amauti* as a symbol, but these meanings become fluid and adaptive according to the context within which the artist uses it. This holds true across different forms of media, as is the case with Pootoogook who drew

amautiit as opposed to sewing them because drawing was the most practical solution for her socio-economic circumstance, similarly to Pitseolak and Napachie who preceded her.

Drawing instead of sewing the *amauti* does not mean all of its original meanings are lost, but rather that new meanings emerge and adapt according to the new context in which the symbol is presented.⁶⁵ Thus, the *amauti* as a symbol is intrinsically linked to love and resilience by virtue of making both possible: by retaining a close bond between mother and child in the earliest years of childhood development and by enabling both to be resilient against the Arctic elements through providing warmth and protection. When brought into Pootoogook's context, the wind-swept *amauti*-clad woman symbolizes Inuit cultural resilience against the South. The meaning of symbols shift according to the dynamic cultural circumstances but the core principles associated with Inuit material culture, remain.

The contrast between North and South that Pootoogook visualizes in drawings like *Skinning a Seal in the Kitchen* calls for markedly distinctive cultural objects such as the *amauti* to be framed as visual markers of cultural sovereignty. The concept of cultural sovereignty encompasses what Tewa/Diné scholar Beverly Singer refers to as trusting in the old ways and adapting them to the present, an idea that is complimentary to Simpson's theorization of Indigenous cultural love functioning as resistance against colonial forces.⁶⁶ Pootoogook's drawings that show that the *amauti*, a traditional form of apparel integral to maternal Inuit culture, continues to be worn in the North despite the encroachment of Southern-style outerwear, marks cultural resilience and visualizes cultural sovereignty.

⁶⁵ As suggested by Christine Lalonde in "Colonialism Changes Everything," in *Inuit Modern*, ed. Gerald McMaster (Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario, 2011), 31.

⁶⁶ Beverly R. Singer, *Wiping the War Paint off the Lens: Native American Film and Video* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 2.

However, writers such as Lenape scholar Joanne Barker have warned against equating Indigenous sovereignty with the resurgence or visualization of particular cultural activities (such as basket weaving or even the wearing of *amauti*) due to the risk of flattening out the political complexities of Indigenous sovereignty within their respective legal jurisdictions.⁶⁷ While Pootoogook's depiction of the *amauti* may not directly aid with the Inuit mission of self-determination and governmental sovereignty within Inuit Nunangat,⁶⁸ to consider her use of the *amauti* as a recurring symbol within her oeuvre marks a visualization of Inuit resilience that, through recursive depiction, has the potential to strengthen Inuit cultural sovereignty by documenting how the "old ways" continue on into the present. This encapsulates the important notion that Inuit *Qaujimajatuqangit*, though often translated as "traditional knowledge," is a *living* knowledge, and what may be considered "traditional" is certainly not confined to the past. Pootoogook's drawings demonstrate that the visual functions as a space where this form of cultural community strengthening takes place, which, both Rickard and Igloliorte argue, is art's key role: to formulate more fluid notions of sovereignty as Indigenous (and Inuit specific) thought moves within cultural space.⁶⁹

Pootoogook's drawing *Three Generations* (2004–05) (fig. 9) presents as a compelling example of Inuit cultural sovereignty, love, and resilience in the form of what Singer calls adapting the "old ways" into the present. The drawing recalls another scene of familial

⁶⁷ Joanne Barker, *Sovereignty Matters* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 21.

⁶⁸ Inuit Nunangat is a term used to describe the Inuit regions of Canada: Inuvialuit (Northern Yukon, Northern Northwest Territories, and Northwestern Nunavut), Nunatsiavut (Northern Labrador), Nunavik (ᐃᐱᐱᐅ, Northern Quebec), and Nunavut (ᐃᐱᐅᐅ).

⁶⁹ Jolene Rickard discusses the importance of art in fostering cultural sovereignty in: "Sovereignty: A Line in the Sand," *Aperture* 139 (Summer 1995): 50–59; Heather Igloliorte discusses this in her essay: "Sovereign Nations: Canada and the Inuit of Northern North America," in *Negotiations in a Vacant Lot: Studying the Visual in Canada*, ed. Lynda Jessup et al. (Montreal: McGill-Queen's/Beaverbrook Canadian Foundation Studies in Art History: 2014), 150–170.

memory as we see the matriarchal family unit of Pitseolak Ashoona, a young Annie Pootoogook, and Napachie Pootoogook walking together. Young Pootoogook holds her mother's hand as her grandmother follows behind. Pitseolak and Napachie wear Southern-style clothing, yet Pootoogook has drawn her young-self wearing an *amauti*. Traditionally meant to be worn by mothers, young Pootoogook carries a teddy bear instead of an infant in her *amaut* in an act of maternal mimicry. She embodies the transmission of cultural knowledge across generations, as we know she does not wear the *amauti* out of necessity but rather as an object of cultural significance and learning through knowledge embedded in an object of material culture. Young Pootoogook makes use of the *amauti* as an object of living knowledge, adapting it to her then-circumstance as a young girl rather than a mother (indicated by her teddy bear in place of infant). The artist's decision to highlight herself as the source of cultural knowledge transmission signals that the maintenance of Inuit culture was important to her. As the youngest of the matriarchs and perhaps the furthest removed from regular engagement with Inuit knowledge and cultural traditions, her *amauti* marks her as a figure that seeks to strengthen these qualities through marking *herself* as the symbol of resilience within a memory of familial love.

Directly above young *amauti*-clad Pootoogook in *Three Generations* is a framed picture of what may be considered the quintessential symbol of love in Western culture—a red rose, another recurring symbol that frequents Pootoogook's drawings. Thus, another North/South contrast emerges: Inuit familial and cultural love represented by the *amauti*, and Western conceptions of love symbolized by the red rose. The placement of the framed red rose picture directly above her young *amauti*-clad Pootoogook is notable because the red rose, like the *amauti*, also has familial ties specific to Pootoogook's family story. As hinted by

the written text that reads “Red Rose” on the framed picture of the image of the red rose, Pootoogook has likely adapted the image from the Red Rose Tea logo, a Southern import.⁷⁰ This traces back to Pootoogook’s familial ties to her grandmother, Pitseolak, who stated that the ability to purchase tea (and other goods) for her family was a key motivation for initially switching to drawing from handicrafts during the early days of Kinngait Studios.⁷¹ Similarly to the way that Pitseolak adapted to the new medium of drawing to provide for her family, Pootoogook appropriates the red rose as a form of embellishment in this drawing to express a kind of love that appears universal, but when analyzed further, is really very specific.

Pootoogook demonstrates her own application of *qanuqtuurnig* (specifically adaptiveness and innovativeness) and *sanattiaqsimajut* (these things are finely crafted) when considering her use of the red rose as an aesthetic embellishment. The red rose is linked to *qanuqtuurnig* in the sense that Pootoogook has adopted and adapted a symbol from Western culture (as roses do not grow in the Arctic) to use for her own expressive needs. This image shows us how Pootoogook uses the red rose to not only depict a familial memory imbued with love, but to also show her innovation, *qanuqtuurnig*, as an artist. The artist takes this symbol from her ever-shifting intercultural environment and appropriates it to express the kinds of love that motivate her and her drawings.

Three Generations is where Pootoogook’s love for family and culture, as well as her works’ potential for strengthening Inuit cultural sovereignty, coalesce. Notably, young *amauti*-clad Pootoogook’s movement in the drawing is different from the wind-swept *amauti*-clad

⁷⁰ The way Pootoogook draws the red rose picture in *Three Generations* is reminiscent of the logo on the Red Rose Tea box in drawings like *Bringing Home Food* (2003–04) (fig. 10). See Appendix A.

⁷¹ Pitseolak Ashoona and Dorothy Eber, *Pitseolak: Pictures Out of My Life* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1971), 76.

woman: she walks at a regular pace with her matriarchs, a slow pace even, as the artist's drawings often convey an unhurriedness perhaps reflective of the conception of time in the North.⁷² Here, Pootoogook visualizes the transmission of Inuit knowledge through a child—herself—who unlike the wind-swept woman, is not yet moving in resistance. Still indoors but heading outside soon, young *amauti*-clad Pootoogook is a precursor for the eventual resistance *and* resilience she will embody as an Inuit woman who will grow up in the intercultural North. For now, she marks herself as the hopeful locus for Inuit cultural maintenance and sovereignty for the years to come: she is the source of strength and resilience within a memory of maternal love.

⁷² Michelle Raheja has discussed the Inuit conception of temporal “slowness” in relation to the pacing of the Inuit film *Atanarjuat*, stating: “The slowness of the sequencing matches the patience one must have to hunt on the ice, wait for hours at a seal hole, traverse long distances on foot or in a dogsled, or battle more than five hundred years of colonialism.” Raheja, “Reading Nanook’s Smile: Visual Sovereignty, Indigenous Revisions of Ethnography, and *Atanarjuat*,” *American Quarterly* 59.4 (2007): 1178.

Conclusion: Reflecting on Love

I end my analysis of Pootoogook's drawings on her image of the red rose in order to return to where my investigation began: by considering how Joyce Wieland's work *True Patriot Love* located the flower as a backdrop upon which she constructed her homage to Canadian nationalism. Wieland's work uses a government publication about Arctic flowers to shape her conception about Inuit within the narrative of Canadian true patriot love, and in contrast, Pootoogook uses the image of the red rose—a flower that grows in the South—to embellish her own drawing *Three Generations*, where love for family and culture coalesce in the North. Pootoogook's use of the image becomes infused with the adaptiveness of *qanuqtuurnig* through incorporating this symbol from the South into her own recursive imagery to shape and express her distinctive feelings of love. Unlike Wieland's use of delicate Arctic flowers to signify an ecologically threatened environment, Pootoogook's rose can be read as representing resilience, a sentiment reflected in the way Pootoogook decorated her own home. In the 2006 documentary *Annie Pootoogook*, we catch a glimpse of the artist's home wall décor where a plastic rose has been thumbtacked on top of two newspaper headline clippings; they read "Love" and "Revival and survival" (fig. 11).⁷³ I posit that love is an action that can strengthen Inuit cultural sovereignty. Therefore, in this instance I see the potential for one love to surpass another: Pootoogook's love for family, community, and culture over the Canadian nation's (or Wieland's) historical appropriation of Inuit art and culture for their own agendas.

⁷³ *Annie Pootoogook*, film, directed by Marcia Connolly (Mississauga: Site Media, 2006), 4:32.

Through this theorization, what emerges are the voices and ideas from women writers and scholars, many Indigenous, who predominantly populate this major research paper. This happened organically as a result of approaching Pootoogook's drawings from a place of specificity and tracing her drawing lineage through the theme of matriarchal love. However, it would be a misstep not to acknowledge that Pootoogook also used drawing to depict love for the men in her life. In fact, the very first drawing I introduced in this paper features a love relation between a woman and a man, *Composition (Plucking the Grey Hair)* (fig. 2), which exemplifies how love for both family (or in this case companionship) and culture are intertwined elements in Pootoogook's drawings. The work also demonstrates another of the many types of love that the artist drew. Scenes of tenderness featuring men exist in Pootoogook's oeuvre, though they are often seen as secondary to her contrastingly jarring images of abusive traumatic experiences with male partners.⁷⁴ Perhaps this is why Pootoogook's scenes of matriarchal love have struck me as the most compelling: because they are contrary to depictions of violence, the drawings frame the artist's memories of her matriarchs as a source of strength. In this sense, feeling love in many dimensions is truly bound with the capacity to be resilient.

When Pootoogook moved South, away from both family and culture which were her main sources of stability and resilience, her capacity to apply *qanuqtuurnig* to the everyday became more difficult. Yet it seems that love kept her going. One of her last drawings titled *Full of Love* (2015) (fig. 12) is a self-portrait featuring the artist sitting down cross legged, hands cupping her heart, a smile of contentment on her face, and yellow emotive lines

⁷⁴ Examples of Pootoogook's drawings that express love for men include *Composition (Couple in Bed)* (2006) (fig. 17) and *Sharing God's Love* (2002) (fig. 18). See Appendix A.

radiating around her body. Executed in the medium of drawing itself and even adapting the emotive line motif that her mother Napachie developed (fig. 19), traces of love and strength from Pootoogook's matriarchal lineage linger in this drawing. Only twelve months later the artist would pass away, and what unfortunately followed were narratives about abuse and decline informed by dominant cultural prejudices.⁷⁵

But this paper looks for the resilience, rather than despair, in Pootoogook's drawings by shedding a light on her depictions of love. They outnumber her scenes of violence, yet are not discussed far frequently enough. Pootoogook's legacy lives on and her drawings continue to strengthen Inuit cultural sovereignty not only as markers of love for culture and family, but in influencing younger generations to cultivate self, familial, and cultural love through drawing—just as her matriarchs did for her. In November 2017 four Kinngait (ᑭᑎᑎᑭᑦᑲᑦ) youth were asked to talk about their favourite Pootoogook drawings.⁷⁶ One of the teens, Johnnybou Taukie, age fourteen, resonated with Pootoogook's drawing *Hunter Mimics Seal* (2006) which features an Inuk hunter lying down on the ice across from a seal directly mimicking the animal's position. What is compelling is that although the drawing does not directly reference familial love, the reasons Johnnybou cited *Hunter Mimics Seal* are bound with family and culture:

The seal represents some of the most useful resources, like the skin could be used for *kamiks* (traditional seal skin boots) or *atigi* (parkas). [...] And the hunter

⁷⁵ *Qallunaat* Sergeant Chris Hrnchiar of the Ottawa police department faced controversy for trivializing Pootoogook's death through comments posted on social media. CBC News, "Ottawa officer demoted for racist comments about Annie Pootoogook," *CBC News Ottawa*, December 7, 2016, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/ottawa/chris-hrnchiar-racist-comments-penalty-annie-pootoogook-1.3884927>.

⁷⁶ Chris Rattan, "Cape Dorset youth pick their favourite Annie Pootoogook drawings," *NOW! Magazine*, November 1, 2017, <https://nowtoronto.com/art-and-books/art/cape-dorset-youth-pick-favourite-annie-pootoogook-drawings/>.

is very powerful. They keep the family from hunger and keep the family warm with skins.⁷⁷

The meaning Johnnybou locates in Pootoogook's drawing is implicitly defined by love, in this case, paternal. Remarkably what these comments demonstrate are how Pootoogook's legacy lives on through her drawings for the Inuit viewer, where the power of love will aid future generations to fortify Inuit culture and foreground their own voices.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

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Appendix A: Figures

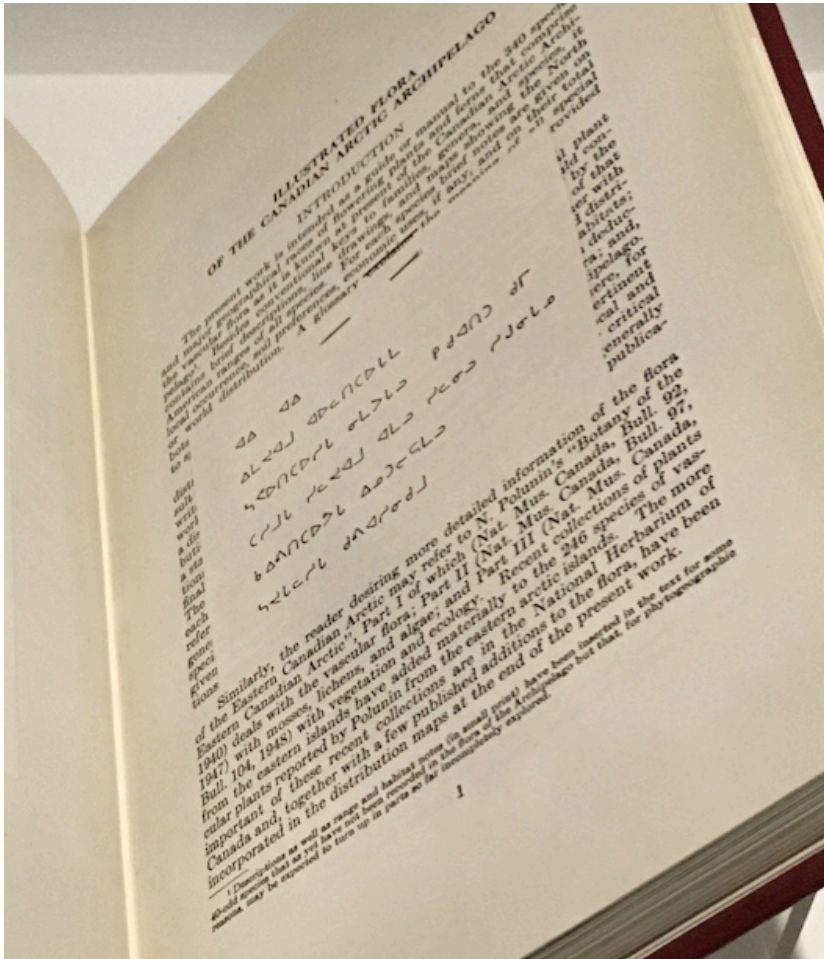


Figure 1: Installation view of Joyce Wieland, *True Patriot Love*, page 1, 1971, bookwork, 25 x 17 cm, published by the National Gallery of Canada. Photo taken by Emily Lawrence in the exhibition *Passion Over Reason: Tom Thomson & Joyce Wieland*, McMichael Canadian Art Collection, Kleinburg, ON.



Figure 2: Annie Pootoogook, *Composition (Plucking the Grey Hair)*, 2004–05, coloured pencil and ink on paper, 66.6 × 101.8 cm, collection of Stephanie Comer and Rob Craigie.



Figure 3: Annie Pootoogook, *Pitseolak Drawing with Two Girls on the Bed*, 2006, 50.8 × 66 cm, pencil crayon and ink on paper, courtesy of Fehbeley Fine Arts.



Figure 4: Annie Pootoogook, *My Mother and I*, 2004-05, 76 × 106 cm, pencil crayon and ink on paper, collection of John and Joyce Price.



Figure 5: Annie Pootoogook, *My Grandmother*, Pitseolak Drawing, 2002, 46.5 × 52.5 cm, pencil crayon and ink on paper, collection of John and Joyce Price.

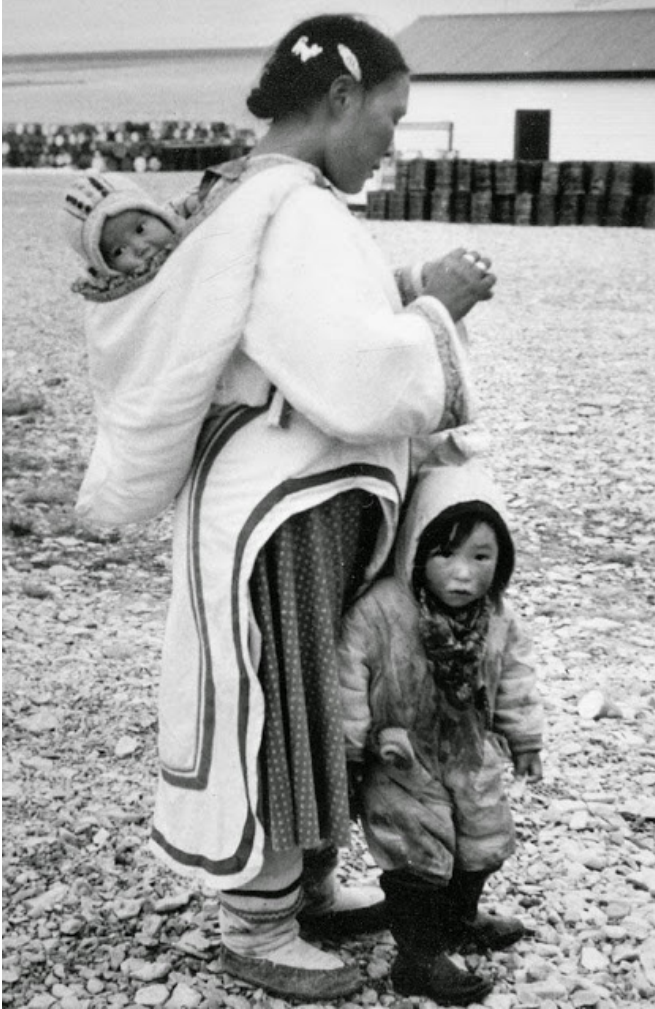


Figure 6: Inuit mother with one child in front of her and carrying one in her hood, September 12, 1958. Iglulik (ᐃᓄᓐᓇᓐ, Igloolik), Nunavut. Library and Archives Canada, Charles Gimpel Fonds.



Figure 7: Annie Pootoogook, *Skinning a Seal in the Kitchen*, 2004–05, 58 × 101.5 cm, coloured and metallic pencil, black porous-point pen on paper, Art Gallery of Ontario.



Figure 8: Annie Pootoogook, *Composition (Mother and Child)*, 2006, coloured pencil and ink on paper, 38.1 × 50.8 cm, McMichael Canadian Art Collection.



Figure 9: Annie Pootoogook, *Three Generations*, 2004–05, pencil crayon and ink on paper, 66 × 101.5 cm, collection of John and Joyce Price.



Figure 10: Annie Pootoogook, detail of *Bringing Home Food*, 2003–2004, coloured pencil and ink over graphite on paper, 50.8 × 57.8 cm, McMichael Canadian Art Collection.



Figure 11: Film still from the documentary *Annie Pootoogook* (2006).

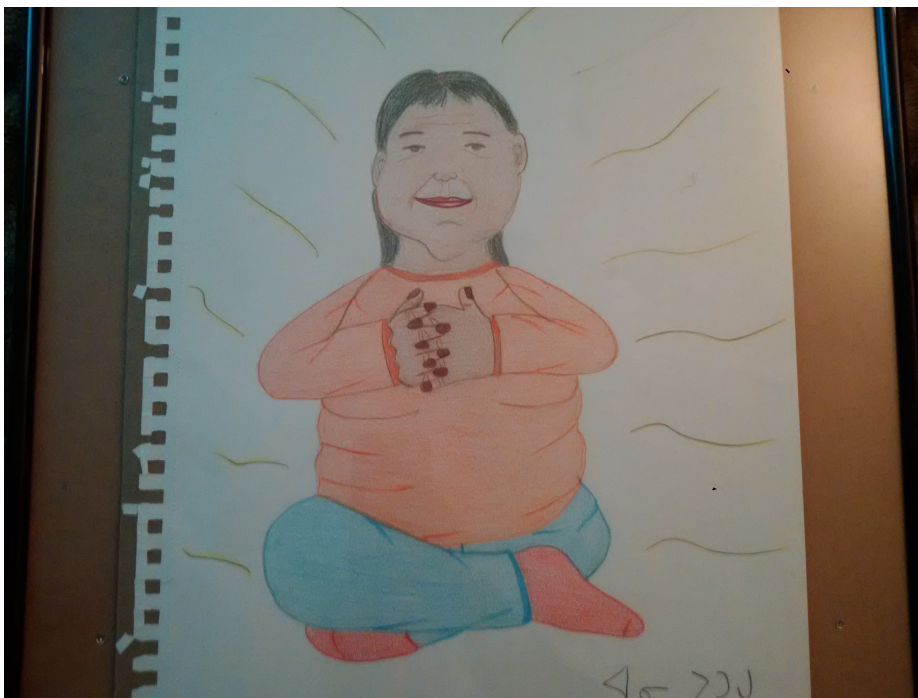


Figure 12: *Annie Pootoogook*, *Full of Love*, 2015, pencil crayon on paper.

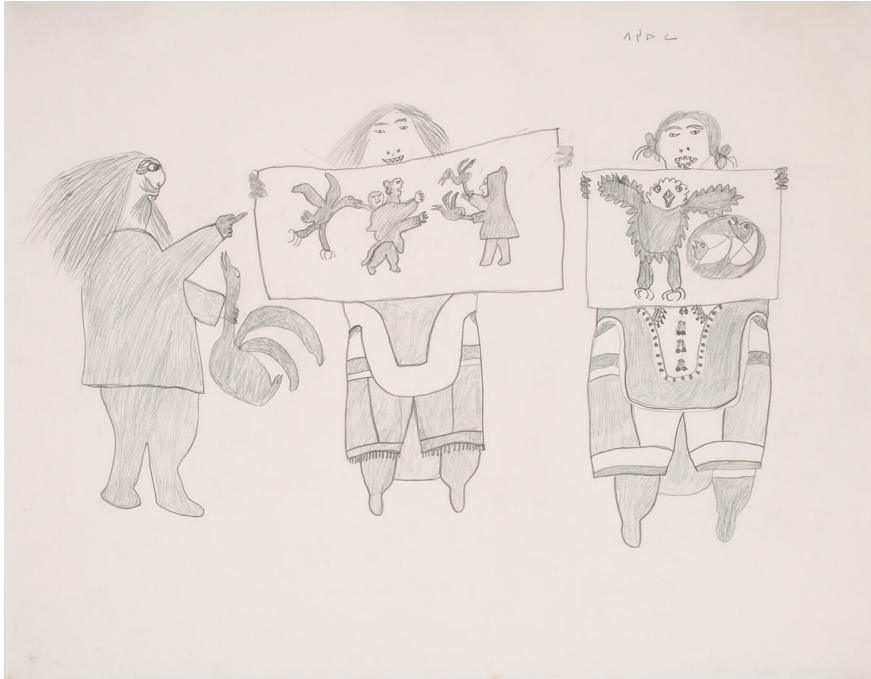


Figure 13: Pitseolak Asboona, *The Critic*, c. 1963, graphite on paper, 47.6 × 61.1 cm, National Gallery of Canada.



Figure 14: Napachie Pootoogook, *Napachie Drawing in Her Tent*, 1984–85, coloured pencil, felt-tip pen on paper, 50.9 × 66 cm, collection of the West Baffin Eskimo Co-Operative Ltd., on loan to the McMichael Canadian Art Collection.

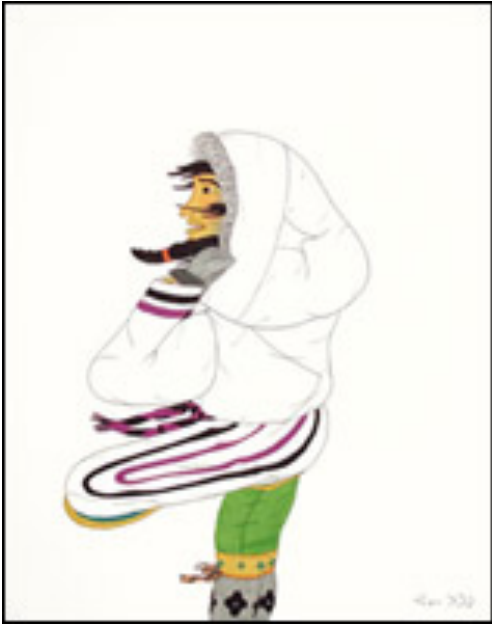


Figure 15: Annie Pootoogook, *Composition (Windswept)*, 2005–06, ink, pencil crayon, pencil 68.58 × 57.15 cm, collection of E.J. Guarino.



Figure 16: Annie Pootoogook, *Windy Day*, 2006, pencil crayon and ink on paper, 51 × 66.5 cm, collection of John and Joyce Price.

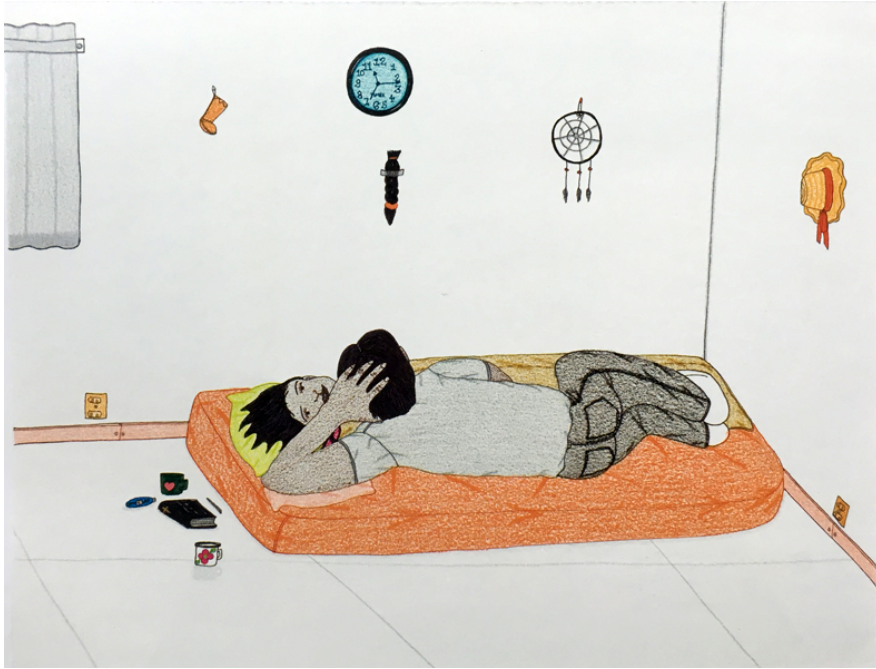


Figure 17: Annie Pootoogook, *Composition (Couple in Bed)*, 2006, pencil crayon and ink on paper, 39.5 × 51 cm, private collection.

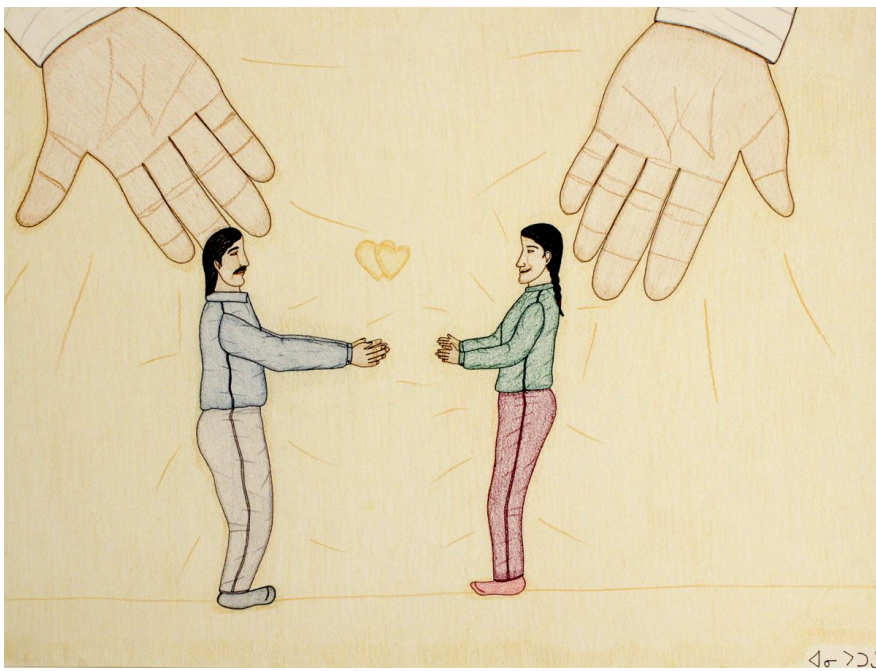


Figure 18: Annie Pootoogook, *Sharing God's Love*, 2002, coloured pencil and ink, 50.8 × 66 cm, courtesy of Febeley Fine Arts.

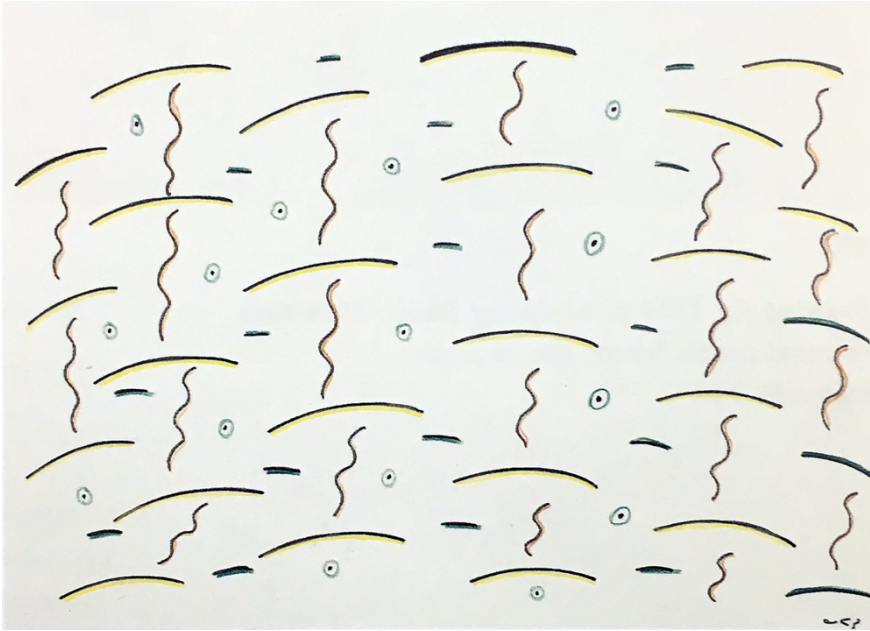


Figure 19: Napachie Pootoogook, *Vibrations*, 1978–79, coloured pencil and felt-tip pen on paper, 25.4 × 34.6 cm.