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Another Kind of Team:
an Ethnographic Look at Contemporary Inuit Dog Race in Nunavik

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Abstract

This project in ethnology examines the contemporary Inuit dog sledding practices (Inuktitut: *qimutsik*) and their place in modern Inuit society in Nunavik, Québec, Canada. In particular, this project attempts to document and analyze the Ivakkak race, an annual Inuit dogsled race in Nunavik, from the Inuit cultural perspective. The project presents an ethnographic portrait of the event, as complete as it could be, given the circumstantial limitations imposed by the 2020 Covid pandemic. The findings presented in this document cover key features of Ivakkak, including its administrative and sportive dimensions, its pan-regional communal aspects, its performative and athletic traits, and most importantly, its multi-species cultural-social integration specific to the contemporary Inuit life in Nunavik. The findings show that, although largely underrepresented in the mainstream media (sport and cultural outlets), Ivakkak encapsulates a unique universe, built and sustained by dog-human partners in ways unrivaled by any modern dogsledding competition in the Northern hemisphere.

Keywords: qimmiit, qimutsik, Inuit, dogs, dogteam, dogsledding, Ivakkak, Nunavik, human-dog relations, sports

Résumé

Le projet vise à dresser un portrait ethnographique de la course Ivakkak, un évènement sportif communautaire, organisé annuellement à Nunavik depuis 2001. Cette course célèbre la tradition de traîneau à chien inuit (« Ivakkak - the return of the Inuit dog », tel est le titre officiel de l'événement), mais consiste également en une fête sociale très populaire chez les locaux. L'objectif principal est de connaître l'état actuel des relations humains-qimmiit (chiens inuits) au Nunavik à travers une observation compréhensive de l'édition 2020 de la course Ivakkak. Plus précisément, le projet porte sur trois volets principaux: premièrement, l'organisation et le déroulement d'Ivakkak, ses significations sociale, culturelle, voire politique, pour les participants et pour les spectateurs; deuxièmement, les techniques de traîneau et de dressage ainsi; finalement, les relations humain-chien dans un contexte de compétition sportive spécifique. Le projet tente de saisir l'importance d'Ivakkak et des *qimutsiit*, « dog team », dans la modernité inuite, du point de vue des Nunavimmiut. Les résultats de ce projet révèlent que, malgré le fait qu'il soit largement sous-représenté dans les médias du Sud, Ivakkak constitue un univers d'une grande richesse, créé et soutenu par les Inuits et leurs partenaires canins, dans une configuration qu'on ne peut difficilement assimiler aux autres compétitions de traîneau à chiens ailleurs dans le monde.

Mots-clés : qimmiit, qimutsik, Inuit, chien, traîneau à chiens, Ivakkak, Nunavik, relation humain-chien, événement sportif

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Dedicated to the memory of Willia Qullialuk, and to all the young mushers of Nunavik

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Chapter 1.
Literature review, hypothesis and methodology

1.1. Qimmiit, sled dogs, and the academia

Sled dogs constitute a unique cultural icon in the Inuit world. Traditional life in the Eastern Arctic used to be (and in many aspects still remains) a large web of intricate interspecies ties, where humans are indissociable from their canine companions. This entanglement manifests itself in the most immediate physical realm (daily tasks, crafts, techniques), as well as in the less tangible social and spiritual spheres (socialization process, family and community dynamic, emotional life, oral history, belief systems), and everything in between. Up until the 1950s, almost every exploration report, travel log, and general description (in European languages) of the Eastern Arctic Inuit communities mentions sled dogs. These hardy "shy and wild" work animals have continuously captured the Southern imagination over the past two hundred years (Lévesque & Baril, 2020). Even in a post-colonial world, where Inuit societies have undergone violent sociocultural traumas and profound, drastic mutations, *qimmiit* (dogs, *pl.* in Inuktitut) remain an endearing and enduring symbol of Inuit ethnic identity.

Given the vast popularity of northern sled dogs (the famous "huskies"), one would expect that Inuit sled dogs, *qimmiit*, and dog team, *qimutsiit*, as a specific area of study, would attract a good deal of scholarly attention. Yet they are far from being a "hot" research topic.[1] The most thoroughly investigated aspect related to Inuit dogs is in the field of Arctic archaeology (Morey and Aaris-Sørensen, 2002; Pitulko and Kasparov, 2017; Losey et al., 2018; Hill, 2018) and genetics (Ameen et al., 2019; Bergström et al., 2020; Sinding et al., 2020). In addition, sled dogs have been studied in cynology and in physiology for their impressive metabolic performance.[2] A number of canine epidemiology and veterinary studies also tackle dogs in Northern communities (Aenishaenslin et al., 2014; Andersen-Ranberg et al., 2019).

[1] Keywords "Inuit sled dogs" return about 5000 results on Google Scholar search, whereas "Inuit religion" brought up roughly 35,500 entries, and with "shamanism", 76,800 (April 2021).

[2] An overview can be found in the ScienceDirect topic section: www.sciencedirect.com/topics/agricultural-and-biological-sciences/sled-dogs. For genetic studies, consult: pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/?term=sled+dog+genetics

More recently, anthropologists and historians have started to conduct more systematic studies on Inuit dogs, both their past and their present. These studies are embedded in a larger corpus of works focused on, among others, human-animal relationships (Laugrand & Oosten, 2015; Brunet & Lévesque, 2017; Lévesque, 2019), Arctic history and colonial legacies (Tester, 2010ab; Zahara, Hird, 2016; Lévesque, 2018), traditional indigenous knowledge (Furgal et al., 2002; Wenzel, 2004; Inukpuk, 2009), Inuit health and well-being (Aenishaenslin et al., 2019), social and ecological impacts related to climate change (Wenzel, 2009; Laidler et al., 2010; Sørensen, 2010). There are a small number of comprehensive works dedicated exclusively to the Inuit sled dogs in the Arctic region. Although they closely examine qimmiit and the local dog-human interactions, the perspectives they offer can be different from the ones held by Inuit villagers, historians, and cultural anthropologists (Han, 2018; MacRury, 1991; Montcombroux, 2015). This scholarly interest in sled dogs in the Arctic is also reflected in recent interdisciplinary research featured in *Dogs in the North: Stories of Cooperation and Co-Domestication* (Losey, Wishart and Loovers, 2018). Such renewed effort occurs in conjunction with the consolidation of global Indigenous political and cultural sovereignty, and is also in tune with the conceptual shift in anthropology from the late 1990s onward – the "ontological turn" as it was defined during the 2013 AAA conference (Kelly 2014). Tentatively we could note that the seasonal cycles around the planet are punctuated with ceremonial rituals and communal festivities led by native people, many of them feature iconic animals and plant species as active non-human ritual partners: the Plateau tribes' first salmon feast in the Columbia River Basin (Colombi, 2009), the Sami reindeer festival in Lapland (Kari & Reidar, 2013) and in Northwest Russia (Vladimirova, 2011), the Evenki reindeer festival in Khatystyr (Gadal et al., 2017), to name a few. The Inuit dog sled races in Nunavik also represent one of these seasonal highlights on the global ethnocultural calendar.

Today, other than niche musher communities (mostly in North America and Europe, and some in Russia) where there exist strong interests in Inuit sled dogs, there is almost no broad media coverage of Arctic dog races run by Inuit communities. However, seasonal festivities with a dog sledding component and dedicated yearly race events are very popular among Inuit themselves, and receive a great deal of local coverage through regional news, radio programs, and social media. In academia, contemporary dog sledding competitions in the circumpolar region also receive unequal attention. The most studied race event (which is also the most

mediatized dogsledding races in the North) is the Alaska Iditarod Trail. Northern Indigenous dogsledding practices are mostly discussed in the context of traditional hunting (Wenzel, 1983; Condon et al. 1995; Dahl, 2000) and tourism (Shackel, 2011; Lemlin et al., 2012), but rarely in their modern incarnation as communal competitive sport and seasonal festival.

1.2. The problematic

Despite the growing academic attention for dogs in the Arctic and the expanding media coverage of various local dog sledding events, there is an absence of ethnographic account for events like Nunavut Quest or Ivakkak (the Nunavik race with the central theme "The Return of the Inuit Dog"). Scholars and policy makers acknowledge the importance of Inuit sled dogs in contemporary Inuit communities, but the exact unfolding of seasonal *qimutsik* (dog sledding) activities remains out of focus. This represents a gap that is worth filling.

In existing anthropological writings on Inuit sled dogs (as a distinctive breed) and Inuit dog sledding (as a specific cultural practice), I notice two recurring elements: first, the reinforced idea of ruptures, and second, a tendency to elaborate ontological abstraction. Both these elements ground our understanding of contemporary *qimutsik* activities. Yet, they also have specific implications that I would like to address (and perhaps recalibrate) through my ethnographic project.

1.2.1. Ruptures: revisiting the conventional narrative model

When assessing the unique cultural values and social positions of dogs in the Inuit world, we are confronted with the idea of radical ruptures: the past and the present for Inuit communities in the Eastern Arctic are irreversibly split by the colonial projects of the 1950s and 1960s. Through the design and implementation of those projects, federal and provincial agencies lacerated local communities, perpetuating painful memories that, collectively and intimately, still haunt the Arctic (Crawford, 2014; Trott, 1997). Changes were drastic and seemed both inevitable and irreversible. As elders often begin their stories with "before the settlement", to their interlocutors, such narrative marker tends to evoke an irrefutable demarcation between the pre-contact time and the modern time. On this split timeline, discussions tend to cluster around two

ends on the spectrum. Toward "the present", Inuit and non-Inuit thinkers face pressing contemporary issues related to health and well-being, education, economy, social and political justice, environment and wildlife management and emerging urban Inuit communities. Toward "the past", we fall back onto ancestral knowledge, the ethnohistorical corpus, and archaeological studies. The relation with the past is often tinted with a visceral sense of urgency, intensified by the burden carried by Inuit elders and their inevitable passing (Grant, 2019). In this light, the preservation and transmission of traditional knowledge are paramount.

Sled dogs appear to lean more toward "the past". Indeed, they were the traditional method for transportation in a pre-modern, pre-industrial, pre-colonial Arctic nomadic life. As the only domesticated animal in the Arctic, the Inuit dogs also carried symbolic and spiritual meanings that were complex and ambiguous (Laugrand and Oosten, 2014). With the rapid transition into settlement and the introduction of snowmobiles, sled dogs are no longer the primary embodiment for mobility on the land.[3] In fact, under the new federal and provincial administration, mobility itself is no longer part of the equation (Tester, 2010b; Lévesque, 2018). The disappearance of *qimmiit*, Inuit dogs, saddens many Inuit elders who remember their youthful years on the tundra (QTC, 2013). This narrative of loss – the collapse of an entire body of traditional knowledge on dog sledding, along with the loss of freedom, dignity and cultural integrity – pervades many writings. The present appears as a degenerated version of the past, eroded by modernization. The losses are colossal and undeniable; many communities are still struggling to recover from the collective trauma. Yet pitting the "present decay" against the "past ideal" might not be the healthiest analytical and interpretive scheme: it can reinforce pre-established cultural stereotypes (often reflecting the Eurocentric colonial mentality); it not only impedes local communities to heal from colonial trauma, but continues to corrode their evolving history (McGinnis et al., 2019). While acknowledging the colonial tragedy and painful memories, collaborative research must also aim at more empowering analytical and interpretive angles (Wilson, 2008). Stories can be told in many different ways, depending on the position of their narrators (Haraway, 2003). Additionally, temporality in Inuit world is not a unilinear progression, stretched thin between the present and the past. The model of "before and after" suits our general narrative conventions, but it only partially overlaps with the Inuit worldview and their understanding of time and space

[3] "Land" encompasses all travel surfaces on the tundra, therefore also the frozen sea ice (Aporta, 2017).

(Gombay, 2009). One needs to be aware of different habitual configurations of time. In this sense, Inuit sled dogs are not powerless victims engulfed in cultural wars, torn apart inside a static past-present dichotomy. One can also choose to look at them as a dynamic locus for innovations and creative adaptations.

1.2.2. Ontological abstractions: grounding concepts

In recent Inuit studies, hunter-gatherer ontology is often evoked. Inuit culture is seen in contrast to the naturalistic ontology that characterizes most European civilizations. Some scholars do not hesitate to apply the broader Amerindian perspectivism and the animistic cosmology when describing the human-animal relations in the Inuit world (Desjardin, 2017). Sea animals and land animals, biotic and abiotic elements are all "persons" with one or multiple souls, capable of intentional actions. These non-human agents are perpetually interlaced in shifting power vectors and delicate reciprocities with the human inhabitants of the tundra (Kishigami, 1993). By rejecting the rigid conceptual boundaries between humans and non-humans, anthropologists are able to discern complex connections between Inuit and their dogs, and to appreciate the symbolic richness and the spiritual depth of these interspecies connections (Laugrand & Oosten, 2014). The "more than human" ontological narratives are attractive and effective, yet there is a potential risk of cultural distillation. Everyday life and pragmatic knowledge can become overly intellectualized, fossilized and frozen into abstract relational theories. Concept and abstract thinking are useful tools in scientific works, but one needs to be aware of theories' blind spots and/or their blinding power (perfect and elegant theories, like miniature suns, can emit blinding glare and cause loss of sight). The unwanted cultural essentialization, not to mention distortion, is already a fiercely contested issue among contemporary Inuit thinkers (Arnanak, 2000). Managing a dog team in modern Nunavik village requires hard work and cash investment – there are concrete tasks to accomplish, obstacles to navigate, and rewards to fetch. To understand sled dog practices in this context is an attempt to see the locals' ways of working, training, learning and playing. It could be supported, but should not be restrained, nor inflated, by abstract ontological propositions.

Ontological conceptualization also poses another risk: the process of abstraction can forcefully separate the material (or the technical and the physical) aspects from the lived experiences of handling a dog team – the Inuit way. Such separation can consequently lead one to

exclude emotions and affective elements from the big picture. Scholars often describe sled dogs as a tool for survival, a unique environmental adaptation – in other words, one of the key elements in Inuit "old" technology and subsistence production (Morey and Aaris-Sørensen, 2002). This is factual observation, but at the same time a slippery slope towards utilitarian reductionism, which would betray the Inuit worldview. When discussing health, Inuit prefer a grounded and holistic approach: physical health and mental health cannot be separated (ITK, 2014; Tagalik, 2018). Through a similar perspective, one can observe that in the actual dog sledding practices, the "material aspects" cannot be separated from concrete experiential and emotional forces. It is perhaps more intuitive to consider the aesthetic and experiential importance when we discuss artful corporal practices, such as clothing and tattoos. Inuit dog sledding has a life aesthetic as well, where forms and gestures of both human and dogs exert real affective power on the practitioners of this "art". To understand the emic cultural value of contemporary Inuit dog sledding, its emotional and aesthetic aspects cannot be overlooked.

1.3. The initial hypothesis

My first hypothesis is that "the return of the Inuit dogs" is more than a one-dimensional cultural revival, but a complex transformative process involving different parties (sometimes with conflict of interests), generating new types of social and physical mobility. I would like to make an ethnographic account of today's Inuit dog sledding that proposes an alternative path to the rupture narrative—a narrative that reinforces the idea that the modern dog race in Nunavik is the only way to keep an ancient tradition alive in a world dominated by new technologies and lifestyles, where sled dogs haven become completely obsolete.

Instead of opposing past and present, pre-contact and modernity, and emphasizing cultural erosion and extinction, I will explore the modern Inuit dog race in light of its technical adaptation and knowledge transition. I would argue that the core of the Ivakkak dog race, more than a resurrection of the old ways, is a vivid gesture of creation. It embodies hybrid and exciting practices that illustrate the complex tectonic shifts happening in contemporary Inuit communities. The Inuit perception of "time" and "history" will help to ground this reflection.

My second hypothesis is that, to define modern Inuit sled dog culture, one cannot see dog sledding as technology, tourist attraction, or sport competition alone. These are all valid points, but we would miss the target if we fail to capture its emotional depth. Through field observations and dialogues with mushers, I anticipate foregrounding the emotional and aesthetic aspects of modern Inuit *qimutsik*.

Lastly, I will try to demonstrate that in Nunavik, despite formal similarities, Inuit mushers run a different kind of teams from those of their ancestors, and from those of their Euro-American contemporaries. The concept of "team sports" and its various interpretations will help us to apprehend the richness of an Inuit dog race like Ivakkak. Through detailed ethnographic description, I will try to highlight the inner dynamics and the uniqueness of modern Inuit *qimutsik* – both in the larger public sphere and in the smaller familial circles. I would argue that these modern day *qimutsik* activities and race events are actively evolving, carrying special meanings for local communities.

1.4. Theoretical elements and conceptual anchors

The conceptual foundation for this project rests on a combination of currents. The three pillars are: an anthropology of nature, allowing a decentralized mindset to comprehend animal-human relationships; cosmopolitics, emphasizing the inner plurality and the hybrid nature of the target of study; and body techniques, focusing on concrete gestural elements and the extralingual signs that are specific to Inuit *qimutsik* practices (and aesthetics).

1.4.1. Human and non-human

Over the past decades, anthropologists have led insightful discussions on different ways societies integrate various elements from their surrounding environment. Scholars such as Philippe Descola and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro expanded anthropology and amended its classic Eurocentric and human-centric attitudes. There is now a solid theoretical basis that allows us to consider animals not as subordinates or passive instruments serving human wills, but as autonomous partners and competitive game players in their own right.

In his inaugural lecture at the Collège de France, Philippe Descola delineated the basis of an Anthropology of Nature, a philosophical outlook that has influenced and informed many subsequent works carried out by others in the field. The Anthropology of Nature originated in the critic of Western humanism, in particular its dominant dualistic mind set polarizing Nature and Culture, pitting Man against Nature in a perpetual assertion of human singularity, will and power, through the detachment from and the subjugation of its non-human surroundings. The revised anthropology is Descola's solution to overcome modernity's inherent limitations and bias.

> En apparence, en effet, l'anthropologie de la nature est une sorte d'oxymore puisque, depuis plusieurs siècles en Occident, la nature se caractérise par l'absence de l'homme, et l'homme parce qu'il a su surmonter de naturel en lui. Cette antinomie nous a pourtant paru suggestive en ce qu'elle rend manifeste une aporie de la pensée moderne en même temps qu'elle suggère une voie pour y échapper. La nature n'existe pas comme une sphère de réalités autonomes pour tous les peuples (Descola, 2001: 14).

When liberated from the Nature-Culture dualism, and detoxified of its human-centric and Eurocentric illusions, we will no longer regard humans as the pinnacle of life on Earth, nor Western industrial modernity as the pinnacle of human civilization. Consequently, we will be able to more adequately apprehend diverse social attitudes involving non-human actors, to better understand different societies, and to valorize different coexisting cosmologies.

> Il est temps que l'anthropologie conteste un tel héritage et qu'elle jette sur le monde un regard plus émancipé, nettoyé d'un voile dualiste que le mouvement des sciences de la nature et de la vie a rendu en partie désuet et qui fut à l'origine de maintes distorsions pernicieuses dans l'appréhension des peuples dont les usages différaient par trop des nôtres. L'analyse des interactions entre les habitants du monde ne peut plus se cantonner aux seules institutions régissant la société des hommes, ce club de producteurs de normes, de signes et de richesses où les non-humains ne sont admis qu'à titre d'accessoires pittoresques pour décorer le grand théâtre dont les détenteurs du langage monopolisent la scène (Descola, 2001: 17).

Each human society has its systems of classification, organization, and identification – in other words, cosmological schemes assigning meaning to all perceivable/perceived units, the veins that run through all activities, the web that holds the world together. Anthropology provides us with tools to observe and analyze societies' composition and movement in detail. That is exactly

where Descola roots his project: to capture these details and identify patterns of continuity-discontinuity between humans and their surroundings.

In some of the cosmological configurations (ontologies) proposed by Descola, the social realm instinctively encompasses humans and non-humans – animals, plants, spirits, deceased, Earth's elements, to name a few. Western societies, with their predominantly "naturalistic" ontology that casts human species aside from all other earthly and cosmic beings, represent rather a minority. Society is formed by a collection of persons, and non-human entities are attributed full and/or partial, stable and/or transient personhood. While describing Indigenous societies of the Amazon basin, Viveiros de Castro noted that ideas such as "people" or "person" do not imply "member of the human species". They are personal pronouns registering the point of view of a speaking entity. He describes the social condition of personhood as such:

> To say, then, that animals and spirits are people is to say that they are persons, and to *attribute to non-humans the capacities of conscious intentionality and agency* which define the enunciative position of the subject (de Castro, 2005: 49).

Personhood, therefore social position and relevance, is defined by one's ability to see and to be seen. Living entities are intertwined in a pervasive web of connectedness, where one's position and one's viewpoint are mutually dependent. In the Amerindian societies that Viveiros de Castro qualifies using this perspectivist ontology, the world is populated with "extra-human intentionalities endowed with their own perspectives". The non-humans can occupy equal social rank to humans, but very often they are also superior to human subjects.

> Personhood and 'perspectivity' – the ability to occupy a point of view – are questions of degree and situation, rather than fixed diacritical properties of this or that species. Some non-humans avail themselves of these potentialities in more complete ways than others; indeed some of them display them with an intensity that is superior to our own species and in this sense they are 'more persons' than humans are. Aside from this, the question has an a posteriori essential quality to it. The possibility that a hitherto insignificant being reveals itself (in dreams, in shamanic discourse) as a prosopomorphic agent capable of affecting human affairs is always present (Viveiros de Castro, 2005: 39).

Speaking of our relation with animals, Descola and Viveiros de Castro both noted that different societies have developed their own narratives, or "origin stories". In the Western world, humanity evolved out and away from archaic animal forms; our animal nature is "deep down", hidden/tamed by culture, but can erupt in uncontrolled fashion; animality is a sign of regression and primitive state. Alternatively, indigenous worldviews (in the Americas, in particular) define human and animals as symbolic and physical siblings, or relatives connected by more or less distant (or evident) bloodlines, sharing more or less strong affinities. All living creatures having once been humans continue to be humans (Descola, 1986: 120; Viveiros de Castro, 2005).

Ontological discussions aside, the present project will not be an elegant and theoretically sophisticated edifice. It is propelled by energy that belongs to a practical and experiential landscape. What follows will not be a "clean" paper loaded with crystalized Cartesian deductions. As "dog people" know so well: canine companions are often a loving mess. In an incisive remark, Donna Haraway wrote "Dogs are not surrogates for theory; they are not here just to think with. They are here to live with." (2003: 5). As we will see in later chapters, this resonates with the Inuit mushers' way. From the realm of Anthropology of Nature, I extracted a few key ideas that seem particular relevant and applicable to my project:

- Extra-human:
  When trying to capture a specific phenomenon, one should include all active elements, humans as well as non-humans. In observation and data analysis, one should give full weight to non-human entities (in my case, the Inuit sled dogs);

- Multispecies assemblage:
  An expanded anthropology takes into account the hybrid matrix composed of human and others, as well as the dynamic and multi-layered connections between human and non-human creatures (in my case, the mushers and the dogs, as well as natural forces such as weather conditions and snow/sea-ice conditions);

- Decentralized and flattened hierarchy:
  A mindset free of human-centric and rigid hierarchical orders: orders such as the unidirectional grand ladder of evolution or the vertical tree of life; an interconnected

rhizome meshwork would be a more appropriate metaphor (in my case, the mushers and the dogs are on an equal footing – there is no absolute physical and psychic superiority of one species over the other).

The fluid aspects of a multispecies assemblage are important in understanding Inuit dog teams. On one hand, Arctic sled dogs are domesticated animals controlled by their human masters; on the other hand, the dogs have extra-human abilities and sensibilities on which mushers depend; and finally, both parties work together as cooperative teammates on and off the race trail. When humans are decentered, different realities can emerge, fluidity will be easier to detect, more nuanced expressions can arise. In understanding Inuit mushing, this will allow us to see flexible team structure/hierarchy, and dynamic social bonds between mushers, dogs, and larger communities.

1.4.2. Plurality and messy networks

My second conceptual inspiration comes from the interrelated ideas of cosmopolitics and actor-network. Elaborating on Isabelle Stengers's philosophical theories, Bruno Latour outlined a cosmopolitical framework that affirms fundamental differences between people.

> Inutile par conséquent de dire : « Nous différons peut-être superficiellement par nos opinions, nos idées, nos passions, mais au fond, nous sommes tous semblables, notre nature est la même et si nous acceptons de mettre de côté tout ce qui nous sépare, alors nous allons partager le même monde, habiter la même universelle demeure ». Non, si nous mettons de côté ce qui nous sépare, il n'y a rien qui nous reste à mettre en commun. Le pluralisme mord trop profondément. L'univers est un plurivers (Latour, 2011: 39).

If "cosmos" embodies this radical plurality, the "politics" affirms the necessity and the generative power of encounters across differences. The politics propose the progressive composition of a shared world that retains its plural nature.

> Les arts par lesquels on cherche à composer progressivement le monde commun. Le monde commun est à *composer.* Les arts politiques doivent hésiter, tâtonner, expérimenter, reprendre, toujours recommencer, rafraîchir continûment leur travail de

> composition. Chaque sujet de préoccupation, chaque affaire, chaque objet, chaque chose, chaque « issue », chaque concernement : il va falloir recommencer. Il n'y a rien qu'on puisse transporter tel quel d'une situation à l'autre ; à chaque fois, il va falloir ajuster et pas appliquer, découvrir et pas déduire, spécifier et pas normer, décrire – avant tout décrier (Latour 2011: 40).

Societies are human artifices. Rather than solidified pre-established structures, they are animated with eternal assembly and disassembly of connections. The "social" character arises when bonds between individuals stabilize, but these bonds are constantly negotiated and calibrated. The common world, in turn, is not a pre-existing reality that social beings inhabit (willingly or unwillingly, consciously or unconsciously). The common world, more precisely, the shared worldview, is a perpetual messy construction site (Labour, 2007). In her ethnography of capitalism and global connections in the context of Indonesian logging industry, Anna Tsing echoed Latour's concept of cosmopolitics.

> I begin with the idea that the messy and surprising features of such encounters across differences should inform our models of cultural production […] Cultures are continually co-produced in the interactions I call "friction": the awkward, unequal, unstable, and creative qualities of interconnection across differences. (Tsing, 2004: 3)

According to Tsing, friction is not necessarily a synonym of slowing down or resistance. It is the metaphorical image for the grip of encounters on the contact surface between parties with conflicting or divergent motivations. It reminds us of the importance of interactions in shaping cultural form and power.

1.4.3. Techniques du corps

Another concept guiding this project is the early theories on "technique du corps" proposed by Marcel Mauss. Since the Arctic dog race, in both Inuit and non-Inuit contexts, is formulated as a specific type of sport competition, employing bodily techniques as conceptual viewfinder allows me to better observe and analyze the race. Mauss remarked that, for a very long time, when discussing different societies and their traditions, anthropologists made the

fundamental mistake of considering something as "technical" (or technological) only when instruments are involved. According to Mauss, techniques or technologies should include any act that is effective (as in Mauss's understanding of magical-religious acts) and traditional (passed between individuals, groups, and generations through knowledge transmissions).

> Le corps est le premier et le plus naturel instrument de l'homme. Ou plus exactement, sans parler d'instrument, le premier et le plus naturel objet technique, et en même temps moyen technique, de l'homme, c'est son corps […] Avant les techniques à instruments, il y a l'ensemble des techniques du corps (Mauss, 1934: 372).

Gestures, motions, and performances… We consciously shape and direct our body, we also articulate a great number of movements "naturally" by reflex. The physical coordination of one's movements simultaneously reveals his/her biomechanical conditions and social-cultural conditioning. For example, as Mauss recollected, while enlisted in the First World War, he observed visibly different gestural attitudes ("attitude du corps") in the most basic act of walking between the British and the French regiments.

By applying this conceptual invention of techniques du corps, Mauss's goal was to understand a person from a "total" point of view:

> Et je conclus que l'on ne pouvait avoir une vue claire de tous ces faits, de la course, de la nage, etc., si on ne faisait pas intervenir une triple considération au lieu d'une unique considération, qu'elle soit mécanique et physique, comme une théorie anatomique et physiologique de la marche, ou qu'elle soit au contraire psychologique ou sociologique. C'est le triple point de vue, celui de « l'homme total », qui est nécessaire (Mauss, 1934: 369).

This triple-layered "totalizing" approach exceeds the scope of my project. However, Mauss's focus on techniques of the body does shift my attention to important (if not central) aspects of Inuit dog sledding that have been previously ignored: mushers' and dogs' actual movements. Classic ethnographic accounts of Inuit dog teams are primarily concerned with the various physical instruments (sled construction, harnesses and hitch patterns, whips, etc.), but not so much with the "moves" expressed directly by bodies in motion ("moves" as in sport language, or referring to the martial arts forms). By focusing on motion, we would be in a better position to

observe Inuit mushers and their canine teammates' multi-body orchestration. The physical synergy achieved through the non-verbal could be well palpable to attentive observers. *Qimutsik* (dog sledding) practices could also entail combined sets of communicative channels (sings that are heard, seen, and felt) and full range of sensory perception. It would be crucial to apprehend Inuit mushing's corporeal aspects. Certainly, verbal language is the primary vehicle of meaning and the preferred communicative medium in a lot of activities (for example, Inuit have elaborate oral traditions), but to run a dog team, spoken words are used sparingly, whereas body language occupies the main stage.

A large part of the Inuit world is extralingual, mediated between living entities in form of gestures and sensory cues (hearing, seeing, smelling, touching, feeling…). This leads to the last conceptual block for this project, the Inuit "philosophy", or the Inuit style of learning skills and teaching life lessons. For a Qallunaat[4] anthropology student, understanding modern Inuit dog sledding is essentially a learning process – learning a new "sport", a set of new life skills and all their worldly implications. In order to learn effectively, and to minimize cultural blind spots, I tried to familiarize myself with the broader set of values in modern Inuit society. To do so, I am relying on the conversations with Inuit elders collected by Frank Tester in *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit: What Inuit Have Always Known to Be True* (2017), and writings and artworks created by modern Inuit artists and thinkers, namely Zacharias Kunuk, Alootook Ipellie, Sheila Watt-Cloutier, Peter Irniq and Betsy Annahatak.

1.5. Methodology

In order to produce an adequate ethnographic portrait of the modern Inuit dog race, I used three main sources. First, I used my field observations obtained during the main Ivakkak dog race events in February/March 2020. I assumed two participatory positions – a public spectator, and a staff assistant helping with various minor tasks. During the race events, I was in direct interaction with mushers and dog teams, Ivakkak staff members, and villagers who attended the events. The second source was virtual observation. This was the continuation of my field observation via

[4] The Inuktitut term that designates all non-Inuit.

digital platforms – a way to bypass the travel restrictions related to Covid 19. The virtual observation covered content on social media (videos, photos and posts by mushers and community members, and by Ivakkak and Makivik official accounts on Facebook), local news sources (Nunatsiaq News and CBC North), and materials circulating on the Internet (digital and print magazine featuring current and past dog races, documentary films made by independent artists as well as Inuit cultural organizations). The time period of selected social media feeds and accessible web content ranged from the early 2000s to May 2021. The third component was informal interviews, conducted both in person and online, with mushers and community members. Due to the pandemic, most of the discussions had to be done through Facebook Messenger and phone calls, between April 2020 and February 2021. Additionally, I also relied on ethnological reports from the late 1890s and the early 1900s as a minor source. The scope was limited to the Eastern Arctic region. These earlier writings provided points of comparison to assess the evolution of the dog sledding practices.

1.5.1. About data collection

For field and online observations, I try to take note of all information that are accessible, though there are limited accesses due to language barrier, time constraints, and current pandemic travel restrictions. During the race, although I participated in most key activities in three different villages, I was unable to be present at every single moment and at every single location along the Ivakkak race trail. For the on location and online conversations, I adopted an open style. My position was that of an inexperienced student/outsider interested in learning about *qimutsik*. My Inuit interlocutors were free to lead the conversations in a totally open and relaxed atmosphere. They decided what was relevant to talk about.

1.5.2. Data treatment

Through descriptive approach and qualitative analysis, I will try to highlight the key features of a modern Inuit dog race, while adhering to Inuit perspective on teaching and learning, working and enjoying life. I will examine the matrix of relations in its evolving complexities, the gestural and aesthetic aspects, and the athletic performance embedded in dog teams. What exactly

is *qimutsik*'s place in Inuit history, in modern Inuit life? What is its emotional value? How does it differ from (or relate to) other dog sledding practices in the North?

Collected information is grouped according to thematic similarities. The themes follow mushers' logic, or in accordance to the practical working order of *qimutsik*. The main themes are: *qimmiit* breed, equipment and supplies, team care and teamwork, pre-race/race/post-race activities, and individual/family/community involvement. Generally speaking, detailed data analysis will also reflect my three core conceptual blocks.

- **Interspecies assemblage (and its inherent fluidity)**

  When treating field observation and mushers' interviews, I am giving equal weight to humans and canine partners. I am paying close attention to the following elements: relations, interactions, teamwork, formulation and application of "rules", managerial schemes and protocols that make a "good" dog team – functional, well-coordinated, and fast running.

- **Cosmopolitics and frictions**

  For fieldwork, I try to observe and register participants on different levels, keeping in mind plurality and hybridity: the musher-dog hybrid at different stages of the race event; the shifting connections between mushers, dogs, event staff members and community members. I also try to take notes of salient power relations between the participants (the unequal social positions, the conflicting interests and the process of reaching common ground). In other words, I try to take notes of visible ideologies, personal and collective goals involved in running dog teams and planning public race events. I also take notes of important moments, especially when musher/dog are at the center of the discussions and decision-making processes (the politics).

- **Techniques du corps**

  My task is to capture some recurring body techniques at different points during a team run: departure, cruising, arrival, rest. I take into consideration the expressive quality of movements and non-spoken signs, in both mushers and dogs. The patterns in movements and verbal/non-verbal signs allow one to operate a team. Based on my field recordings, notes and sketches, it would be pertinent to make an inventory of *qimutisk* gestures and their common

interpretations, i.e., a small dictionary with picture inserts charting body movements and outlining their formal/kinetic specificities.

1.6. Overview of study materials

- **Field notes**

There are 70 pages of notes, written and drawn combined, taken during the Ivakkak dog race in March 2020 (the exact time period: Feburary 20th - March 20th). These notes contain personal observations and some preliminary interpretations on the daily course of events during the race. In addition, I also made ample photo and video documentation.

- **Digital media**

In the context of Covid 19, without physical access to my research environment, digital media is a central part of my source materials. They include: sporadic photos, videos, and comments on Facebook and Instagram, posted mainly by Inuit (mushers and non-mushers); organized social media contents from official accounts (Makivik Corporation, Ivakkak official page, Air Inuit, Nunatsiaq News, CBC North, various northern villages of Nunavik, and pages run by semi-closed Facebook groups); online news articles on Inuit dog race from Nunatsiaq News and CBC, running over the past two decades; documentary films hosted in the NFB digital archive, *Tuktu and his Eskimo Dogs* (1967), *Qimmit: A Clash of Two Truths* (2010), and *Vanishing Point* (2012); independent production *Return of the Qimutsiit* (2006), and more recently *Okpik's Dream* (2015). Other sources: short video portraits of Nunavik mushers, such as the one created by Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (2018, available on YouTube), online magazines, such as *The Fan Hitch*, fully dedicated to Inuit sled dog and qimutsik traditions; selected editions of Makivik Magazine and Makivik Annual Report that cover past Ivakkak races.

- **Written record**

A collection of writings that prepares me with the general background knowledge on Inuit qimutsik practices – ethnographic records from the late 19th and early 20th century, including: *Annual report of the Bureau of Ethnology to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution* (1881-

1897), *Report of the Hudson's Bay expedition of 1886 under the command of Lieut. A.R. Gordon, R.N.* (1887), *Report of the fifth Thule expedition 1921-24* (volume 7, 8, and 9) by Knud Rasmussen, *Report of the Canadian Arctic Expedition 1913-1918*. Recent non-academic publications on Inuit sled dogs: *Qimutsiutiliurniq: How to raise a dog team* (2009), *The Canadian Inuit Dog: Icon of the Canada's North* (2018).

- **Post-race conversations with mushers and Ivakkak staff**

Online chats with mushers and community members via Facebook Messenger, April 2020 and onward. Phone conversations with one Ivakkak musher and three Ivakkak staff members, between September and December 2020.

Chapter 2.
The Ivakkak race: an examination of its contexts, background, and organizational features

2.1. Geographical setting: Nunavik

Nunavik is the name of the Inuit territory located north of the 55th parallel in Quebec, Canada. Its name means "a large land" in Inuktitut. The territory covers 507,000 km^2, a surface area slightly above the size of Spain (The Canadian Encyclopedia, 2020). According to the 2016 Census data, the total population of Nunavik is 13,115, of which 11,800 are Inuit, and the average age is 26.7 (Statistics Canada, 2019). Nunavimmiut[5] live in 14 coastal communities (six along the Ungava Bay, two on the Hudson Strait, and six along the Eastern Hudson Bay).

Figure 1. Nunavik map
(Map created by Makivik)

[5] Nunavimmiut, the people of Nunavik. "*miut*" is a modifier attached to the place name, which turns it into the appellation for people from that particular location-community. Kuujjuamiut refers to the people of Kuujjuaq; and Montrealmiut, those from Montreal.

Around and between close and/or adjacent Northern villages, local residents are generally quite mobile on the land, especially in the winter season when ice and snow conditions allow fast and flexible travel on motor sled. On a larger scale, plane and sealift are the only access to the territory from outside. Heavier cargo can reach ports in summer, while during the rest of the year supplies and goods are delivered mostly via Air Inuit cargo (Air Inuit serves all villages in Nunavik, connecting local communities to Southern cities such as Quebec City and Montreal). Even with government subsidies, due to the transportation cost of air-shipped goods, the shortage of housing, the lack of affordable and reliable telecommunication services, and the necessity to travel down south for healthcare services, the cost of living in Nunavik's is much higher than in the South (Rogers, 2016; Robitaille et al., 2018). For income, most job opportunities lie within the public sectors (government administration, birthright organization, municipal administration, construction, tourism, community services, transportation), in addition to mining operations (Arrigada and Bleakney, 2019). Although household and community economy is not the focus of this paper, it's worth pointing out that the economic life of Nunavimmiut is a complex mixture of wage jobs, modern hunter-gatherer activities (or land-based activities), and informal exchanges. This hybridity can be seen in villagers' everyday life. It is also reflected in the rich material culture specific to the Ivakkak race – a topic that we will elaborate in chapter 5.

Similar to other Inuit settlements in the Canadian Arctic, towns in Nunavik were born out of rapid social transformations between the 1950s and the 1960s. The contemporary social-political history of the region is far from a straightforward narrative. Five generations of Inuit life stories are intertwined with waves of qallunaat[6] presence: the American military establishments in the Arctic, the federal (Canada) and the provincial (Quebec) administrative pressures, and later on the arrival of mining industries and ambitious hydroelectric projects (Hervé, 2017). Nunavimmiut did not acquire an autonomous political body (however fragmented) until the 1975 James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement (JBNQA) signature. This is considered the first modern Indigenous land claims settlement in Canada (Arteau, 2011). The political project for Nunavik's self-governance and self-determination is still in the making, with ongoing discussions and negotiations involving actors on federal, provincial and regional levels. The region's leading

[6] Initially the word was used to designate European whalers ("those with large/thick eyebrows"). It still denotes White people in some context, but in practice the term includes all non-Inuit.

organization, Makivik Corporation, proposed to establish a Nunavik Constitutional Task Force in 2019. The Task Force is mandated to develop an indigenous government model for Nunavik, based on Inuit values and heritage (Makivik Press Release, 2019).

2.2. Ivakkak, the Inuit qimutsik race

2.2.1. General overview

"Ivakkak" means "when the dogs are at their best pace" in Inuktitut (Ivakkak official website, 2021). One retired Ivakkak musher that I interviewed during the 2020 race event made a more specific translation:

> The dogs are running on good ice, you can hear the sound of their trotting.
> They are happy. It's a good feeling.

This description based on the musher's own experiences. It conveys something personal and poetic, more than the pure functional and physical reality of a sled dog team. The naming of the event, since the first edition in spring 2001, was in fact something deeply personal. Johnny Watt, a Kuujjuaq elder born in 1926, a former mayor of Kuujuaq, then the Nunavik Governor, named the event. He was an old-time dog sled master well respected by the community[7]. He did not participate in the race, but his son Charlie Watt Jr. did and arrived third place. Charlie Watt Jr. also ran the 2002 race (came in second place) and the 2003 race (came in first place). His success was seen as a continuation of his family legacy in the footsteps of his father Johnny Watt. Knowledge about dogs and the land was passed down in the family (Ivakkak staff, personal communication).

[7] Johnny Watt was one of the elders who testified in March 2005 before the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development in Ottawa (38th Parliament), on the slaughtering of Inuit dogs from the mid-1950s to the late-1960s. He grew up on the land, owned a dog team for hunting, trapping, fetching firewood, and trading. He witnessed many dog shootings by the qallunaat officers, and some of his own dogs were killed too, although they were all tied. To consult the full report: https://www.ourcommons.ca/DocumentViewer/en/38-1/AANO/meeting-22/evidence.

Figure 2. Ivakkak over the past 20 years
(Illustration by author, race information compiled by author)

In spring 2020, the 19th edition took place on the Ungava coast. The race trail connected five communities (Kangirsuk, Aupaluk, Tasiujaq, Kuujjuaq and Kangiqsualujjuaq), covering a total distance of 460 km. Seven teams, 14 mushers and 83 Inuit sled dogs (*plural.* qimmiit) from five communities participated in the race – one team withdrew early in the race. The remaining six teams all reached the finish line. All mushers were under the age of 35. The youngest participant was 16-year-old (he took a break from school to join the race). The start date was originally planned for February 24th, but was reset to February 25th due to blizzards that delayed the arrival of 3 teams from the Hudson Bay coast. All teams departed from Kangirsuk the morning of February 25th. The race had a smooth start, despite difficult ice conditions on the Kangirsuk River. However, within 5 hours, all teams and support crew members returned to

Kangirsuk village. The race was halted for a major accident. Assistant musher from team 7 Willia Qullialuk of Kangiqsujuaq (24-year-old) died shortly after they crossed the frozen Kangirsuk River. The cause of Willia's death was unknown at the time, but was later confirmed as the result of heart failure (Willia had a heart transplant in 2015). On February 26th, Makivik released an official statement announcing Ivakkak mushers' collective decision to continue the race. A replacement musher flew in from Kangiqsualujjuaq that day to join team 7. All teams departed again on February 27th. There was no other accident on the trail. The race ended on March 9th in Kangiqsualujjuaq. Tasiujaq team won first place for the third year in a row. From the initial arrival of Ivakkak staff in Kangirsuk to the final departure of the Ivakkak team from Kangiqsualujjuaq, the 2020 Ivakkak lasted 19 days (a week longer than the past average event duration of 2 weeks).

2.2.2. Ownership, budget and event organization

a. Makivik

The "owner" of the Ivakkak race, in other words, the home-organization behind Ivakkak's inception in 2001 and its continuous operation over the past 20 years, is Makivik Corporation. Although this paper is about Ivakkak and not Makivik, it is important to highlight some unique traits of this Inuit-run non-profit organization. Otherwise we will not have a complete picture of Ivakkak.

Makivik was the first Inuit economic development company in Canada. It was created to administer the funds obtained from the previously mentioned 1975 James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement. From the total C$225 million compensation funds, Makivik received C$90 million (over a 20-year period) on behalf of Inuit. This is considered a heritage fund, and one of Makivik's key mandates is to "administer, distribute and invest the compensation money payable to Nunavik Inuit" (Makivik Corporation, 2019). Makivik owns several subsidiary companies, including Air Inuit, the "Official Airline of Ivakkak"[8]. The organization is composed of several departments: construction division, renewable resources department,

[8] This was mentioned in past editions of the *Makivik Magazine* between 2001 and 2018. From 2018 onwards, Facebook posts and the Ivakkak website also feature numerous stories and photos about Air Inuit's private charter for the dogs. One highlight is the custom configuration of the Air Inuit Dash 8, which carries up to 26 specialized metal/plexiglass compartments, designed to suit canine passengers.

economic development department (EDD), legal department, justice department, media and publication. Ivakkak is a project managed directly by the EDD.

Often celebrated as a success story of business management and Inuit self-governance (Schneider, 1998; Simon, 2003; Arteau, 2010; Wilson and Alcantara, 2012), Makivik is a unique entity that mixes social/political purposes and corporate/entrepreneurial goals. Its hybrid nature is captured in the coexistence of a business-development-investment modality and a strong Inuit-centered social vocation, embedded in its mandates and its non-profit status. Makivik's internal structure and decision-making processes are also a hybrid, mixing modern business/managerial form (non-Inuit professional consultants and partners) with community-based social-political form (discussions, consultations, elections, equal village representation, elders on the Board of Governors). With unparalleled ethnic legitimacy on Inuit land, Makivik functions as the de facto government of Nunavik – in a way comparable to Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated in Nunavut (Wilson and Alcantara, 2012). Both organizations have financial operations to address concrete issues in the social, economic and cultural spheres in Inuit communities (Inuit domestic policy), and both represent Inuit interests vis-à-vis external political entities (Inuit "foreign" policy). To simplify their main difference:

> For NTI, political rights lead to socioeconomic development, whereas for Makivik, economic development through investment leads to sociopolitical development. (Janda, 2006)

b. Budget and funding

As previously mentioned, EDD is in charge of Ivakkak. The funding to run this annual event comes directly out of Makivik's pocket. The other major donor since the beginning of Ivakkak is FCNQ (la Fédération des coopératives du Nouveau-Québec), one of the largest non-governmental organizations in Nunavik, owned by its fourteen member co-ops in their respective village, and operated exclusively by Inuit and Cree staff (FCNQ, 2018). Between 2001 and 2007, FCNQ provided co-op store gift certificates, cash prizes, outfitting supplies and snowmobiles to Ivakkak as winner prizes. Post 2007, FCNQ continues to support Ivakkak by issuing gift certificates to the winning teams. For the 19th edition, major sponsors were Air Inuit, KRG, FCNQ, Newfound Resources Ltd., Canadian North, Hydro Québec, Northern Stores, NRBHSS

and municipalities of all 5 communities on the Ungava coast. 22 additional sponsors were also featured on the official Ivakkak banner. All together, these sponsors provided over $34,000 in cash and in-kind contributions.

Figure 3. Ivakkak Sponsor Banner *(From Ivakkak official website)*

Since its very first edition, Ivakkak has been a costly event (and its high price tag has been a source of contention among some Nunavimmiut, we will return to this in later chapters). All things considered, this is not a surprise. Daily expenses in the North are already much higher than elsewhere. Things add up quickly – the number of people and dogs, the amount of planning, food, equipment, and the scale of logistics involved to ensure the success of such an elaborate community event (not to mention the unpredictable extreme Arctic weather, the complex terrains, and the occasional polar bear harassment on the race trail). One should also know that all Inuit staff members working for Ivakkak are officially contracted and fully remunerated. They are hired directly by Makivik for the duration of the race.

In the description of the Annual budget published in the Makivik Magazine Spring 2002 issue, Ivakkak was one of the two main projects reported to the Corporate Secretary's Department, budgeting $121,950. Fast-forward 16 years, in the 2018-2019 Annual Report, Makivik contributed a little over $500,000 to the 2018 race event. For the same edition, through sponsorships, close to $150,000 was brought in; cash and material prizes totaled just a little over $99,000. Makivik's official website makes past Annual Reports available to the public, hence I

was able to track Ivakkak expenditures all the way back to 2009. Below is a chart showing total accumulated expenditures and yearly spending:

Year	Total Ivakkak expenditure As recorded in Makivik Annual Reports, Sanarrutik Expenditures (cumulative, 2002 - 2019)	Yearly Ivakkak expenditure Calculated from the Snarrutik Expenditures Makivik investment ONLY Does no include other sponsors contributions
2009	1,043,486	----
2010	1,361,079	317,593
2011	1,845,647	315,315
2012	2,160,962	393,410
2013	2,554,372	328,400
2014	2,882,772	355,608
2015	3,238,380	450,245
2016	3,688,625	485,118
2017	4,173,743	585,668
2018	4,759,411	533,622
2019	5,293,033	----

Table 1. Ivakkak budget 2009-2019 *(Data compiled by author)*

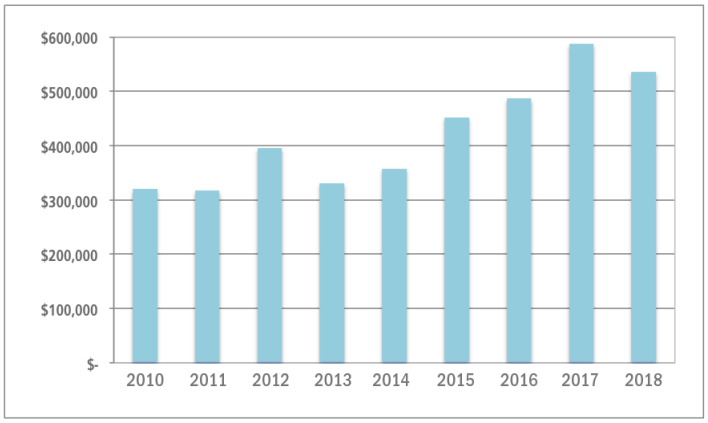

Figure 4. Ivakkak budget trend 2010-2018 *(Data compiled by author)*

In the 2018 Ivakkak promotional video produced by Tummiit Media, one Ivakkak staff stated:

> We set aside $400,000 every year for the race. We also do funding requests to other organizations.

This description is relatively accurate, but only for the early 2010s. Since 2016, expenditures have attained the $500,000 range. Overall there is a steady increase over the past decade. On a larger scale, Ivakkak's cumulative expenses from 2002 to 2019 all together account for 3.4% of Makivik's total expenditures. Other major cultural and socio-economic projects sponsored by Makivik represent significantly larger portions, for they require permanent infrastructure and staffing: for example, the Avataq Cultural Institute accounts for 9.7%; the Nunavik Landholding Corporations & Associations accounts for 21.6%.

Project A small selection from the Makivik Annual Report 2018-2019 (Total 67 entries on the published table)	**Total expenditure** As recorded in the 2018-2019 Annual Report, Sanarrutik Expenditures Distribution, cumulative from 2002 to 2019
Nunavik Landholding Corporation & Association	32,566,557
Avataq Cultural Institute	14,623,867
Income Tax Project	7,006,370
Cruise North Expedition	6,605,543
Hunting & Fishing Trapping Association	6,467,606
Nunavik Youth Association	6,453,906
Ivakkak	5,203,033
Nunavik Tourism Association	2,339,020
Food Baskets	1,575,000
Nunavik Festivities	425,000
Churches	195,000
Total*	**150,851,701**

Table 2. Ivakkak budget in perspective *(Data compiled by author)*
** The Sanarrutik total, which includes all 67 entries; only 11 are listed here*

In recent Makivik Annual Reports, Ivakkak budgets are listed under the *Sanarrutik expenditures*. There is a distinction to make between the JBNQA funds and the Sanarrutik funds. The latter resulted from the Sanarrutik Agreement, or the Partnership Agreement on Economic and Community Development. It was signed initially in 2002 between Makivik, KRG (Kativik Regional Government) and the Québec government. It was subsequently amended in 2003 and 2006. The final agreement stipulates a fund totaling approximately $315 million to be distributed to Inuit over 25 years. The fund is to be used for the improvement of policing services, the

creation of crime prevention programs, the creation of parks and the economic development in Nunavik[9].

2.2.3. Ivakkak's raison d'être

Ivakkak was created to bring back qimmiit (Inuit sled dogs) and qimutsiit (Inuit dogsledding) to Nunavik[10]. The drastic transition from a nomadic Arctic life to a sedentary life in permanent village settlements is as complex as controversial, a necessity or a pact with the devil, depending on one's standpoint. In the collective memory of Nunavummiut, qimmiitt were mass slaughtered between mid-1950s and late 1960s (Lévesque, 2018). Following the introduction and the popularization of snowmobiles in northern villages, qimmiit were no longer the indispensable transportation method in Inuit daily life. They almost completely vanished from the region. Ivakkak was an active effort led by Makivik and Inuit elders to revive a dying art. It was meant to be "a journey in the footsteps of our ancestors" (Makivik magazine, 2001). The founders of Ivakkak were also those who demanded formal investigation into the 1960s dog slaughtering[11]. Over the years, Ivakkak has become more than an act of remembering the ancestral life, but also an act of territorial-identity affirmation. To quote the current EDD Vice President, Maggie Emudluk:

> Over the years, Ivakkak has demonstrated, and has kept alive, the traditional way of winter travelling within our *arctic homeland*, Nunavik.
> (Ivakkak website, 2021)

Rooted in the past, Ivakkak's goal is also forward-looking. The annual event is designed to reinvigorate qimutsiit (dog-teaming, Inuit dogsledding) and to inspire younger generations in

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[9] See Sanarrutik Agrement, available at https://www.autochtones.gouv.qc.ca/relations_autochtones/ententes/inuits/sanarrutik-consolidee_en.pdf

[10] The official title of the event is "Ivakkak – the Return of the Inuit Dogs".

[11] Pita Atami (Makivik President in 2001) and Johnny E. Watt (Nunavik Governor in 2001), founders of Ivakkak, also represented Nunavimmiut in front of the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development in Ottawa in 2005. Since 1999, Makivik leaders continuously called for justice on the issue of dog slaughters. In 2011, Makivik received formal apology and $3 million compensation from the Québec government. The sum is made into Qimmit Trust, and distributed to 526 former dog owners. https://www.makivik.org/justice-croteaus-report-on-the-slaughter-of-sled-dogs-an-agreement-signed-between-the-gouvernement-du-quebec-and-the-makivik-corporation/

all Nunavik communities. The symbolic power of Ivakkak (its "spirit") will be further developed in chapter 7. Here I should simply emphasize that in addition to the athletic and sportive dimensions, Ivakkak has highly impactful ceremonial powers and functions. This peculiarity sets it apart from contemporary dogsled races in Alaska, Scandinavia and Russia.

2.2.4. Ivakkak's race participants

A large number of actors are involved in Ivakkak. Here the focus is on those who are so to speak directly "on the trail". Participants can be grouped under the following categories:

a. Ivakkak Mushers

There are two mushers per team: one lead musher and one assistant musher. The lead musher is the one steering the dog team and occupies the front seat on the qamutik (Inuit sled), however the driver's role can alternate and switch freely on the trail. The pair is for the majority two male partners from the same home community, linked by kinship (lineal or collateral kin) and/or friendship. Modern Inuit society still has normalized gendered task divisions and there are not many girl mushers (only two female mushers in the Ivakkak history, both were assistant mushers running with an older male relative). This does not mean that Ivakkak (or qimutsiit) is a male-exclusive territory. In fact, elders do recall outstanding female hunters and mushers, and Ivakkak organizers do expect more girl participants in the future (Makivik magazine, 2005; field interviews). Only Inuit are eligible to register to race.

b. Qimmiit – Inuit sled dogs

Along with the mushers, qimmiit are the real stars of Ivakkak. A team is normally made of 10-12 pure breed Inuit sled dogs. Although the pedigree status and the genetic purity of these dogs can be contested, there are strict guidelines and selective criteria to "weed out" non-Inuit dogs and mixed-breed dogs. Ivakkak has the mission to revive Inuit dogsledding practice, and to revive a distinctive breed of Arctic dogs. Race officials and mushers discuss dogs in geo-ethnic terms: pure breed Inuit "huskies" of the North vs.

other dogs introduced from the South (including Siberian huskies). The following chapter will give a detailed description of the "Ivakkak dogs".

c. Ivakkak staff

Besides Ivakkak Head Coordinator (who is present at the start/finish line, and in each community when the teams arrive to town, but who doesn't necessarily follow the race on a snowmobile – *sikidoo*, in the local dialect), a large convoy accompanies mushers and qimmiitt on the trail. For the 19th edition, because one team withdrew on the second day of the race, the number of Ivakkak crewmembers exceeded the number of Ivakkak mushers. Each crewmember is in charge of specific tasks and has clearly delineated responsibilities.

Staff position	Tasks and responsibilities
Trail Coordinator	• Act as the senior staff member on the trail and the bridge between staff and the Ivakkak Coordinator • Ensure the safety of mushers, staff and dogs on the trail • Work closely with Scouts to ensure weather and trail conditions are safe • Keep and file all necessary documents (accommodation forms, cargo slips, receipts) • Chair 'End of Day' meetings with staff • With consideration of staff suggestions, make any final decisions on staff termination, alternate trail routes and weather delays
Marshal	• Oversee the Officials daily tasks • Familiarize staff with the latest version of the Ivakkak Rule Book • Ensure that the Ivakkak rules are followed • Chair 'End of Day' meetings with Mushers • Act as the Ivakkak Press Liaison (radio updates from the trail) • With consideration of Officials suggestions, make any final decisions on - Continuation of injured dogs - Continuation of injured, fatigued, distressed mushers/ teams - Musher penalties - Disqualifications
Scouts	• Always keeps an eye on the trail to ensure the safety of the mushers, staff and dogs • Pre-start inspection of the trail ahead • Must assist the Trail Coordinator on his/her duties • Always at least one Scout ahead of the leading dog team and one Scout behind the trailing dog team

Support Crew Members	• Each support crew member is assigned 2 Ivakkak teams (4 people) • Must carry their two designated teams' belongings in their qamutik • For "on the land layovers," must set up camp FOR their two designated teams • Must help their designated teams to tie-up dogs/transport in qamutik if needed • Must help their designated team load dogs on to the plane • Must help their designated teams shop for supplies when in a community
Veterinarian	• Monitor the condition and health of the dogs before/during/ after the race • Care for dogs when called upon by mushers • Check all dogs at the end of each race day • Prescribe pills, treatments, and other caretaking for the dogs • Work with Ivakkak Support Staff as a team to ensure safety of dogs • He/she must have the veterinary certification to operate in Québec, be fluent in English, be able to work and endure extreme weather and conditions, drive a skidoo over long distances and open to distinct cultures
Vet assistant	• Observe the dogs for the entire duration of the race • Listen to Ivakkak mushers' need, and be ready to be called to care for dogs • Assist the Veterinarian in all duties, as required • Ensure Veterinarian has support needed throughout the race
Photographer	• He/she must provide their own photography equipment (camera, lenses, case, computer/ hard drives) • Send selection of photos to web master during each community stop • Mount and set-up mini cameras (GoPro) to record the race • Transfer data from devices to HD/computer and provide all RAW format photos taken of the event • He/she must follow the race by skidoo for the entire race

∗ This chart is based on job descriptions that Ivakkak organizers use to hire support staff in 2020, as well as for the upcoming 2021 edition. All staff members are expected to have their own snowmobile and qamutik in good condition, except for the veterinary and the photographer (Ivakkak rent skidoos for them).

d. Community members

Everyone from the community who attend Ivakkak events, from elders to children; among them are mushers' close relatives who travel by Air Inuit to different villages to follow the race and cheer for their loved ones – in this case when mushers arrive in town, they are reunited with their family for the duration of their stay (most of time for one night, but longer if weather conditions delay race departure). This category also includes political figures on different administrative levels (local mayors, municipality personnel, KRG staff and affiliates). Unlike the common villagers, these political representatives' contribution/involvement in Ivakkak are highlighted during festive and race events. Their cooperation is a crucial factor in Ivakkak's success and smooth operation. There are also

occasional glitches (to be discussed in chapter 5), but overall, local and regional authorities actively cooperate with Ivakkak staff in planning and organizing activities (in certain cases, also in the PR/advertising campaigns).

e. Qallunaat – non-Inuit spectators

In each community there are outsiders who partake in Ivakkak festivities: tourists, contractors, health personnel, educators, researchers, etc. For the 19th edition, it was in Kuujjuaq, the "capital" of Nunavik, that the qallunaat presence felt the most substantial.

f. Online fandom – followers on virtual platforms

There is also an Ivakkak fan-base that remains physically absent but digitally present. Ivakkak's official website was fully launched in 2004 and upgraded over the years. For the recent editions, race results, event recaps, photos and videos are published daily. The website now also features a live GPS tracking of teams, which refreshes itself every 5 minutes. Along with an official Facebook page, Ivakkak has a strong web presence. Extended networks of Inuit users on Facebook, Tiktok and Instagram, along with coverage by media outlets such as Nunatsiaq News and CBC North further solidify Ivakkak's digital community. This virtual community includes locals, Nunavimmiut who are currently residing in the South, Inuit from Nunavut and Canadian provinces, people from other indigenous groups in the circumpolar world (Greenland, Northern Europe, Russia and Alaska), non-Inuit mushers, and Arctic dog enthusiasts all over the world.

The social aspects of Ivakkak will be examined in chapter 5. A quick note here regarding the ethnic composition of the Ivakkak staff: there is a shift from mixed ethnic background (especially in Ivakkak's early years) to a practically Inuit-exclusive team. The only staff position that is consistently occupied by qallunaat candidate is the Ivakkak veterinarian. For the 19th edition, Makivik made an explicit effort in hiring an Inuk to work as the official Ivakkak photographer, a position that was previously held by non-Inuit.

2.2.5. The Ivakkak trail

One defining feature of Ivakkak is the yearly alternating trails between the Ungava coast and the Eastern Hudson Bay coast. In addition, the start and the finish lines are placed in different villages, and the direction of the race also changes every year (i.e. ascending or descending the coast, northbound vs. southbound). This flexibility entails a geographical covering and a territorial awareness/connectedness that further distinguish Ivakkak from other contemporary dogsled races, where trails are often pre-determined and do not shift every year. As one Ivakkak staff member explained:

> We normally look at the past races to see what communities have not hosted a start of finish line yet. Once this information is reviewed, that's how the routes are chosen.

Compared to the Iditarod Trail – the most famous Nordic dogsledding sports event ("The Last Great Race on Earth", as its official title goes), Ivakkak is not primarily structured around the idea of the "trail". Iditarod, on the other hand, finds all its glory in *one* single trail. Its legacy is built on a particular event in American history, the 1925 Serum Run from Seward to Nome.[12] It also evokes the Klondike-Alaska Gold Rush, the mail route, and the idea of America's Last Great Wilderness (Ringsmuth, 2011). For half a century, the Iditarod Trail embodied the modern American masculine ideals: individualism, freedom, the mystified partnership between wolf-like dogs and the Alaskan (White) Men, and their moral and physical superiority exemplified on the backdrop of the Wild (Onion, 2009). The values embodied by Ivakkak, as we would discuss in later chapters, are very different from these Euro-American ideals.

[12] The race was conceived in 1967 by the Centennial Committee to celebrate the 100th anniversary of Alaska being a U.S. Territory, after being purchased from Russia. https://iditarod.com/race-history/

Chapter 3.
Qimmiit, the Ivakkak dogs

Qimmiit, the Inuit sled dogs, are the key players in the Ivakkak competition. They effectively occupy the center stage in almost all the race activities. The furry ones and their human teammates are inseparable on the race trail. In fact, the entire Ivakkak staff's daily operation revolves around "dogteam coordination". Before diving into the complex social and emotional bonds between qimmiit and the Inuit mushers, we should first look at:

- The Inuit sled dogs: the animal in its physical and historical specificity
- Key "house-keeping" activities: routine practices that revolve around qimmiit

Zoological characterization, protocols of veterinary care and dogteam training are not typical subjects that fall under the umbrella of anthropology. Although this project is not a veterinary survey, nor a zoological report, I think it is nonetheless highly relevant to highlight, through the descriptions that follow (on qimmiit morphology, pedigree, diet, training, handling and transportation, team configuration, dog temperament and characters, and vocalization traits), the practical labors, time and energy, not to mention the brain powers that Inuit mushers and Ivakkak staff invest in their precious sled dogs. We will not be in a position to fully appreciate the interconnectedness between dogs and Inuit in a contemporary dogsled competition, if we bypass the banal daily operations and skip the basic definition of "what is an Inuit sled dog" as defined by the Ivakkak rulebook.

Also, I hope that by going through the numerous care/maintenance and feeding "tips" gathered from Ivakkak mushers' daily routine, readers of this paper will be able to appreciate the intensely demanding nature of dogteam-keeping, and the breath of activities involved in an apparently "low-tech" dog race. Love, as Inuit mushers taught me, is not to be found in sweet words and fancy talks, but in dedicated hard work.

3.1. General physical considerations:
What makes a qimmiq and how are Ivakkak dogteams cared for?

The conceptual bracket for "Northern dogs" and "sled dogs" can be quite wide. Description and analysis here concern primarily the Inuit sled dogs that participated in the 19th Ivakkak, with additional reference to Inuit sled dogs not directly involved in the 2020 event. Data are based on:

- Field observations and direct interactions with dogs during the 19th Ivakkak;
- Experiences assisting/accompanying the Ivakkak veterinary at race start;
- Conversations with Ivakkak mushers, their family members, veteran mushers, radio broadcasters and villagers during the race;
- (to a lesser extent) Subsequent group conversations on social media and content shared by mushers on their Facebook page.

From my own observation, Ivakkak dogs constitute the top-tier Nunavik canine elite. This general impression can be biased, for I am a foreigner, and prior to Ivakkak I have never met an Arctic sled dog. The shock factor, the excitement and the chill I felt in a first time face-to-face encounter with the Arctic sled dogs in the Ivakkak race setting deeply moved me, and inevitably colored my perception of these animals. However, my subjective understanding is not totally illusory, for I have met several Ivakkak staff members (including senior members) and local villagers who shared the same feeling and opinion.

3.1.1. Morphology:
Basic traits of an Inuit sled dog, as defined by Inuit mushers and Ivakkak staff

To become an Ivakkak dog, a qimmiq (dog) must meet specific qualifications. In Ivakkak's Official Rules and Regulations[13], it is clearly stated at the very beginning that:

> Only purebred Inuit Husky dogs are to be used by participants.

[13] An updated PDF version for the 2021 race (20th edition) is available at https://www.ivakkak.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Rules-and-Regulations-2021-.pdf

> IMPORTANT: Siberian husky dogs or blue-eyed dogs will not be accepted under any circumstances.
>
> Dogs will be checked prior to the start of the race and any dog that doesn't fit these requirements may be removed from the race and returned home.

Ivakkak officials and staff members are strict about this rule and make no compromise. For the 19th edition, the pre-race inspection process was rigorously conducted one day ahead of the Ivakkak start date. The inspection team (Marshall, Trail Coordinator, Scout, Veterinary and Veterinary Assistant) went through all 84 dogs stationed on the snowy hill outside the Kangirsuk village. One dog was disqualified on the spot, because its fur was exceedingly long and its ears floppy. To quote one of the inspectors (a senior Scout): "That is *definitely* not a Inuit dog!" The matter was again brought up during a pre-race all staff meeting. Putting a non-Inuit dog on the team was almost seen as cheating and a moral violation of the Ivakkak code of conduct. In the afternoon on the same day, the Ivakkak Coordinator contacted Air Inuit, requested a dog cage and arranged the disqualified dog's return to its home community.

Ivakkak dogs are big. Based on my observation, their average height when standing (from ear tip down) is approximately 33-34 inches. These dogs also appear to have a much tougher build than most southern work-dogs. I do not have data on their average weight and muscle density, but from close interaction with them (tapping their legs, shoulders, chest and back) and discussing with the Ivakkak veterinary, these animals have strikingly compact and robust musculature. Mushers' prideful remarks also confirmed my observation, as one musher told me about his dogs: "They are super tough animals, all muscles."

Fur density is another defining trait of Ivakkak dogs. Thick and voluminous fur, paired with a square broad shoulder, confers to these sled dogs an imposing posture comparable to young Tibetan mastiffs. One retired musher told me that a few years ago a hunter mistakenly shot his lead dog: the lead dog sprinted far ahead from the rest of the team when his rope snapped; the hunter in the distance thought it was a running wolf. Like Arctic wolves, Inuit sled dogs can display a wide range of fur colors. In the 19th Ivakkak, common fur colors are black, white/beige, and various shades of grey. Some dogs have large patches of black fur on an overall cream body.

One Puvirnituq team had several tall dogs with distinctive reddish-brown fur – it was said to be a trait inherited from Greenlandic dogs brought to the village in the 1980s and the 1990s.

Below is a detailed Ivakkak dog qualification/characteristic chart:

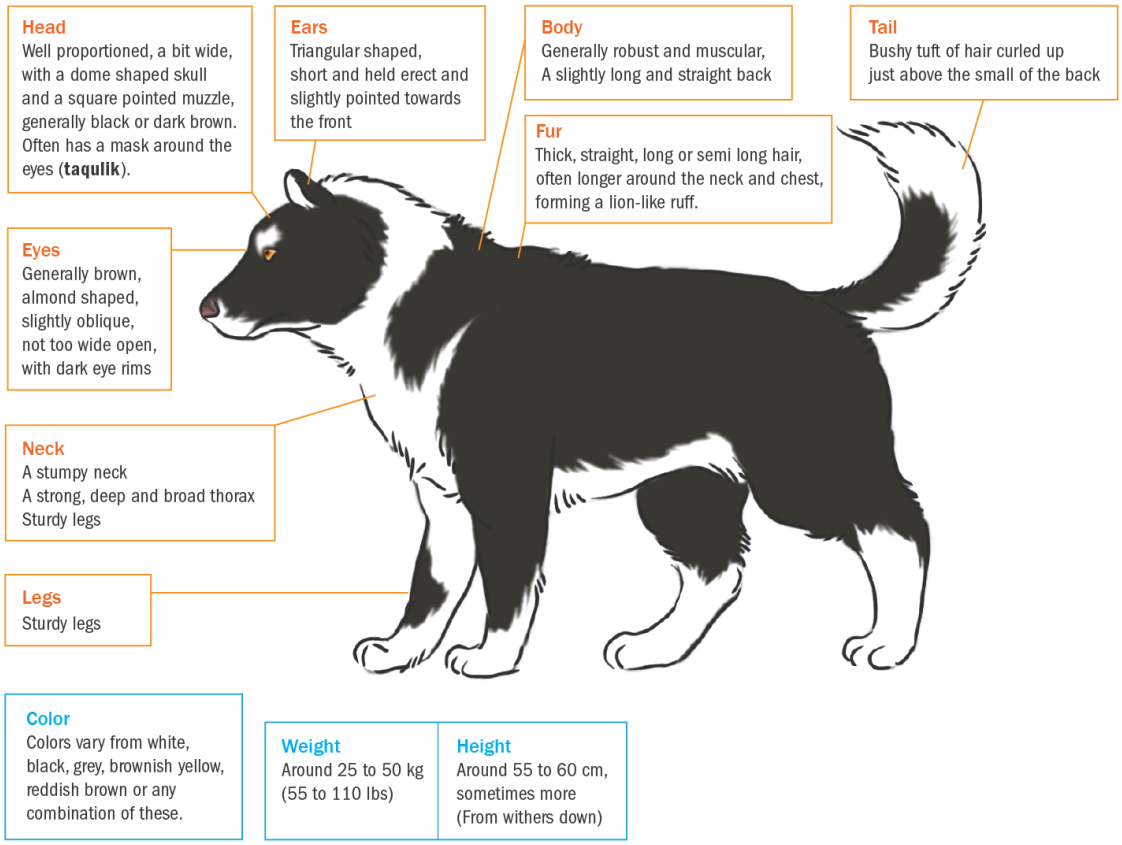

Figure 5. Ivakkak dog qualifications
(Illustration by author, information extracted from Ivakkak Rules and Regulations)

3.1.2. Pedigree: concept of breed and purity of the Inuit sled dogs

The Ivakkak Rules put great emphasis on "purebred". Some nuances should be highlighted before moving further. The concept of breed traces back to a specific set of cultural and historical conditions. In *The Invention of the Modern Dog* (2018), Worboys, Strange and Pemberton demonstrated that "breed" was primarily an artificial construction in Victorian Britain, at the same time when the concept of "pet dog" emerged:

> For centuries there had been different dog types, which had emerged in different places from breeding for work, sport, or companionship. There was variation in "look" within the types, and they merged into each other at the margins, with gradation in size, shape, color, coat, and so on. […] The gradation of forms disappeared with the adoption of breed as the principal way of thinking about and categorizing dogs from the mid-Victorian period onward. Breeders reimagined and remodeled dogs, reducing the variation within types and at the same time producing and proliferating discrete, differentiated, standardized breeds. The difference between *pre-* and *postbreed* dogs can be compared to how colors appear in a rainbow versus on a modern paint sample card. (Worboys, Strange & Pemberton, 2018: 2).

When stating "purebred Inuit Husky dogs", Ivakkak staff members and Inuit mushers are navigating an ambiguous conceptual space – to Western standards at least. Arguably, the Inuit sled dogs are what Worboys and his co-authors would have labeled "Pre-breed dogs", because they are not "Modern Dog" engineered by British Victorians under the combined pressure of industrialization, commercialization, class/gender attitudes, and evolutionary thinking. The phenotypic and genetic stability of the Inuit dogs resulted from long-term climatic, geographical and functional adaptations (not from intensified and accelerated artificial selections). Their evolutionary history unfolds on an extended timescale, closely synched to the Inuit migration across the North American Arctic.

> The Inuit migration (beginning around 1000 BCE) represents a significant episode in the history of dogs in the North American Arctic, and the dispersal of Inuit culture is mirrored in the dispersal of its genetically distinct dogs […] The legacy of these Inuit dogs survives today in Arctic sledge dogs, making them some of the last remaining descendant populations of a pre-European dog lineage in the Americas. (Ameen *et al.*, 2019)

Between the 1960s and the 1970s, the native sled dogs practically disappeared in the Canadian Arctic (Carpenter, 1976ab). Nowadays, to rebuild the local sled dog population in Nunavik, young Inuit mushers are striving to re-establish a dog type with relatively stable morphological traits and functional adaptations, but they are not concerned with commercialization, uniformed look, or absolute genetic/phenotypic purity. Although they have borrowed the "purebred" concept and associated terminology, the actual meaning of "purebred" and "breed" in the modern Inuit vocabulary is perhaps not identical to how the same terminology

is used in a kennel club in the South. Something is lost in translation. This "out-of-phase" can be seen in recent debates surrounding the official breed title of the Inuit dogs.

In January 2020, the Canadian Eskimo Dog Club (a registered branch club under the Canadian Kennel Club, CKC) proposed to change the breed name to Inuit Qimmiq. This proposition was unsatisfying to many Inuit, because qimmiq generically refers to all dogs. In addition, "Inuit Qimmiq" literally translates to "People Dog", which is nonsensical to Inuktitut speakers. The current title, "Canadian Eskimo Dog", is also nonsensical to many Inuit (not only because "Eskimo" reflects an aberrant colonial attitude). "Eskimo Dog" was first registered with CKC in 1888. "Canadian" was added to it in 1986 to distinguish the breed from the Greenland dogs (Tranter, 2020). This separation between Canadian and Greenlandic has no basis: not only are Eastern Canadian Arctic and Western Greenland parts of a broad geographical and cultural continuum (Inuit live in both areas and share many aspects in lifestyle and local technologies), sled dogs bloodlines in these two areas are also intricately connected. In terms of genetic profiles, they are the same dogs (Friis, 2004; 2005). As mentioned previously, Nunavik mushers also developed local lineages from Greenlandic sled dogs. Some Ivakkak mushers and veteran mushers also have dogs that are from Nunavut, or are directly descended from Nunavut bloodlines (which in turn were mixed with dogs from Greenland).

CKC's renaming debates would have seemed futile in the Ivakkak race, where dogs are called for what they are and for what they do. Mushers use qimmiq and qimmiit when speaking in Inuktitut, and an array of interchangeable terms when speaking in English: dogs, huskies[14], husky dogs, Inuit dogs, sled dogs, male, female, puller, lead, etc.

3.1.3. Feeding the qimmiit: intensive labour and Inuit dietary norms

During the 19th Ivakkak, I recorded three categories of dog feed: country food, store bought dog food, and cooked special food.

[14] The term "huksy" is phonetic deformation of "Eskimo". For reference, consult *Dictionary of Newfoundland English*, by George Morley Story, W. J. Kirwin, John David Allison Widdowson, pg 263, University of Toronto Press 2004. https://www.etymonline.com/word/husky

- Country food includes frozen fish (whole arctic char sawed into big chunks of 4-6 inches) and frozen caribou (big chops of frozen meat, 2-3 lb/piece, more or less). Although not observed directly during the race, some mushers also mentioned that they fed their dogs frozen walrus meat. Not every team used the same types of "wild-caught" meat – some teams arrived at the race fully stocked, carrying several large boxes of frozen caribou, while other teams relied heavily on frozen fish. Experienced mushers from Puvirnituq explained to me that they prefer to feed the team caribou (and secondly frozen fish, if caribou is unavailable) – they believe raw caribou is the best food source for high performance teams. We should note that food types vary depending on mushers' own resourcefulness and hunting skills, as well as their family tradition, and the dominant fauna in their home region. Seasonal availability of wild animals also plays into the feeding plan[15]. Many mushers said they were very busy hunting/fishing in fall/early winter to stock up for the race. Their family members were all involved in this process. One remark is that other iconic Inuit Country food items such as seal, ptarmigan and beluga were not given to dogs (at least in the Ivakkak context). On the trail, each team's dedicated Support Crews were in charge of carrying the food supply (for dogs) in the qamutik (box-trailer sled attached to their snowmobiles), along with their camping gears and land-traveling items (tent, propane stove, caribou hide and insulated sleeping pad, gasoline, road marks, gun and ammunition, etc.)

- Store bought food – or commercial dog food – were purchased by Makivik from dealers in the South. Right before the 2020 race, Ivakkak staff stocked over 20 bags of dry dog food (approx. 44 lb/bag) at the Land Holding Cooperative in Kangirsuk. Mushers were directed to collect their allowances (2 dog food bags per team to begin with) as soon as they arrived in town. Each team also received a special sealable heavy-duty canvas bag (large enough to hold 50 lb of dry dog food) – it is mandatory to carry a bag of dog food on their sled throughout the race[16]. At each community checkpoint, mushers can refill dry

[15] It was mentioned that when available, musk ox could also be hunted and used as dog feed.

[16] Ivakkak Rules requires all teams to carry a number of essential equipment throughout the race. The list of mandatory items is in the Rules book, Annexe 2 - Carryon Equipment List. For most items (such as gun and ammunition, shovel, chisel, etc.), if missing from the sled upon inspection, the team will get a one-minutes penalty. However, if the dog food is missing, a 5-minutes penalty will be applied.

dog food, which is also coordinated by Ivakkak/Makivik. There were two commercial dog food brands – both specifically labeled as "high performance" and "work/sport dogs" food and high in animal protein (chicken and fish meal). These two brands are also what many mushers use to feed their team outside the Ivakkak race:

a. *Redpaw PowerEdge*: "performance" dry dog food for work/sport dogs, produced by a Wisconsin-based dog food company. Each bag is 40 lb, market price in the South (Canada and USA) is around $89 per bag.
b. *Inukshuk Dog Food*: also a specialized dry dog food designed for high performing work/sport dogs (including police dogs), produced by a New-Brunswick dog food company[17]. Each bag is 44 lb, market price in the South is around $85 per bag.

- In addition to raw frozen meat and commercial dry dog food, some mushers also prepared special cooked food as "pre-race supplement" for their teams. The special meals were cooked and given to dogs directly in the pot (the ones observed were 50L stainless steel stock pots). Two kinds of special meals were noted during the race: caribou fat broth with oatmeal, and bone/caribou carcass broth. The homemade concoctions use Country food as base ingredients (caribou is once again the core element). They were meant to make the dogs stronger and to give them an extra energy boost.

When feeding sled dogs, Country food is a lot more desirable than store bought foods in terms of health benefits and nutritional properties. Caribou meat is the best option, followed by arctic char. This ranking of dog foods echoes with the cultural values Inuit ascribe to their traditional foods. There is a parallel between the ideal Inuit *human diet* and the ideal diet for high performance sled dogs. Store bought food is considered to be of significantly lesser quality, no matter how bold the "high performance" claim of its package. On the other hand, there is also an unavoidable trade-off: hunting Country food for dogteam requires heavy investment in time, money and effort, whereas store bought food is much less labor intensive, more "convenient", and all together a cheaper alternative. Some teams use a combination of Country food and commercial dry dog food, but the most experienced teams (especially the past Ivakkak winning

[17] Inukshuk is also the official dog food supplier of the Yukon Quest. The company promises its formula to have "the highest energy per cup" compared to all commercial dog food on the market.

teams from Puvirnituq and Tasiujaq) restrained from using commercial dog food, or used them only sparingly. Two past champion teams arrived at Ivakkak with loads of frozen caribou and fish, and they did not switch to commercial dog food during the race. According to one musher, dry dog food not only does not meet the energy needs of his dogs, but it could upset their stomach. The most experienced mushers also fed their teams cooked supplements throughout the pre-race training season. In contrast, less experienced teams tend to be rely more on commercial dog food.

The Ivakkak dog-feeding schedule varies between teams – each musher decides when to feed their dogs. There were some general trends: dogs were fed the night before the race and shortly after they arrived at the designated resting place[18]. They were never fed right before the race. They were not fed a lot – this is to maintain a balance between hunger and satiation – eating too much or too little will harm their performance. Previous accounts from elders and veteran mushers confirm these general practices (Inukpuk, 2009; Shannon, 1997: 78). Dogs were not given anything liquid (except broth supplement and vet-approved "energy drink" – we will develop this in later chapters). They ate snow for hydration. There were also some concerns with unauthorized feeding and substance abuse. A past incident was recalled during a staff meeting at Kangirsuk: during an earlier Ivakkak, drunken villagers fed alcohol (or something else, the exact substance was unknown) to Ivakkak dogs; this made half of the dogs sick the next day. A decision was then made to appoint a night guard to patrol the dogteams' resting area, whenever the teams would spend the night close to a community. In the Ivakkak Rules, mushers are the only ones allowed to feed their dogs. Drugs are strictly forbidden.

3.1.4. Dogteams' handling and transportation

While Ivakkak pays homage to the traditional Inuit mode of transportation, Ivakkak dogs enjoy the most up-to-date transportation services – motorized vehicles from airplane to snowmobiles to speed boat.

[18] Dogs are only fed when they are tied in the "resting/parking" configuration – roughly one meter apart from each other along a straight metal chain. They are not fed while running, or while attached to the sled and halting temporarily.

For every Ivakkak race, dogteams are flown into the starting village and flown out from the final village back to their hometown via Air Inuit (and in some early editions, First Air and Air Inuit). Over the years, Air Inuit has become the Official Airline of Ivakkak. The first edition in 2001 was the only time when dogteams sat in a bare cargo plane without additional supporting structures. From 2002 onwards, Air Inuit started to use custom made cages to carry the canine passengers: the "kennel system" was first a series of rustic wooden boxes, then subsequently up-scaled to stacked wooden/plastic/metal boxes, then finally "perfected" to customized double deck compartments made with stainless steel and plexiglass[19].

Once on the ground, dogteams were moved between the village airport and the designated resting area in several ways: a team could be chained in a single file pulled between two skidoos, then they trot to the destination guided by the skidoos; they could be loaded on 4x4 trucks (sometimes the truck were docked to the aircraft, so dogs were directly off-loaded onto the truck without even touching the ground) and carried to the resting location; occasionally they could also be ordered to sit in a qamutik behind a skidoo. Mushers would request trucks to carry their teams to save their energy for the race, or to give them more time to recover after stressful and exhausting air travel. For the 19th Ivakkak, dogteams were stationed on a hillside halfway between the Kangirsuk airport and the village. Two teams also decided to load the dogs on qamutik and carried them to the start line on the frozen Kangirsuk River in the morning of the race day. An additional use of qamutik for Ivakkak dogs was the "dog ambulance" – a dedicated qamutik, with built-in compartments (each compartment was equipped with camping ropes or the "dog seatbelt"), and pulled by the Veterinary Assistant's skidoo throughout the race. On the trail, mushers could request to take out a sick/injured/exhausted dog athlete from the team, and transfer it to the ambulance qamutik.

At each resting place, teams were stationed not too far from each other, but dispersed enough to avoid fighting between dogs. All teams were settled down in unilinear "parking" configuration: dogs were tied along a roughly 15-meters-long metal chain. The chains were

[19] This gradual and reiterative process is recorded in images and short blurbs in the Makivik Magazine, published between 2001 and 2019. Pictures of the most up to date "kennel system" can be found on the Ivakkak official website, for example: https://www.ivakkak.com/the-flight-home/

fastened on snow/ice anchors (see figure below), or occasionally pressed down by heavy rocks or wood blocks.

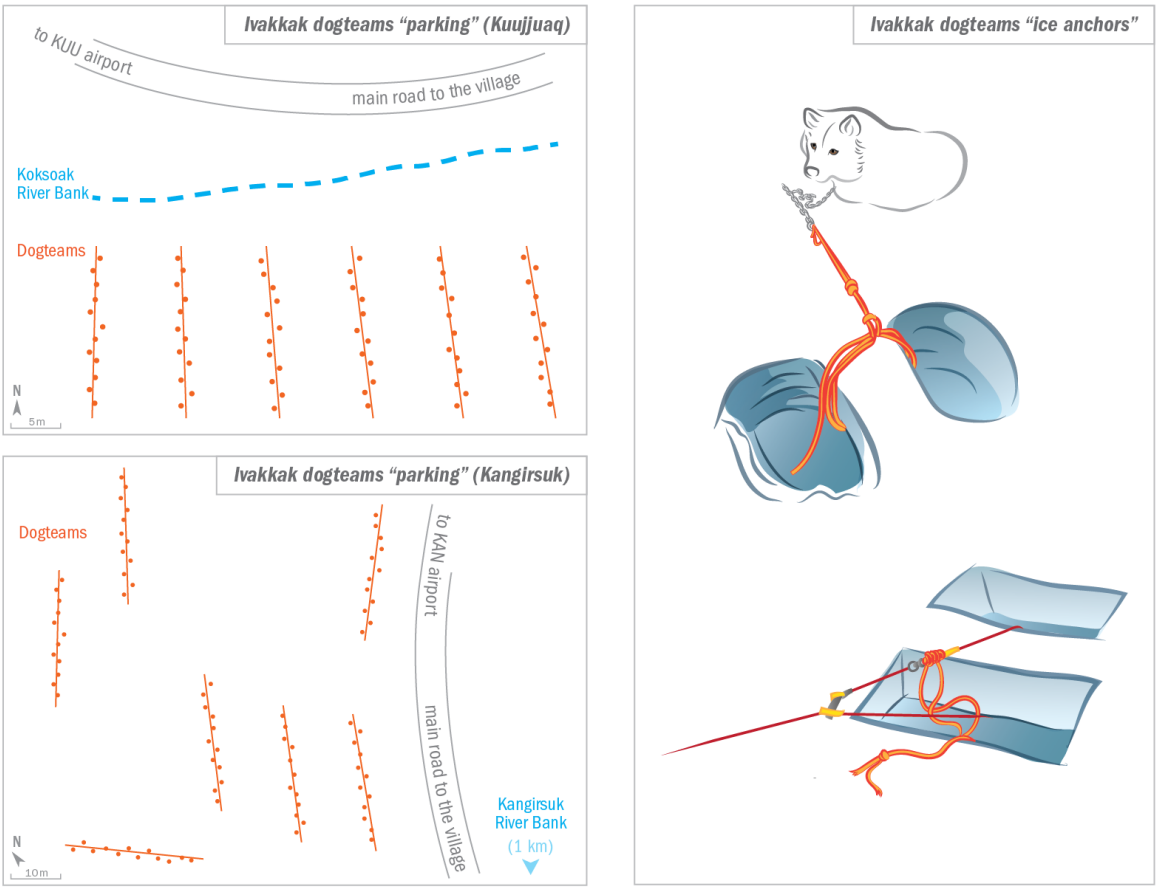

Figure 6. Ivakkak dogteams' "parking" configuration and ice/snow anchor techniques (Illustration by author)

3.1.5. Care and maintenance: daily routine and constant energy invested in keeping one's dogteam in good shape

All Ivakkak dogs are fully vaccinated – rabies, distemper, parvovirus and infectious canine hepatitis. They are also given dewormers before they leave their hometown to join the race.[20] From what I observed during the race, experienced mushers' chief concern was the well-

[20] We will discuss the push and pull between the Western veterinary health practices and the local cynology expertise more in detail later.

being and the physical conditions of their canine partners. The qimmiit were entitled to a number of "physio-care" regular treatment:

- **Pre-race massage**: back-leg and hip stretch to warm-up the muscles; this was for the most part a veterinary-led initiative, only half the mushers followed suit at the beginning; throughout the race, dogs with light muscle/paw injuries were given massage in the morning before getting back on the trail – these were done by mushers, the veterinary, the veterinary assistant, and support crew members. Some mushers also gave a quick post-race massage to their dogs after a long and difficult run.
- **Paw fur trim**: some mushers would check the underside of each of their dogs' paws, and thoroughly trim down the fur around the paw pad (or the fur between the fingers that grow a bit too long) with small scissors. This fur trimming was done on a regular basis before the team hit the trail. This is to avoid ice/snow accumulation and the formation of ice clumps under dogs' paws. Elder had mentioned in earlier account that dogs with long hair are more prone to getting ice clumps, and that these must be removed from the pads to prevent the freezing and the bleeding (Inukpuk, 2009: 45).
- **Booties**: some dogs wore homemade fleece booties – this is to prevent ice clumps damage or to help injured paw pad to heal faster. In general, the booties were only used sparingly during the Ivakkak race (and there was a tendency of losing them on the trail).
- **Paw ointment**: dogs with injured paw pads were given custom made ointment to help them recover. Some mushers used their own concoction, but in most cases the Ivakkak Veterinarian provided the ointment. The veterinarian made a large batch (1L) before the race, and distributed the paw-cream to mushers in a small container.

Dog's health mattered more than the final results of the competition. Although team performance was important and every musher wanted to win, dogs were not forced to run when exhausted or injured (therefore the "qimmiit ambulance" – the much appreciated qamutik carrier adapted to injured and fatigued dog athletes). The care for Ivakkak dogs was methodical and professional, mushers and staff members were to ensure that the teams could run well, where "everyone do their job". Generally speaking, affectionate petting is totally absent. Although physical interaction between human and dog partners vary from one Ivakkak team to another,

generally speaking there were only rough and fleeting head rub, nose or shoulder tap, and, very rarely, a quick rough hug (which was always initiated by a high-energy playful younger dog). This to me was reminiscent of how some professional athletes greet each other in competitive team sports. Perhaps one could call this "musher's austere affection". One musher told me frankly: "We don't pet these dogs, it'll make them soft." Petting is seen as an infantilizing act, disrespectful toward canine teammates, and a negation of qimmiit's autonomy.

3.1.6. Training dogteams: "like teaching children"

In summer, dogs are chained outside the village, or set to roam free on small islands[21]. Depending on the geographical and weather conditions, and each musher's personal schedules, one might visit their teams daily, bi-weekly, or monthly for feeding and general check. Each musher has his own way of managing the team in "low season". There are rarely any training sessions in summer. Training for Ivakkak generally starts in November, and intensifies over the course of early winter months. According to most mushers, teams are most heavily trained within one to two months prior to the race date. For some mushers, there are constraints to their training schedules because they also hold regular wage jobs. Even then, most teams find time to run long distances at least 2-3 times per week. Failure to do so will leave the team vulnerable – too weak to face the physical intensity and the shifting snow conditions on the Ivakkak trail. After the 19th edition, one musher reflected on his team's performance:

> My dogs didn't get enough training this year to build up their stamina, so they got tired quickly pulling through that soft snow (on the second half of the trail, between Kuujjuaq and Kangiqsualujjuaq)… next year we will do better.

It was difficult to get more detailed information on pre-race training. The most direct way to learn about it would be a visit to the teams while they are conducting Ivakkak preparations in their home villages sometimes between November and February. This should be done in a subsequent fieldwork[22]. When asked if there are any particular team-building techniques, most

[21] One musher from Puvirnituq complained: "All the islands near the village are already taken!"

[22] Mushers from three villages (Puvirnituq, Tasiujaq, Kuujjuaq) agreed to let me visit them during the 2021 training season. However, the plan was not fulfilled due to the Covid pandemic.

mushers talked about the importance of early training (puppies). Three elements were mentioned: puppy selection, teaching voice command, and dogs' social learning.

- **Puppy selection**: some mushers and veteran mushers expressed the idea of "natural talent" regarding their dogs. Like humans, dogs were born with different predispositions – some were more prone to become good sled dogs and even team leaders. Experienced mushers in the past were able to identify the most talented puppies in a litter. The selection methods were explained in anecdotal fashion. First, the parka method – pups were placed inside a skin parka, and the ones that managed to crawl out the fastest were considered the best picks for future teams. Second, the flip method – pups were placed belly-up on a musher's palm (or on a flat surface), the ones that managed to turn over the fastest were kept as the best candidates for future teams.
- **Voice command**: the most important thing that dogs had to learn, since their puppyhood, were obedience and the words used to indicate directions: left, right, stop, and go. They also had to be responsive to their names.
- **Dogs' social learning**: this is a learning/teaching formula comparable to traditional Inuit education. In traditional Inuit learning models, textbooks and written documents are of lesser importance than "field learning" – pupils acquire new skills by following and observing elders, by listening to elder's stories and instructions, by practicing and going through trials and errors. Like Inuit children, young puppies are expected to learn from direct life experiences, to become independent and self-reliant quickly. Quality education is made of dynamic and sensory experiences, and family-based social events (Annahatak, 1994). Similarly, young dogs must learn from their canine elders. Mushers would put young siblings on the same team, and let them follow older and more experienced dogs. Whenever youngsters misbehaved or misperformed, they would be corrected or punished by their own elders.

On a team, mushers generally positioned themselves as the "bosses" – this relationship is however more complex than a unilinear top-down control (this will be elaborated in the next section). Tough treatments were also mentioned as training tips, but violence and physical abuse were not recommended (with one exception – when a dog refuses to cooperate or become obviously aggressive). According to mushers and retired mushers, a team will not perform well if

dogs were abused or treated badly. “They need love,” a musher explained in modern language, “But not soft baby love.” The most useful tool for disciplining a team is the long skin whip. The ones used by Ivakkak mushers today are very similar to the designs recorded in earlier ethnographic accounts (for example in the 1889-1890 Smithsonian Annual report of the Bureau of Ethnology[23]). The whip is not used for body punishment, but for giving warning signals – both visible and audible (when snapped in the air or on snow/ice). Mushers also used the whip to make their team accelerate when needed, and to correct the team formation on the run. A special harsh physical punishment is mentioned only once. The technique in question is not beating, and it is only reserved for the most stubborn troublemakers: the musher quickly grabs and bites the ear of the wrongdoer. According to the mushers, this last resort disciplinary action would be immediately effective, and the dog would remember it forever.

3.1.7. Dogteam configuration: formation in Inuit pattern

Ivakkak rules require each team to have 10-12 dogs. For the 19th edition, all teams started with 12 dogs, half arrived at the finish line with 8-10 dogs pulling the sled (the injured or fatigued dogs finished the race riding the ambulance). According to elders and veteran mushers, 6-7 dogs suffice to make a fully functional dogteam. One elder recalled that his father used to travel with only 6 strong dogs and was able to cover about 400 km in 3-4 days under good weather conditions.

In term of sex ratio, there were no particular rules, nor discriminations. Female and male dogs were equally appreciated. There is one precaution with the female dogs – their reproductive cycle. Females in heat were allowed in the race, but mushers must monitor them and restrain them from disturbing other dogs. Since female’s “mood” could potentially wreak havoc on the race trail, some mushers used veterinary-approved hormone regulators to suppress/offset the heat cycle in their female dogs before the race. This practice could be compared to the ways in which

[23] The Eleventh Annual report of the Bureau of Ethnology to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, 1889-1990, directed by J.W. Powell, contains work conducted by Lucien M. Turner around Fort Chimo; a detailed illustration of “Dog whip” can be found on page 244:
https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/87521#page/372/mode/1up

some professional female athletes artificially modify their menstrual cycles in preparation for major competitions.

In terms of age, most Ivakkak dogs were young (1.5 – 2 years old) or in their prime time (2 – 5 years old). One musher pointed out that younger pups, despite their high energy level and strong competitive drive, often get tired more quickly than older dogs. This could be explained by the fact that, in mushers' experiences, sled dogs only attain full physiological maturation right around 23-24 months old, not before. When evaluating one of his dogs, one musher noted:

> The brown one is my top runner. He's (the) tallest too, a year and half, still five six more months to grow.

Ivakkak teams run in fan hitch pattern. Outside competition, some teams also use the in-tandem formation (especially in forest areas) for training and recreation. In the fan hitch pattern, roles and positions of team members could be quite flexible on the run, and sometimes interchangeable. The team structure is relatively flat, with almost no visible hierarchy. The "lead dog" could be the most prized dog on a team, but that is not necessarily always the case. A lead dog does not have to be the pack's dominant alpha dog. When asked what would make a good lead dog, most mushers mentioned that the lead should be the most responsive one on the team. One Ivakkak team featured a double-lead (a pair of siblings), while some other teams featured female leads (one team leader was described as the matriarch – the female was leading a team made entirely of her children and grandchildren). A retired musher also mentioned that a female in heat could be a good lead, because males on the team would be "very motivated to chase after her". Favoritism was not observed: on a given team all dogs were treated equally (for example, same food ratio, same social interaction), except for injured dogs, for they received extra care from their human partners.

3.1.8. Temperament and character: the qimmiit's personalities and Inuit's understanding of dogs' aggressive behaviours

Mushers told me that their dogs "all have different personalities". When I interacted with the Ivakkak dogs, they indeed displayed a range of social characters: some were extremely

friendly and eager to play, some were nervous and noisy, some were very calm, and some were utterly indifferent and ignored all strangers. All dogs were excited to see their musher (singing, wagging tail, jumping) and would sit or lay down quietly when the mushers were gone. Most dogs were visibly agitated right before the race. I did not observe any aggressive behavior. The Ivakkak Veterinary validated my observation and told me the dogs behaved very well when getting physical checks before the race and on the trail. Although locals were not advised to get close to the dogs, at each village finish line, many locals gathered around dog teams for pictures (and some "petting"). For example, at the Kuujjuaq finish line, as soon as the Veterinary assistant stopped his snowmobile, large crowd of school kids immediately gathered around his "qimmiit ambulance". The four dogs sat tamely in the qamutik for nearly an hour of non-stop tapping, hair pulling, and affectionate stroking from all sides. They were quite relaxed and seemed to enjoy the public attention. Their patience with loud children was impressive and exceeded Vet Assistant's expectations.

Aggressiveness should be set in context:

- Aggressive behaviors towards humans were not observed. It would not be tolerated.
- Aggressive behaviors towards other village dogs were not observed, although it could be tolerated, it must be prevented. Most mushers despised strays (for they might have rabies, and they often steal Ivakkak dogs' food). During the 19th edition, Ivakkak staff made sure that village dogs were kept away from the Ivakkak dogs. Each village also coordinated with the Ivakkak staff and conducted "cleaning operation" before the arrival of the dogteams (village municipality's dog catcher toured the area to make sure no loose dogs were to disturb the teams; villagers were advised to keep an eye on their household dogs).
- Aggressive behaviors among Ivakkak dogs (intra-team or inter-team conflicts) were frequent. The fights were often vicious and were perceived as detrimental to all dogs, especially during the race schedule[24]. To avoid fighting and injuries, mushers made sure to station their teams at safe distance from each other. Whenever a dogfight broke, mushers would jump in (or use their whip) to separate the group as quickly as possible.

[24] Outside the race competition, dogs "infightings" are common and not perceived negatively. In fact, many mushers explained that dogfight is an integral part of qimmiit social life, through which they reach stable hierarchy and social ties.

The "in-fighting" were part of the day-to-day sled dog reality. One musher told me how he lost one of his strongest dogs back home: it was attacked (and eaten) by three other dogs. "He was too strong, they were jealous of him". The scene would have been bloody, but the musher described it as an unsurprising event. In this case, jealousy was interpreted as a motivation for group fights. Another musher also hinted at a similar idea:

> When the dogs are too healthy, they start to have a lot of competition. When the dogs feel healthy, they are afraid of other dogs, so that's what happens, they get into big fight.

3.1.9. A remark on the "vocal" dogs: the acoustic landscape of Ivakkak

When describing Qaanaaq, Kirsten Hastrup evoked the Deleuzian/Guattarian notion of *refrain* – a particular motif (in this case, a sonic/sonorous motif) that bestows a sense of consistency to a given territory. She argued that through their concerted barking and howling, the dogs of Qaanaaq made the territory (Hastrup, 2018: 214-215). Another anthropologist visiting Northern Greenland also made similar remarks about Saqqaq:

> In the middle of the winter […] the familiar sound of all the dogs in the community howling at the same time makes communities of the North so different from those of central West Greenland south of Sisimiut, where dogs are allowed to be kept only as pets. (Dahl, 2000: 30)

Perhaps a Qaanaamiut and a Saqqaamiut would feel at home if they were to attend Ivakkak, for this Nunavik event shares the same sonic refrain. Qimmiit choir marks Ivakkak with a distinctive soundscape. Through their concerts, Ivakkak dogs also define a territory made by sound (it is also a "mobile" territory, moving from village to village as the race progresses).

It would be impossible to capture Ivakkak dogs' range of vocalization by written text. Barking, short howling, sustained long howl, high-pitch squeak, low pitch growl… the vocabulary is limited and does not convey the rich tones of their vocal expressions. The "group songs" were significantly more complex and dynamic than any other dog sounds (or non-human mammal sound) that I have previously experienced in the South. The qimmiit choir could start at

any given moment and could last for as long as 10 minutes. Sometimes it could also rise and fall in succeeding waves. On a quiet day or night, one could clearly hear the sinuous howling within a 3 km radius. When standing close to the group, many layers of sound could be identified at once: barking, squeaking, and howling could evolve in synchronized or contrapuntal turns. A loud "session" could also come to a sudden stop – without a visible trigger. There are studies of dog vocalizations in veterinary and behavioural sciences (Yeon, 2007; Siniscalchi *et al.*, 2018), however I did not find any specific studies on sled dog group songs and acoustics in Inuit communities.

3.2. Relational aspects: the complex bonds between Inuit mushers and qimmiit

Previous ethnographic works have provided a detailed look into the social integration between qimmiit and Inuit (Shanon, 1997; Laugrand & Oosten, 2015; Hastrup, 2018). The bonds between sled dogs and humans are discussed in different structural terms: dependence, interdependence (or mutualistic relationship in the biological sense), co-evolution, alliance and cooperation, or master-subordinates configuration. It would be presumptuous to say that any one single description/analysis is categorically more accurate, objective, or truthful than all others, for analysis (especially when it comes to relational and social aspects) could be influenced and inspired by personal experiences. A scholar's own proximity with dogs, his/her attitudes towards non-human creatures, his/her worldviews and value references can directly or indirectly shape his/her perception and interpretation.

The following section inevitably reflects my personal experience and predisposition. Being a (Siberian husky) dog friend, I am inclined to adopt a less hierarchical framework to assess the relationship between the Ivakkak dogs and their human partners.

3.2.1. Revisiting the "Work dogs" label

Before attending Ivakkak, I was advised to adjust my social perception of dogs: the Inuit qimmiit are work dogs, not pet animals; showing too much affection or tenderness towards them would be totally inappropriate and violate the Inuit social etiquette. Inuit have different

socialization methods for their sled dogs, and the way they treat their dogs is not always compatible with the Southern pet culture.

> Despite its place in society, and the symbolic and economical unit that it forms with its owner, the dog is not regarded as a sacred animal by the Inuit. Their treatment of dogs certainly does not correspond with the standards that Westerners associate with pets. (Lévesque, 2018)

"Pet dogs" and "Work dogs" are indeed two social categories/labels that succinctly set Inuit sled dogs apart from other canines in the South. As previously observed, Ivakkak mushers do not pet their dogs; and people are instructed to refrain from any "petting" actions, for that will make the sled dogs weak/soft. The dogteams are fed to pull the sled ("to do their job") – humans provide food and care in exchange for canine labor and performance. The relationship could be summarily rendered as a "boss/workers" pair. When speaking of their teams, many mushers did not hesitate to use expressions such as "I am the boss", "they have to listen". However, this rendition roots in a modern capitalistic model typical of industrial society. Relying on such a wage-labor metaphor could be misleading. Qimmiit are not the Inuit proletariat tied to their human owners in clean-cut contractual relationship. Although the physical labor is real, and Inuit sled dogs have one of the toughest jobs on Earth, "Work dogs" is a label too simplistic and does not account for other (equally important or even more important) social bonds.

During the 19th Ivakkak, most mushers visited their dogs at least once or twice per day when the teams were resting outside a given village. Once on the race trail, mushers and the dogs moved around as a whole – spending entire days together. Some mushers paid more attention to their dogs, in ways that exceeded the basic caretaking tasks. When checking or feeding a resting team, some mushers would rub the dogs briefly "in passing", or push down the ones that jump up/forward for attention. Most dogs would get up and tail-wag at the approach of their own musher. The communication was almost always two-ways, however minimalistic. All Ivakkak mushers were attentive to their dogs. Below are some instances where I noticed emotional bonding concretely manifested between Ivakkak dogs and their mushers.

- **Caring and guiding a team**

  When speaking of his sled dogs, one musher said: “My dogs are my life, they are like children basically, it’s a lot of work and love.” Recalling a difficult stretch on the trail, the same musher stated: “You have to be calm for the dogs. You are not happy, but you can’t show it to them. When you are positive, they tend to do a lot better.”

- **Treating dog as equal**

  One musher noticed that one of his dogs started to limp on the second day of the race. Arrived in Kuujjuaq, the Veterinary was able to arrange a thorough medical exam (including a quick X-ray in the early morning, conducted in the garage of the local hospital). Upon finding out that his dog had a small bone deformation in his left femur, which possibly caused the limping, the musher half jokingly addressed his dog in English: “Buddy you are going to get early retirement!” He later explained that he will not use this particular dog in future Ivakkak races (which he did nevertheless the following year), but plan to keep him for breeding, “He’ll be a good dad.” Many mushers showed a real sense of respect when talking about their most “talented” dogs. The dogs were attributed their own intelligence and integrity; they were never reduced to simple instrument.

- **Treating dogs as part of the family**

  Although the traditional namesake practices (in Inuktitut, atiq) were not directly mentioned, and no dog from the 19th Ivakkak cohort had the name of a deceased Inuit family member, many elder and older mushers that I met affirmed that dogs were part of their family growing up. Some elders cried quietly during Ivakkak ceremonies when dog slaughters were brought up. Many younger mushers were protective of their dogs and defended them as their own family members. For example, in Kangirsuk, one musher got very angry because some free roaming dogs kept harassing his injured dog (his paw was cut accidentally during transportation, and the musher kept him at his temporary residence in the village). He posted a message to the Ivakkak group chat: “Is the black dog yours with a cable? He’s been fighting my injured dog. If it’s not yours I’m gonna harpoon him!” Mushers also get upset (and vocal on social media) when they lose puppies to stray

dogs, or when they feel Air Inuit has failed to properly handle inter-village travel for their dogs.

Most Ivakkak mushers were also the breeders of their own dogteams. The mushers must care for their dogs from birth to death. This is a multi-generational commitment, because mushers often assist the unfolding of entire lineages, from parent-dogs to their offspring. This is also a group engagement, since mushers must take part in the canine social dynamics. In fact, one could argue that the social and physical integration between Inuit sled dogs and their "owners/mushers" is more complete/total than how Southern households integrate pet dogs (or work dogs). In the South, most dog owners would never have to deal with their dogs' birth phase (puppies come from professional breeders, or are commodities from pet shops), gestation phase (adult dogs are mostly sterilized), group behaviours (dogs most often live in atomized families as solitary canine pet). In addition, sophisticated veterinarian sector and a full-fledged pet-service industry free the Southern dog owners from many essential responsibilities regarding their dogs, such as food provision and healthcare.

Given the inaccuracy of the polarized opposition between "work dogs" and "pet dogs", we could turn to an alternative model which would better reflect the musher/qimmiit's daily reality. Regarding dogs' social categories and cultural representations in Kuujjuaq, Brunet and Lévesque observed that dogs fall into two groups based on their roles: sled dogs and companion dogs. Among the latter, imported Southern dogs represent an important sub-category, sometimes referred to as toy dogs (Brunet & Lévesque, 2017). This "Sled dogs vs. Toy dogs" opposition was brought up in my exchanges with several Ivakkak mushers. It was the generally accepted formula to classify dogs in Nunavik. Sled dogs are strong Inuit dogs that can pull sled; they mostly spent their adulthood outdoors. Consistent with pre-settlement practices, some sled dog puppies are brought indoors for early socialization. The puppies often mingle with infants and young children in the house. Injured adult dogs could also be brought indoors temporarily to receive care. The previously mentioned injured dog (whose front paw was accidentally cut while onboard Air Inuit to Kangirsuk) was brought indoors for a warm bath (his musher and assistant musher spent half an hour rinsing the blood off his legs/belly in the bathtub), a full towel wipe, a complete manicure and some caribou jerk snacks; he stayed in the house for a couple of hours

before he was let out (his musher was worried that he could catch cold if he was left outdoors with wet fur). Toy dogs are small/weak breeds kept indoors (mostly) for sole entertainment purposes. Mushers give no particular value to small toy dogs. They are tolerated only because other members of the family (wife, girlfriend, or children) enjoy keeping them for fun. For most experienced mushers, their sled dogs are a true source of pride. Mushers are emotionally invested in their teams. On the other hand, toy dogs elicit no positive emotional response. On a social scale, sled dogs occupy a much higher rank than toy dogs.

3.2.2. "Dogs are like us" and "dogs are dogs"

The social integration between Inuit sled dogs and mushers/villagers could be seen as a flattened web of interconnectedness. We could appreciate the dog-human relations in terms of "closeness" and "distancing". The connection between qimmiit and mushers is stable and long lasting. The dog/musher partnership is multigenerational, tied to bloodline – for both canines and humans. However, the bonds are also dynamic. Their patterns are fluid under shifting circumstances. This could generate many "contradictory" patterns incompatible with the Western/Southern frame of reference. Depending on the context (the setting of a specific activity) and the function (dogs' roles in that particular activity), sled dogs can be alternately assimilated or estranged, included or excluded from the human sphere.

- **On closeness – "Dogs are just like us"**

  Sled dogs are discussed using the same kinship terms applied to people. Dog society has its own matrix of grandparents, parents, siblings, children, etc. These labels are consistent and stable. They can define one particular dog in relation to other dogs through his/her lifetime. Other general social-psychological descriptors are also shared between sled dogs and humans, for example, vocabulary related to gender norms, age groups, temperament and moods, and physical and mental conditions. Sled dogs' character and ability are also discussed, as they were people. Learning ability shows this parallel particularly well. Some dogs are deemed more talented than others, some are attributed more importance for their physical and mental competence (while some are undervalued for their visible incompetence).

Sled dogs listen and respond to mushers. Beside the essential voice commands, some mushers also stated that dogs understand their mood. One musher explained that when travelling in difficult areas (such as river bank or hill with jagged ice), mushers should lead the team and reassure the team. Dogteams also respond to "human presence", they get visibly excited at the race start when cheered by the crowd, as well as when they approach the finish line. They also have place sense and place memory. One recurrent anecdote is that a dogteam will always bring the musher home even in total whiteout. The village is not only people's home, but also dogs' home. All Ivakkak dogs have their own names, reflecting their physical traits or personalities (for the full list of names, see appendix). As mentioned previously, the traditional namesake practice was not observed among the 19th Ivakkak participants.

According to an elder and retired musher, sled dogs have remarkably strong sense of place. They have a real feeling of belonging to their home (geo-social) community. He told me a story about a young female Greenlandic dog that he adopted in the 1980s. The dog was a gift sent to his village by plane. Despite being treated well and giving birth to her own litters in the village, the female would regularly run to the airport. Sometimes she would sit quietly and watch the planes, sometimes she would try to sneak on a plane, and airport staff had to catch her and send her home. The elder was emotional when he told me the story. He mimicked the dog's contemplative expression – an empty gaze, as if his soul had flown far away. The sadness and the melancholia in the story of this homesick female were so acute. The elder concluded that the dog was longing for her home in Greenland until she died; and she knew that her home was on the other side of the ocean.

Sled dogs also "understand" the spiritual forces. In some sense, dogs and people share the same God. Throughout the Ivakkak race, a race start prayer marked the morning departure from every village. Mushers, support staff, village representatives and elders (sometimes also their close relatives) would gather in a circle, hand in hand standing or kneeling in the snow, while the village priest or a respected elder lead a short prayer, invoking past memories and asking God to bless all the teams. During the prayer, dogs' howling and barking would always fill the background. Mushers and older Ivakkak staff

members interpret this group behavior as dogs' reaction to the presence of elevated power: "They know we are praying, so they always sing with us during this time".

- **On distancing/estrangement – "Dogs are dogs"**

  Sled dogs are physically distanced from people. They are almost always stationed away from human residences. Their dwelling areas are located in village peripheries. During Ivakkak, at each race stop, dogteams were kept outside the village. Human health and safety is always prioritized, and dogs' "parking spot" must respect human hygiene rules. Before arriving to Kuujjuaq, Ivakkak head coordinator specifically mentioned that (per major's request) the location for teams' resting place must not be on Stewart Lake – the Lake is the village's source of drinking water, and dog feces left on the lake could cause contamination.

  Sled dogs were absent from all major community events and Ivakkak celebrations (such as opening and closing ceremony, and community feast). While mushers and villagers feasted and danced in the community gym, qimmiit were left out in snow and blizzard and were completely forgotten for the moment. Although Ivakkak's central theme is "the Return of the Inuit Dogs", sled dogs were not invited to the parties and no one seemed bothered. Also, despite the abundance of food at some community feasts, no table scraps were saved for the dogteams. This could appear contradictory and shock Southern sensibilities. In the Southern pet culture, pet dog's domain and human domain tend to be merged together; a dog's world is constructed artificially to mirror its owner's world. Dogs are expected to "deliver on the fantasy of unconditional love", a love relationship "corrupted by our culture's infantilization of dogs and the refusal to honor difference" (Harraway, 2003: 38-39). On the contrary, Inuit sled dogs retain all their differences as social and biological beings. Their behaviors are still monitored and interpreted from a human perspective (Inuit mushers read their dogs, as they read other elements in the environment), but canine integrity is acknowledged and respected. Bringing sled dogs indoors is regarded as mistreatment, because their natural home is not a human house. Dogs and humans' domains interlock and overlap, but they are not collapsed into each other.

People's closeness to sled dogs also varies from one community to another. Some villages were visibly more excited for Ivakkak events. Public's enthusiasm about Ivakkak could be shaped by several factors:

- **Local history**: whether there are many elders and veteran Ivakkak mushers present in the village
- **Competitive drive**: whether there are mushers representing the village competing in Ivakkak; whether the village has past Ivakkak champions (Tasiujaq for example is the hometown of the defending Ivakkak champion, and for the 19th Ivakkak Tasiujammiut took their community festivities to the next level with Ivakkak cake contest, Ivakkak themed beauty pageant, miniature craft qimutsik demonstration, and dog-harness sewing contest)
- **Local tradition**: some villages have more determined qimmiit revival advocates and stronger local qimutsik traditions; some villages have local qimutsik race during holidays, activities include Christmas races, Easter races, and Snow Festival sprint race (Puvirnituq).

Chapter 4.
Ivakkak's people: zooming in on the human aspects

After presenting Ivakkak's canine stars in the previous chapter, we now turn to the "human" domain of Ivakkak. This chapter focuses on Ivakkak's people, plainly and directly, without recourse to essentialization and theorizations. Here I am directly referring to the "anti-establishment" attitude of Vietnamese filmmaker Trinh T. Minh-ha, to quote one of her most iconic statements: "I do not intend to speak about, just speak nearby" (Trinh, 1982). As an outsider without any Inuktitut language skills, my capacity to grasp the intricate social interactions among Ivakkak's people is extremely limited. Due to this limitation, I am not in any position to model their reality according to an external "anthropological theoretical system". This chapter is primarily rooted in the numerous events that I witnessed during the 19th race. I will try my best to produce an adequate account of Ivakkak's human affairs – they always bring together a great many dedicated individuals.

In the paragraphs that follow, my abiding principle is to avoid static categories and "Indigenous culture" stereotypes (Downing & Kowal, 2011), so I can more closely discern the relations and the interactions between Ivakkak's people through an array of "happenings" – for example, incidents, parties, meetings that took place during the race. I attempt to present these materials raw and in detail. Through this angle, hopefully we will be able to better understand the social reality of the Ivakkak participants and spectators. These events are collective and involve various sizes of groups: ranging from medium size (5-10 persons) to large gatherings (up to 400 persons). Many of these events are part of the regular Ivakkak yearly program (which repeat in every edition), but some are totally unplanned and therefore "extraordinary" events (crisis and accident). These events are also diverse in their "basic anatomy": some are more rigid and follow a clear agenda, some are informal and open to improvisations, some are a mixture of both. From what I was able to observe, in the context of Ivakkak, it was through all these events, group activities and festivities that social networks were activated and sociopolitical alliances were consolidated (and/or contested).

4.1. “Inuit” equals “Human”: cultural identity in the context of overriding ethnic majority

In contemporary language, the word Inuit has many semiotic layers. Its primary meaning in Inuktitut encapsulates the (self-referential) concepts of human, humanity and people:

> The basic consciousness of one's own group's specificity in terms of living habits, customs, language, values, etc. […] was often expressed as a contrast between humans (“Us”) and non-humans (“They”). The traditional Inuit for instance established a clear distinction between themselves, the “persons” (this is what the word “Inuit” means), and the other—at least partly rational—creatures with which they were in contact: the animals (uumajuit), the spirits (tuurngait, ijiqqat, etc.), the Indians (allait or itqilgit), the Europeans (qallunaat), etc.
> (Dorais, 1995: 294)

In today’s general context (social sciences, media, art, etc.), however, the word Inuit is primarily a cultural marker and/or an ethnic label. In the postmodernist framework, the ethnic discourse is analyzed as a “contrasting strategy”, when there are concrete goals in dividing people into categories based upon something other than gender, age, or profession. Such identification strategy could be mobilized by one particular group when confronted with or pressured by conflicts emerged from outside. The stylistic choices and the formulas of ethnic originality/authenticity are in flux, responding and adapting to specific power relations at a given moment and in a particular place (Sollors, 1989: xvi).

In Nunavik, endemic societies are deeply entangled with the non-Inuit “dominant” society (Quebec, or Canada, or the globalized world). In many areas of their modern life (from economic activities to artistic creations, to resource management, to modern education and healthcare services), Nunavummiut have to cope with external interferences and navigate administrative constraints set by non-Inuit institutions. In such contexts, setting up the “us” vs “them”, Inuit vs. Qallunaat dichotomy, is not only an ideological choice or a cultural preference, but very often a political necessity. In these cases, Inuit functions as an ethnic label.

In the realm of Ivakkak, the power dynamic is very different from previously mentioned areas. There is no unequal power relationship between the “dominant” and the “marginal” colored by the postcolonial aura (Dirlik, 1997: 224-225). Nunavimmiut are operating in a state of

quasi-total autonomy (total autonomy, if we disregard the material dependence on Southern-import goods). Inuit is the absolute ethnic majority on all levels. Everything happens locally. There is no need to negotiate with foreign entities. Important communications are mostly done in Inuktitut. Inuit, in this context, instead of an ethnic and sociopolitical signature, can practically recover its original meaning – referring to "the people", or "the human". This is not to say that Ivakkak staff, teams, and the general public lose their ethnic-cultural awareness: they cherish the specificity of the qimutsik practice; they value the individual and collective memories of camp life and qimutsik traditions; they understand the political and economic challenges they face as a group defined by territorial rights… The point is that no Ivakkak members need to play the card of self-ethnic-essentialization, or to activate a self-reflexive ethnic-awareness filter. The perception and the management of Ivakkak events, the running and the maintenance of the dogteams, the communication with the general public, these are all guided by pragmatic concerns. Choices and decisions are made based on practicality, what works and what does not, in relation to dogs, weather conditions, villagers' sentiments, and local and regional political networks.

4.2. Extraordinary event

To many Nunavimmiut, Ivakkak is already an "extraordinary event". This special long distance race punctuates Nunavik's seasonal cycle on a bi-annual basis (alternating trail between the Ungava Bay and the Hudson Bay). Over the past decades, Ivakkak's event planning has developed certain regularities. The flow of the events is managed more methodically and efficiently year after year. Most official race activities now follow procedures in prescribed order. This stability was however disrupted by a major incident during the 19th edition. It was an unprecedented (or "extraordinary") occurrence in the history of Ivakkak. Staff members, teams, and the public had to face a serious crisis moment. Under tremendous stress, the cohesiveness and the strength of the Ivakkak organization were put to test.

4.2.1. Crisis: a breaking point

In the morning of February 25th, the wind was strong but the weather was clear. All dogteams were brought to the starting line on the frozen Kangirsuk River on the outer edge of Anse Kanik, beyond the jagged ice blocks formed by tidal push along the shore. The race was already postponed once due to blizzards. Dogs and mushers were eager to hit the trail; staff members were ready to launch the event; the scouts had already left to plant direction flags and to inspect the terrains ahead of the teams. A large enthusiastic crowd gathered on ice, and the Ivakkak Coordinator had to repeatedly order excited children to stay away from the dogs. The first team departed at 10 a.m. Within the next 15 minutes, all teams left (at 2 minutes interval). It was a smooth start. The race was officially on. Once all the teams disappeared into the bright ice-snow haze, people turned to their smartphones to follow the live GPS tracking – the interactive map was refreshed every 5 minutes on the official Ivakkak page.

Around noon, all teams had crossed the Kangirsuk River. Three teams were tied and led the race; the other four teams were spread out on the trail behind. Scout and Trail Coordinator were running ahead of the teams. Support Crews, Marshall, Veterinary, Vet Assistant and the rest of the staff followed behind the caravan. Team 7 issued a distress signal shortly after crossing the river. The hilly area was windy with reduced visibility. Staff members immediately responded and rode to the location as quickly as they could. According to the Veterinary and the Vet Assistant, by the time they reached team 7, the assistant musher was unconscious and in respiratory arrest. They performed CPR over 20 minutes to no avail. “We did our best, but we knew it was just too late. You could see that there was no more blood to his face.” Kangirsuk’s local emergency responders were also called upon for assistance, but nothing could be done to bring the musher back to life. The race was halted. All teams were called to turn back. By 3 p.m., everyone had returned to Kangirsuk.

The deceased was the assistant musher of team 7, 24-year old Willia Qullialuk of Kangiqsujuaq, whose family lives in Akulivik. Heart failure was the suggested cause of death (it was not confirmed until after the autopsy). Willia had received a heart transplant in 2015 and was on regular medications ever since. The successful heart surgery and the post-surgery recovery made him a local youth hero. He was one of the most lively, outgoing, photogenic and energetic

Ivakkak participants in the 19th cohort. The young charismatic musher was the central figure in many photos and video clips shot right before the race. His sudden death sent a deep emotional shock through the Ivakkak circle. The incident also caused a total break in the race's momentum: one team was missing an assistant musher, one team was physically exhausted (and decided to quit), and the race could be cancelled.

4.2.2. Crisis management: the power of the Inuit collective

Important decisions had to be made, especially with regard to how to communicate the incident to the public. The first measure was to moderate the incident's negative impact on the communities. I received a private message from one Ivakkak staff member about the incident around 5 p.m. (while I was in transit to Kuujjuaq). It was a brief update on the situation, and a clear order to not share anything publicly until Ivakkak/Makivik released an official statement. Although the staff members were careful about "keeping quiet", stories travelled quickly through relatives and friends in close-knit northern villages. Before the official statement was issued, many Nunavimmiut were already asking the question "Is the race going to be cancelled?" Ivakkak staff (in Kangirsuk) and Makivik leaders (in Kuujjuaq) had emergency phone meetings. The Vice president of the Makivik EDD called Willia's family. Makivik's communication department moved quickly to draft an official press release. The same evening in Kangirsuk, Ivakkak mushers and staff members held emergency meetings. I was not able to attend these group sessions, but I later learned from one staff member that it was a very heavy and emotional time for everyone present. The group gathering was twofold – to mourn and heal together, and to discuss how to move forward. Mushers kept exchanging messages in group-chat until late into the night.

The next morning, Makivik and Ivakkak released an official statement on their respective Facebook page and website. The press release briefly recounts the incident, followed by a more detailed communication on the aftermath of the tragic event:

> Makivik Corporation's Vice-President of Economic Development – Maggie Emudluk – oversees the annual Ivakkak Race. She said, "First, I would like to give my deepest condolences to Luuku Qullialuk, mother of Willia, her immediate family, relatives, and to his girlfriend in Kangiqsujuaq. There has never been an incident like this in all the years since Ivakkak started in 2001. The mushers and their support crew had an emotional

> meeting together in Kangirsuk last night. They prayed together, talked together and decided together to continue with the race on Thursday morning. We also spoke with Willia's mother who was in Akulivik, late in the evening. She gave the blessing for the race to continue in memory and honour of her son. She and her husband said they would like to be at the finish line in Kangiqsualujjuaq in a couple weeks to see the mushers arrive and celebrate the memory of their son. Our thoughts and prayers continue to be with the family and all those affected.
> (Makivik, 2020)

The race was set to resume on the 27th – after a collective decision made by all Ivakkak mushers, and with the permission and the blessing of Willia's mother. A few significant adjustments were made to reinitiate the race. A temporary substitute assistant musher joined team 7; he was to travel until the next village stop, Aupaluk. A permanent substitute assistant musher was expressly flown to Aupaluk from Kangiqsujuaq, and would complete the race on behalf of Willia. Makivik leaders and Ivakkak organizers made travel plans for the Qullialuk family (Willia's parents, his four brothers and his girlfriend) to be in Kangiqsualujjuaq for the race finish and the closing ceremony. A small red "7" patch was sewn on every musher's race bib, as well as every Ivakkak support staff's bib (beside the Ivakkak logo) – the entire Ivakkak group was thus symbolically transformed into a unified team 7. The race was no longer a competition, but a celebration of a legacy. All mushers were running to fulfill the dream of a passionate young musher. During the closing ceremony held at the Kangiqsualujjuaq community gym, all mushers together lead a solemn procession, handing the 19th Ivakkak race flag to Willia's mother. In commemoration of Willia, the Ivakkak Coordinator and the Makivik EDD Vice-President together presented the 19th race gold medal to Willia's mother, as well as Willia's race bib in a large picture frame. While musicians sang a heartfelt religious anthem on stage, staff members, mushers, and villagers took turns to shake hands and hug Willia's relatives one by one. It was an extremely moving scene and everyone cried. With such gestures, the pain and the distress associated with loss were expressed openly[25]. The people of Ivakkak were able to effectively mobilize an affective social support network, to collectively address a traumatic situation, to heal the emotional wound, and to elevate it to a cathartic ceremonial moment.

[25] The collective and bold (and cathartic) expressions of grief and pain are something deeply imbedded in Inuit traditions. This topic exceeds the scope of the current project, but deserves in-depth considerations.

Undeniably, there is a multitude of crisis in Northern Indigenous communities. Due to rapid changes in social relations, family structures, fragmented education and health services, economic difficulties, the network of relationships among Inuit is under a lot of strain and might seem more fragile than it used to be in pre-settlement time (Karl *et al.*, 2011). However, if we define community resilience as the collective condition to overcome disasters and situations of massive adversity and to *build* on them (Juliano & Yunes, 2014), we could say that the 2020 Ivakkak was a remarkable demonstration of Inuit community's resilience. The crisis that occurred at the beginning of the race was processed effectively and collectively. It was built upon positively to allow the community to grieve and to move forward together. The emotional coping capacity of Ivakkak mushers and organizers depended on but also embodied Nunavimmiut's community resilience. The crisis was given a new and positive meaning, mediated through friends and families, and supported by regional governing bodies.

4.3. Regular events: different protocols and group energy

In addition to the competitive qimutsik race on the trail, a range of group events and activities make up the bulk of the standard Ivakkak program. These events are either public or staff-only. They could involve staff members, mushers, local authorities, local villagers, and regional leaders. The events could be divided into three main categories: NV meetings, community feasts, team departure/arrival.

4.3.1. NV meetings

These are formal "behind the scene", or "housekeeping" meetings prior or during the race for organizational and planning purposes. In local villages, these meetings normally take place in the Northern Village (NV) office building's conference room or activity room. Occasionally it could be held at local Landholding Corporation guest room, or office in the community gym (one instance noted, only in Kuujjuaq). The meetings are called and led by Ivakkak's key staff members, namely the Ivakkak Coordinator. The core Ivakkak organizers work in a small and fast-moving team: counting the Coordinator and 2-3 close staff members. Along with other senior staff members who have worked on previous Ivakkak (Trail Coordinator, Marshall, Scouts and Support Crew), they form the administrative/operative nucleus of Ivakkak. Outside the relatively

formal all-staff or all-team meeting, these core Ivakkak members also meet regularly for quick check-ups and discussions; they are also in constant communication with each other through Messenger and handheld radio receiver. “NV meeting at 3”, or “NV meeting tomorrow afternoon” is normally how a group meeting is called.

For the formal group meetings, local authorities and elders sometimes are invited to attend (they could also drop in and/or excuse their absence at their convenience). Many know each other well, therefore the atmosphere is often relaxed and convivial. Mayors sometimes act as the honorary hosts. Coffee is always available during these meetings. Before the official race starts, 2-3 all-staff meetings are conducted. These meetings do not involve mushers. Ivakkak staff members use these meetings to discuss specific topics that pertain to operational and administrative matters – budget and allowances, scheduling, trail planning/review through map study, weather conditions, equipment arrangement, accommodations at camp sites and in stopover villages along the trail, etc. These meetings are also used to resolve issues and address potential problems.

The all-team meetings include all Ivakkak staff members and mushers. The meetings take place at least once before the race for general introduction, and once at the final destination for post-race recap and acknowledgement. Local officials and elders (often veteran mushers themselves) attend these meetings as well. At the pre-race meeting, Ivakkak staff members review rules and regulations with mushers, present a trail overview, and distribute essential trail equipment (GPS tracker, emergency signal kit, first aid kit, plastic gas can, headlight, map copies, etc.) Shorter versions of the all-team meeting are also held in villages along the trail. The meetings are normally called on the same day of teams’ arrival, after all have settled and rested a little bit (and before the community feast). These meetings are for race section recap, troubleshooting, and preview/planning for the next trail sections. During the 19th edition, as the race progresses, Ivakkak mushers and staff members walked into each all-team meeting with increasingly darker skin tone (prolonged exposure to extra strong UV radiation from the Arctic sun, and the light reflected on snow and sea-ice; fatigue also built up, the race is very physically demanding).

4.3.2. Community feasts

The community feasts are the highlight of the Ivakkak celebration. They bring local villagers and all the Ivakkak staff and mushers together for a large indoor party. In Kangirsuk and Kangiqsualujjuaq, the community feast also served as the opening and the closing ceremonies.

The feast normally takes place in the community gym (or school gym) in the late afternoon around 3 or 4 p.m., and it can go on until 8 p.m. Similar to other seasonal feasts (such as the Christmas feast), the village mayor is the official host of the Ivakkak community feast. Everyone is invited to the party. Food, drink and prizes are procured with village budget, donated by local and regional sponsors (the FCNQ is one of the major sponsors), and also supplied by generous local residents. The feast is a mix of potluck and Country food "all-you-can-eat". Villagers contribute in labor and in kinds, many volunteer to help hours before the feast starts: decorating the space for the feast (setting up sound equipment, making large welcome banners, putting up Ivakkak themed decorations), helping with food preparation (cooking and arranging food tables, preparing seating areas on the floor, cutting and distributing Country food). Cooked foods vary depending on local residents' culinary skills and food habits: in some villages, the meals are quite elaborate (in one village there were even curry chicken and Kolkata fried rice). Country food is always laid out on the floor in abundance – meat types vary depending on local availability (beluga, arctic char, seal, caribou, ptarmigan). Regardless of location, cake is always a serious matter. Eight homemade cakes with elaborate Ivakkak-themed icing decorations were counted in Kangirsuk alone. One senior Ivakkak staff told me that in past editions, some villages organized Ivakkak cake contests with cash rewards, and he also remarked "Everything can be a competition, but cake is something else." For the 19th edition, I did not observe cake competitions in Kangirsuk and Kuujjuaq, but local residents were still highly invested in their baked art. Each village community feast had at least four different cakes. There were cake contests with cash reward in Tasiujaq and Kangiqsualujjuaq. In the latter, the winner was an impressive 18" square cake, decorated with a hand-drawn Ivakkak logo in colored icing, snow ridges in bas-reliefs, and a detailed 2020 Ivakkak trail map; completed with handwritten names of all the mushers on all four-sides of the cake. A compilation of homemade Ivakkak art cakes throughout the years would make a beautiful album.

Before the meal, Ivakkak Coordinator often presents a short speech, followed by the village mayor and the village pastor with blessing and prayer. Well-respected elders from the village or well-known Ivakkak veterans from the community could also be invited to make a short speech. For the feasts that I had the opportunity to attend, all the talks and presentations were done in Inuktitut. Younger children in the room could seem distracted and uninterested in what the elders had to say, but most adults in the room were very attentive. There were clear moments of emotional unity at times. Without a translator and any Inuktitut proficiency, I was unfortunately not able to record the content of these speeches. Mushers were also presented and cheered by the crowd during the introduction speech. In some communities, Ivakkak staff and mushers were held in high regard. As honorable guests to the village, mushers are always first invited to serve themselves at the food tables. During the feast, many elders would take time to shake hands with every musher and every staff member. It also appeared that reception was warmer and more personable in smaller villages. Spatial arrangement might have in part contributed to this impression. Kuujjuaq was the only village where a large number of people sat at the tables during the feast. In other villages people mostly sat on the floor around cardboard mat – the Inuit style.

Music, dance, and games are also important components of the Ivakkak community feast. Mushers, Ivakkak staff and local villagers together partake in these fun activities after the food. The dances (local folk dances such as Inuit style jigs and reels accompanied by keyboard, accordion and fiddle) and the games (speed dice rolling game, wood sawing game, etc.) are all markedly physical and social. Even in games with cash prizes and gift awards (traditional items such as handmade pualuk and nassak, an array of practical camping and hunting supplies), fun and cooperation prevail over competition. For example, for the extremely simple yet rewarding wood sawing game observed in Kangiqsualujjuaq: over 30 people formed a large circle around a 4-meters long log, a saw was planted in the log, at the marshal's signal, people took turns to the saw. The person who successfully cut down a disk from the log would leave with that piece of wood and a 20 dollars bill. The game kept going until half of the log was cut down and everyone exhausted (but thoroughly entertained). Because the person sawing could be pushed away and replaced by another at any time, those with the best sawing skill or muscle strength (the young Ivakkak mushers, for example) were not guaranteed to win the prize. For many rounds, elders

and women players got lucky and chopped down the disk. Cumulative effort and timing decided the winners. In this instance, Stuckenberger's account of Inuit games in a Qikiqtarjuaq Christmas feast is applicable:

> By participating in the games people express themselves as skillful partners in cooperative, yet competitive, performances. The winner can only become victorious through the contributions of others. This structure expresses a fundamental Inuit value that every success ultimately depends on functioning cooperative relationships. (Stuckenberger, 2006)

4.3.3. Teams' departure and arrival

Besides the community feasts, departure and arrival of the Ivakkak teams are the most exciting events and the most spectacular moment during the race. People learn about the race schedule in advance through social media and local radio. Large colorful crowds gather at the departing line and the finishing line in each village. Ivakkak Coordinator is always present at the location with loudspeaker, in the dual role of the Ivakkak race official and the Ivakkak MC. Many children show up with hand drawn cheering signs and posters to support their favorite mushers (who often happen to be their family relatives). Many of them also wear Ivakkak logo tuque and wave small Ivakkak flags (more on the Ivakkak memorabilia in later chapter). At the starting line in every village, a number of local officials and sponsors join the teams and the staff for a short group prayer. Honorary guests and Trail Coordinator signal the race start. When the teams are ready, the crowd follows the MC to count down together for each team.

At the final finish line, the ceremonial spectacle can be more theatrical. In Kangiqsualujjuaq finish line, after each dogteam came to a full stop, many gathered quickly around the sled. In a group, they lift the qamutik high above their head, while on top of it the victorious mushers shouted and waved happily to an exuberant crowd. The weather might be bitterly cold and windy, but the crowd kept their spirits high. The arrival of dogteams could also be a deeply moving moment, especially for the elders. A veteran musher told me that:

> All the years I went to Ivakkak, in the crowd were elders crying, not of sadness, but for joy of seeing dog teams again. I shouldn't say crying, but they were in tears, tears of joy.

4.4. Informal events in the private and semi-private spheres

Parallel to formal events, informal social gatherings also make Ivakkak a busy period for the teams and the staff. When the teams are in town, parties and private festivities are held outside the main Ivakkak program, among friends and close relatives in each village. Some staff joked about Ivakkak being a "large traveling party bus". To attend such gatherings, one needs to be invited. Without close social ties, this entire "alternate Ivakkak universe" would be invisible. I was invited to join a handful of the semi-official gatherings and house gatherings. Since I was not integrated in the local social network, the majority of the private parties were inaccessible. However, I was lucky enough to learn about some of the parties through Ivakkak staff members and Inuit friends.

- **Semi-official parties**

These were dinner parties hosted in local restaurants by the Ivakkak staff, in order to celebrate the teams' accomplishment and to thank everyone for their hard work on the trail. Mushers, staff members and local sponsors were invited to attend. Food was covered by the Ivakkak budget, but drink was not (a clear instruction given to mushers and staff beforehand). Mushers and support staff were also invited to bring their immediate family members (often partners and children). While eating, stories, gossips and a lot of jokes were exchanged. Such events could last 2 hours, during which social bonds and a feeling of camaraderie can be developed among staff and mushers.

- **Unofficial parties**

These were private events in the evening. They were mostly Inuit-exclusive and important socializing opportunities to many. Different age groups had their own activities. Older Ivakkak staff members, their friends and relatives held house parties in private residences, where homemade food and Country food were prepared and shared. Storytelling, music and dance were always part of the program. Younger staff members and mushers held their own parties (sometimes drinking parties at local bars). In addition to food and alcohol, dance and music, quite a bit of weed circulated during these private gatherings. Sometimes the parties could end very late – 4 or 5 in the morning.

Substance abuse is strictly prohibited on the trail (teams will be penalized and could be disqualified if they break the rules). Mushers are advised to behave as community models throughout the race. Drinking parties are not forbidden, but everyone is expected to have fun responsibly. However, alcohol could still occasionally get in the way (for many different reasons). In the past, there had been drunken fights and glass-breaking accidents. After hearing about a loud quarrel at night, one senior Ivakkak staff commented half-jokingly, "Every Ivakkak is the same, drink, party and fighting. Same story every year." In general, fighting accidents are rare. Senior mushers and experienced mushers are all quite serious about the race. During the 19th race, while stopping over in Kuujjuaq, one assistant musher got drunk because he received bad news from home. He went missing for the entire night, and was nowhere to be found. The team leader was extremely anxious all morning and even considered calling a substitute assistant musher to ensure his team's timely departure. The missing musher eventually showed up 5 minutes before the official starting time. No one was penalized and all teams departed on time.

4.5. Political dynamics observed during the 19th Ivakkak

In the news and on social media, Ivakkak is branded as a local sport event. At first glance, the long-distance dogsledding competition might appear apolitical. However, a closer look at its administration and organization reveals its complex political dimension. On multiple levels, Ivakkak is strongly tied to Nunavik's regional politics – here "politics" is not a narrow reference to Nunavik regional governing bodies and public institutions, nor to modern Inuit political ideologies and formalities, but to the messy and intertwined processes, the amalgamation of social interactions, the "flesh-and-blood local situations", as Bruno Latour defined it in the actor network theory (ANT):

> It refers to the summing up of interactions through various kinds of devices, inscriptions, forms and formulae, into a very local, very practical, very tiny locus […] For us, ANT was simply another way of being faithful to the insights of ethnomethodology: actors know what they do and we have to learn from them not only what they do, but how and why they do it. It is us, the social scientists, who lack knowledge of what they do, and not they who are missing the explanation of why they are unwittingly manipulated by forces exterior to themselves and known to the social scientist's powerful gaze and methods. (Latour, 1999)

What we are examining are procedures that enable Ivakkak "actors" to work their way through the "world-building activities". The "world-building" elements within Ivakkak can be seen as concrete methods of self-governance on a modern indigenous territory. This feature sets it apart from other dogsledding races in North America and in Europe. Potentially, parallels might be drawn between Ivakkak and regional and national qimutsik races in Greenland (for example, the Avannaata qimussersua), or the Nunavut Quest in the Qikiqtani region, for they are Inuit-led initiatives. This could be a topic for future ethnographic works.

4.5.1. Network of local and regional figures of influence

To keep Ivakkak running, in addition to the core Ivakkak team, many more partners are involved. Among others, we can identify:

- Makivik leaders (the President, the EDD VP, the Corporate Secretary, the Director of communication, staff in the finance and legal departments, the board of governors, village representatives, and retired Makivik leaders),
- Mayors and NV staff of each village,
- Representatives from the Kativik Regional Government (KRG) and its branch units, such as Nunavik Parks,
- Local influential figures, such as respected elders and retired government officials, village pastors, well-known artisans and artists, and radio hosts,
- Business owners who sponsored Ivakkak.

Many formal and informal meetings are arranged between the Ivakkak staff and these local and regional actors before, during and after the race. Cooperation between these actors is essential to ensure the smooth running of all Ivakkak events. Local figures of authority can use Ivakkak's public platform, such as the feast and the public outdoor events, to reach their fellow villagers. At public meetings, Ivakkak staff always acknowledge and thank the mayors' and the villagers' support and contribution. During opening and closing ceremonies, the floor is not only given to local leaders, but also to Makivik leaders. For the 19th Ivakkak, the EDD VP delivered a speech at the opening ceremony; the Corporate Secretary gave a talk at the closing ceremony on behalf of the Makivik President. Pita Aatami, then the CEO of Air Inuit, also spoke at the closing

ceremony[26]. We can say that Ivakkak ceremonies, in addition to being festive gatherings, are also open stage for political performances. Local and regional actors can seize this opportunity to demonstrate their leadership and foster public trust.

Over the past 20 years, Ivakkak has always been a hugely popular event. We can compare it to a well-oiled machine efficiently operated by networks of actors year after year. However, it is not devoid of inner frictions and contradictions. If Ivakkak can be a stage where Nunavimmiut cooperate and forge alliance, it can also be an arena for rivalries and conflicts. For an outsider (and a inexperienced anthropology student), the fractions and the subtle power dynamics among locals are difficult to perceive. A 3-weeks stay in a foreign world is not enough time to grasp the complexity in locals' interactions and negotiations. Nevertheless, one salient point of friction was observed during the 19th Ivakkak. From the ways senior Ivakkak staff members addressed it on several occasions, I would infer that it is a constant (and delicate) issue brought up every year, at least in recent Ivakkak editions.

It was stated that "some are against Ivakkak", "some don't support Ivakkak", and "some don't want to keep Ivakkak going". The senior Ivakkak crews would at times bring up this discussion among themselves briefly, and always in completely informal contexts: while having coffee breaks, while driving to meeting places, or while having a cigarette outside. In all cases, the conversations were between 2-3 Ivakkak staff members. They seemed to hint at higher-ranking leaders within the local governing bodies (and their political allies) who are not fully supportive of Ivakkak; but these prominent "Ivakkak skeptics" (as one senior Ivakkak members put it) are currently not able to undo Ivakkak, for its popularity among the locals and the values it represents. These brief chats often brought visible irritation and disheartenment to the small group. When I inquired later about the reason why certain people are not in favor of Ivakkak, it was said that the crux of the matter is money:

> Money reasons. Same every year, some for and some against (Ivakkak)…
> They think it's a waste of money. They say the money can be better used.

[26] Pita Aatami is now the new Makivik President. He won the election in February 2021 with 66.7% of the vote. [He also was in the past for almost a decade in the early 2000s].

As mentioned earlier, Ivakkak is an expensive event. From a pure accounting perspective, it is a one-way investment – only expenses and no returns. The budgetary concerns should be the prevalent reason to disapprove Ivakkak. However, personal inclinations might also add to it. One's family background, past experiences with qimmiit, social circles and lifestyles could shape one's perception of Ivakkak. From staff members' conversations, I counted some additional explanations for high-ranking officials' rejection or skepticism regarding Ivakkak:

- Some higher ranking officials do not like dogs,
- Some higher ranking officials are materialistic and selfish,
- Some higher ranking officials do not understand the real importance of Ivakkak,
- Some higher ranking officials are not in contact with the locals so they can't truly appreciate Ivakkak.

During the 19th edition, I did not observe any open opposition to Ivakkak. No one was vocal about his or her dissatisfaction and disapproval. There were some frictions between Ivakkak staff and local authorities in Kuujjuaq[27], but overall, all parties involved were accommodating and worked in harmony. At the end of the race, some Ivakkak staff members also felt positive about the future support they could receive from the local decision-making bodies. According to two staff members, the leaders present at the Ivakkak events were moved by people's enthusiasm:

> They (referring to the skeptical leaders) said it was a really amazing event. They have to see it. The crowd and the people love it. Once they see it, they'll understand.

4.5.2. Small decision making circles – "Inuit democracy" in practice

What has been referred to as direct democracy or participatory democracy in previous sociopolitical studies (Barber, 2014; Elstub, 2018) can be observed in Ivakkak's small decision-making circles. In Inuit style governance, political power (or decision-making power) tends to be diffused; credibility and influence are often based on individual's skills and abilities to steer his/her group in key communal activities; the exercise of power is also based on family ties,

[27] For example, the order to not station dogteams overnight on Stewart Lake clearly annoyed some Ivakkak staff members, but everyone agreed at the end to follow the order and worked together to find an alternative.

hence the governance is an extension of family life/relations; the direct democracy is achieved in relatively small groups, where people participated without mediation (Rodon, 2014). This depiction can well describe the organizational and operational procedures implemented by Ivakkak crews throughout the race. All staff members together composed a close-knit group (16 staff members) where everyone knows each other well. Many staff members are relatives and/or close family friends. Decisions were made in flexible and totally transparent manner, where everyone was able to provide input and feedback. Everyone had genuine opportunities to drive collective decisions, even though senior staff might represent more weight in a discussion (for their cumulated experiences in past Ivakkak races and sometimes their social status as well). The all-staff meetings were held to make plans together and to review proposed plans. In these meetings, comments, arguments, anecdotes, and jokes were traded without discrimination. Debate and discussion occasionally fell in circular pattern. This circularity made the meetings time-consuming and at several occasions slowed down the meeting agenda. A NV meeting planned for 1-hour could take nearly 3 hours. Multiple rounds of discussions and repeated arguments often left key issues unresolved. The debates could also evolve in unpredicted directions, bringing up more problems than solutions. To non-Inuit participants, the slowness and the "unnecessary complications" could feel quite exacerbating.

One example was a NV meeting in Kangirsuk (NV office's conference room). It was a pre-race all-staff meeting to plan for travel time and route sectioning. At the beginning and throughout the meeting, the Trail Coordinator made several convincing remarks and his key argument was that mushers should be the ones who decide how far they can travel each day. "We must listen to the mushers. We are here to support the mushers." He proposed that time planning on the trail (running duration for each day, arrival dates to each village, resting periods, etc) must be adjusted to dogteams' pace. Everyone agreed on this initially. However, as one senior staff member was reminiscing about past Ivakkak travelling schedules, he suddenly realized that the proposed schedule would clash with the religious calendar. He then suggested that no team should travel on Sunday, quoting how it was inappropriate that in an earlier Ivakkak the dogteams arrived in town when people were in church (the pastor was not pleased at all). After this "no travelling on Sunday" proposition, Support Crew and Scouts pitched in their opinions, suggesting that the team could still travel on Sunday morning but only to arrive in town in the

late afternoon. The discussion spiraled. The originally straightforward travel plan got more and more complicated: the race start has already been delayed due to the weekend storm, travelling in short time means more stress on the dogteams, weather could become difficult again, extending the travel plan would incur more expenditures, alternating travel dates would require rebooking of Co-op hotel for the staff… At that time Ivakkak Coordinator started to draft a timesheet on the whiteboard. While crewmembers debated on the issue, the Trail Coordinator muttered that mushers' needs should dictate the pace of the race; in turn the senior staff reaffirmed the need to respect religious norms. No unified decision could be reached at the end of the meeting. The schedule was left pending until a day later. A compromise was reached eventually: teams would not travel on Sunday and travel plans would be adjusted accordingly (the final plan was upended again following the incident on Day 1). Albeit tedious, slow and chaotic, the decision-making process allowed everyone's opinion to be considered.

4.5.3. Evolving rules and regulations: Ivakkak's practicality and reiterative processes

Ivakkak' rules and regulations are developed and refined from years of reiterative processes, based on staff inputs, mushers' inputs, and public opinions. This body of rules is still evolving, as Ivakkak's core administration team seeks to improve the race constantly. Certain rules were modified over the years. For example, the race was first designed to follow a single-musher team model, but it was later changed to a double-mushers team model. It was suggested that for safety reasons and practicality, duo-team would be more appropriate. Another example was the suspension of the race in 2008. It was first decided that the race would become a bi-annual event. However, it was reverted back to be an annual event this following year, per popular demands. Certain key staff positions were added throughout the year. For example, the position of Ivakkak Marshall (the equivalent of a justice minister – to ensure discipline and resolve conflicts during the race) was proposed in 2010-2011. After the 19th edition, all mushers were invited to take a survey and to make comments/recommendations for future Ivakkak. Following the 2020 incident, a health questionnaire and new components were added to the Ivakkak regulations. Candidate mushers must declare whether they have pre-existing medical conditions and health problems. Individuals with high health risk will be advised to not participate in the race. The race program is also constantly updated to adapt to new circumstances. For the 2021 edition, to minimize Covid risk, Ivakkak staff initially considered

postponing the race. After consulting with regional health organizations, local leaders and villagers, they decided to keep the 2021 edition. The regular programs were modified to adapt to public health guidelines. All major indoor programs were modified. Community feasts were reduced to only include Ivakkak mushers, staff members, and village representatives. Facemasks were required for all indoor events. Makivik leaders who planned to attend the opening and the closing ceremonies were required to be tested Covid-negative, as well as to complete a 14-days quarantine prior to attending any public event.

Chapter 5.
A world of objects – Ivakkak's material aspects

Another particularly striking aspect of Ivakkak that I observed during the race is its profusion of "things". In this chapter we will quickly walk through a number of significant objects deployed in Ivakkak's various activities. A minimum understanding of Ivakkak's overall material landscape is important, as we shall see through the panoplies of objects: 1) on the material and the technological level, Ivakkak exists and operates as a true hybrid; 2) it partially replicates the merchandise model of the contemporary Euro-American mainstream sport culture; 3) it requires active contribution from local and regional actors, waving through extended social web; and 4) it also generate significant amount of tangible goods (in particular, gifts) that represent direct "capital" return/reinvestment to the local communities. To a certain degree, we can describe Ivakkak as a relatively stable, self-sufficient and autonomous circular economy, populated by both traditional Inuit items and Qallunaat objects. More importantly, there is no pure separation between what is traditional and what is modern. All Ivakkak objects present some level of hybridity – Inuit objects contain non-Inuit components; Qallunaat objects are modified and customized by Inuit to suit their needs. This state of affairs is on one hand the signs of our globalized capital exchange, and on the other hand, proof of the pragmatic nature and the inventiveness of the locals.

5.1. Mushing tools in contemporary competitive qimutsik: hybrid in almost every way

5.1.1. Qamutik, the traditional Inuit sled (with a contemporary twist)

The Inuit sled used by Ivakkak mushers is the centerpiece of the mushing paraphernalia. Its distinctively robust construction sets it apart from sleds from other circumpolar regions. One might be tempted to group Nunavik dogsleds and classic Baffin Island dogsleds together under an "Eastern-Arctic style" category – for they share some similarities. However, it is important to note that the ones used in the Ivakkak race tend to be much more "streamlined". In other words, reduced overall width, with skinnier and longer runners, and thinner crossbars for better speed performance. In addition, there are significant variations from one sled to another, as each head

musher is the builder (and also the repair person) for his own unit. Each qamutik crystalizes an array of factors: raw material availability, individual style and taste, musher's dexterity and skill level in woodworking, and family tradition, among others. The general design for a wooden qamutik is more or less consistent across the region.

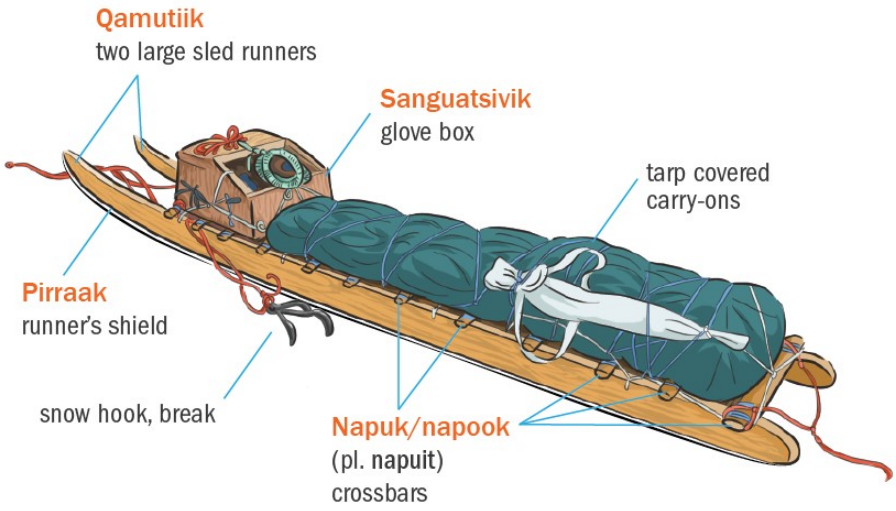

Figure 7. Qamutik
(Illustration by author)

The essential building materials include construction lumber (mostly imported, but in villages such as Kangiqsualujjuaq and Kuujjuaq, locally sourced lumbers are also used), nails and bolts (imported), wood glue and varnish (imported), still sheet and high-density polyethylene (HDPE) sheet (imported). In addition, synthetic ropes are used to fasten the crossbars. It's worth noting that metal nails and bolts are mostly used in building the box component, and in joining the qamutiik (the two large wooden runners) and the pirraakk's metal/plastic parts (the runners' front/bottom shields). Even though using power tools and nail and bolts would make an assemblage task much easier, in most cases, only ropes are used to fasten the napuit (crossbars) to the qamutiik (large runners). Mushers explained that this is a well-tested design that confers elasticity and therefore better physical resistance to the sled, since the ice and snow conditions are always "very hard on the sled". A fixed metal joint will have less chance to withstand the stress especially in the Arctic weather, whereas ropes and wood together form "organic joints" which allow more wiggle room. However, this also implies that a sled needs to be checked and maintained regularly. Not only the joints need to be fastened and adjusted at every race

checkpoint, mushers also regularly sharpen the pirraakk (the plastic bottom layer) to keep them smooth.

In addition to the main sled body, every sled is equipped with a metal snow-hook commonly referred to as "the break". The rake-shaped anchor is also handmade. It is custom-soldered iron and steel rods, and the final look differs from team to team. The break is tied to one of the crossbars close to the glove box. It is always kept close to the head musher, who can put it down quickly when needed. Sometimes the break is not enough to slow down the team, so the musher can also press one foot on it while holding the sled. In contrast to other types of sled designs from Northern Europe, Russia, and Alaska, sleds used by Ivakkak mushers offer an elongated "landing surface" for mushers to jump on and off freely at any moment. While maneuvering the qamutik, an Ivakkak musher's center of gravity is also closer to the ground.

The choice of different wood materials gives each sled a distinctive color tone. Additional layers of wood enamel and varnish further enhance their individualized look. The ropes used are mostly two tones: ice blue and fluorescent orange. These are the standard camping/construction supplies that are available to Nunavimmiut across the region. However, mushers can choose to combine different rope colors for different components on a sled. Ropes used to fasten the glove box are mostly orange and white, occasionally turquoise. Ropes used to tie the crossbars are light blue. The most obvious decorative elements on a sled are the stickers put on the glove box. These could be the equivalent of bumper stickers and window stickers on a car. Not every team puts stickers on their sled, but when they do, they tend to use only two types of stickers. One is the official Ivakkak sticker; the other one (often posted to be the most prominent and visible place) is their home village's logo. Among young Ivakkak mushers, the village pride appears to be an important driving motivation in the competition. Every Northern Village has its own logo[28]. The logo is designed to reflect salient aspects of the community, such as local land and wildlife, particular elements in lifestyle, or a particular traditional practice, etc. Many of the logos, such as the one of Puvirnituq, are modeled upon elders' drawings. The logo can be used as the central motif on the official village flag, as well as the community's coat of arms.

[28] Each village's FCNQ Coop also has its own logo.

It can take from 3 days to a week to build a qamutik from scratch. Most mushers go to their community carpentry center to do their work. The carpentry centers, similar to most modern small/medium-size woodshops, have indoor workspace and are equipped with an array of power tools. Alternatively, mushers can also work in private garages, either their own or that of a friend or relative. During the 19th Ivakkak for example, after arriving at Kangirsuk, three teams borrowed workspace and tools from one of the support crew. They worked together on their sleds in the garage for the entire evening.

Other than dog race qamutik specifically built for Ivakkak and other smaller local race events, some Ivakkak mushers and veteran mushers also build other types of dog sled. The non-competitive qamutik variations include toy style mini-qamutik, small single person qamutik for children (can be pulled by one dog), extra-skinny and lightweight qamutik for small dog teams (usually 4-6 dogs), the Alaskan style (where musher stand on the back of the sled, holding to the upright handlebars), and in one instance, heavy sled with large bench for tourist (named jokingly by the musher as "the chariot").

5.1.2. Harness and whip: their basic forms and functions

Traditionally the harnesses (anu in Inuktitut) and ropes for dog teams were made from sealskin or caribou hide. Although some mushers still use skin ropes for tagline and bridle on a qamutik, in Ivakkak race most harnesses and ropes are store bought, or home made from synthetic materials (polyester ropes and thick cotton canvas from Hunter Support store). Most mushers however do repairs and modifications on the store-bought harnesses. Wear and tear is fixed on a regular basis; harness size is adjusted to suit a particular dog on the team. In some teams, harnesses are marked with dogs' names. Before the race, mushers would spread out all the harnesses and their attached tuglines in final fan-hitch formation on the ice in front of the sled, and then bring each dog to its own harness one by one. Occasionally, homemade harnesses are also used. The conventional labor division in an Inuit household confers most sewing projects to women (clothing, camping tent, bags, etc.), but when it comes to dog harness, many mushers also do their own sewing.

In some teams, large and colorful wool tassels are attached to each dog's harness – two per dog, one on the left shoulder and one on the right, in matching pairs. The tassels are homemade and can be of many different colors in one single dogteam. Some tassels are also made with 2 or 3 different colors of threads. These decorative elements remind one of the large wool tassels on the hand knitted nasaq (Inuktitut, "hat").

As mentioned in earlier chapters, the musher whip's design, fabrication, and use/function remain consistent with earlier ethnographic records. The most experienced Ivakkak mushers use classic long whip intricately woven from seal skin/hide. The whip can be 4-5 meters long. The base of the whip is thick; its thread-count and thickness decrease towards its tip. The more elaborate skin/hide whips might be inherited from older generations (retired mushers in the family); their braiding patterns could also be characteristic to a village or a family. However, I did not have a chance to verify this hypothesis with their owners. Some young mushers use woven polyester rope instead of skin.

Other than the management of the dogteam, the build and the maintenance of the qamutik equipment, a musher's skill is also shown in the way he manipulates the whip. A senior support crew told me that in an earlier Ivakkak, the mushers competed in a tin can target game. Instead of using guns to shoot the distant tin can target (as in old Western movies), mushers had to hit the tin can with the tip of their whips. The mastery of a long and springy whip comes with time and practice. To produce smooth curves in the air and hit a target with precision, a musher not only needs good arm strength but also superior muscle reflexes. The whip is heavy, but also supple. A simple twist in the wrist can change the flow of the entire whip.

5.1.3. Ivakkak standard kit – the essential gear pack

Annex 2 in the Ivakkak Rules and Regulations lists required equipment that every team must carry on their sled at all times. Some equipment on the list are mushers' personal belongings, others are kits and devices provided by Makivik. Musher and assistant musher on a team are solely responsible for their equipment, no borrowing is allowed. At every community checkpoint upon arrival and before departure, Ivakkak officials use the Annex 2 checklist to

verify whether a team still has everything on their sled. Losing equipment on the trail and failure to keep the equipment secure result in penalties. In the Rules book, article 24 specifies that:

> A one-minute time penalty will be applied for each missing item, except for dog food where a 5-minute penalty will be applied.

The list might appear lengthy at a glance, but in reality everything on the list is absolutely essential to mushers' and dogs' security on the trail. Traveling on the land, all Ivakkak teams face fast changing weather, difficult terrain, but also large predators such as polar bears. Participants need to be prepared with everything necessary to respond to challenging and even life-threatening situations.

● Snow knife and/or saw ● Knife ● Ax ● Ice chisels, minimum 5 ft. length
● Poker or harpoon, minimum 5 ft. length ● Shovel ● Gun and ammunitions
● Inuit-style canvas tent (able to accommodate two people comfortably, and be weather resistant)
● Caribou skin or mattress ● Floor covering or tarp ● Small stove
● Sleeping bags winter-rated: one for musher and one for musher assistant
● Naphtha: 1 full can (provided by Makivik) ● Lighter or matches ● Tea kettle and Thermos
● Groceries (enough to survive until the next community checkpoint)
● Dog food (1 bag of dog food inside a canvas bag) - all provided by Makivik
● Garbage bags to carry trash ● Extra dog traces (rope), minimum 3 sets
● Extra harnesses, minimum 3 harnesses ● Candles ● Flashlight or headlamp
● First aid kit (provided by Makivik) ● Flares (provided by Makivik)
● InReach device for tracking and emergency purpose (provided by Makivik)

Table 3. Dog teams carryon equipment list *(from the Ivakkak Rules and Regulations)*

5.1.4. Inuit mushers' gears: Individual belongings and styles

An outsider visiting a Northern village in Nunavik during the snowy months would be impressed by the vibrant colors and the inventive patterns of the locals' winter clothing and accessories. The modern winter fashion of the Nunavimmiut is fast evolving, and could be the subject for a master or doctoral thesis on its own. Here we are only focusing on the outfits of the Ivakkak mushers. The essential pieces are:

- **Clothing**: parka (may have an inner and an outer shell), wind parka (or outer parka), and snow pants. These constitute the top layer clothing. All of these are usually homemade.

For mid and base layers, mushers wear light jackets, shirts, t-shirts and pants made from fleece, thermal fabric and cotton. These clothes are store bought.

- **Shoes**: heavy duty snow boots (rated -40 and colder) – store bought; or homemade sealskin kamiik. For the latter, many mushers wear two layers of sealskin shoes to optimize insulation – one layer of inner shoes, and on top of that, a puffer and fatter pair of skin shoes. In addition to sealskin[29], some snowshoes are also partially made from imported cowhide or moose hide.

- **Gloves**: mushers use two types of gloves. Although everyone owns a pair of traditional skin/fur mittens (pualuuk, made from seal skin, caribou skin, but also imported cow hide, sheep skin and moose hide – these can be purchased at local Hunter Support stores), during the race they mostly wear thermal winter gloves (store bought, grip gloves designed for construction work in extreme cold). Pualuuk provide far superior warmth, but the store-bought winter gloves, with split fingers, are more practical for fixing the qamutik and setting up the dogteam.

- **Hat**: the most common hat type is nasak (hat in Inuktitut), a colorful hand knitted tuque with a snug fit. The nasak has a large and fluffy tassel, attached on a short woven string to the center of the crown. It is the most emblematic winter hat of Nunavik. Some mushers also wear store bought knitted hats, the choice of the brand and colors is a matter of personal preference. There are also the official Ivakkak hats (race souvenir with embroidered logo, more details on that in the next section).

- **Sunglasses and snow goggles**: it would be impossible to travel on the frozen tundra without wearing eye protections. They shield the eyes from wind, snow and the blind bright sunlight/snow reflection. Sunglasses seem to be slightly more prevalent among

[29] Some kamiik are made with natural sealskin from local harvest. The skins are prepared by locals (mostly done by women). However, these "raw" sealskin kamiik need to be kept in the freezer during the warmer season. Industrially tanned seal skins (which can be kept at room temperature) are used to make fancy kamiik and winter clothes (atigi parka, pants, jacket, etc.). Some come from southern suppliers, some are imported from Greenland. Harp seal's skin is more expensive than ring seal's skin – the latter is tougher. For Ivakkak mushers' shoes, pants and parkas, only ring seal's skin is observed.

Ivakkak mushers and support crew members, perhaps because they are more compact, more affordable and easier to purchase.

- **Ceremonial sash**: hand woven from colorful yarns (wool and cotton), the sash is worn as a belt, or across the body (diagonally from left shoulder to right hip). Only a small number of mushers come to the race wearing the sash – it is worn throughout the entire race over their parka; also worn over a t-shirt during indoor ceremonies.

The musher's outfits encompass two elements: aesthetic and functionality. The two are equally important and interconnected. This is also highlighted in vernacular Iñupiat clothing (Reitan, 2017). In terms of the aesthetic, there is a clear search for (masculine) beauty through combinations of bold pattern and sophisticated details. The choice of fabric (plain colors or prints), the assemblage of synthetic material and natural animal skins/furs, the overall tonal arrangement, the needlework on the garment, the skin quilting on the kamiik, the knitting patterns on the nasak… all these demonstrate the aesthetic sensibilities of the markers and the wearers. In terms of functionality, the material selection and the construction of any given piece of clothing or accessory must fulfill a fundamental function: keep the musher warm at all time without being heavy and restraining. Mushers are always on the move with their dogteam, and they also spend a significant amount of time working on ice/snow (for example, kneeling on the ground to trim fur on a dog's paws, inspecting and fixing the sled runners). To adapt to these tasks, some mushers' snow pants are reinforced with sealskin patches around the knees; others simply have their snow pants made entirely from sealskin. During Ivakkak, there is also an indirect competitive element in mushing fashion, which involves the skillful women supporting their male relatives. The ladies might not be running the dogteam, but the public appearances of the racers set the open stage for battle between the most skillful Ivakkak seamstresses. As it was observed in other Arctic communities, sewing skills represent one of the most important sources of social merit, personal/family pride, and cultural identity (Emanuelsen *et al.*, 2020).

5.1.5. Smartphones and access to digital information

One last element in musher's toolbox is the smartphone. Almost every musher travels with his cellphone (if he owns one). The phone's primary use is to share information through

social media (Facebook, almost exclusively) and to take pictures and videos. Young Ivakkak mushers have a very active digital life and take their online content seriously. During the 19th Ivakkak, mushers from several teams repeatedly enquired about the publication of daily race time record on Ivakkak's Facebook page (and on the official website as well, but it was a lesser issue). When the timesheet posting was delayed, some mushers raised the issue immediately in the group chat:

> Where are the race results? The time record is not posted. Our people are following us, we need the time posted.

Regarding the mushing toolkit in the context of Ivakkak, there are three noticeable trends. First, the materials and the objects are flexible in design and fabrication (custom-made and/or customized on pre-made objects), and reflect mixed sources from different environments (harvested from the land, imported from the South via local or global supply chain). The material hybridity is geared towards practicality and efficiency. Second, local variation in styles prevails over regional uniformity. The stylistic differences are particularly apparent in qamutik design and in mushers' fashion choices. Third, there is a profusion of objects and a methodical inventory to keep track of them. From consumables to tech gadgets, the impressive abundance of things is a defining aspect of Ivakkak mushing.

5.2. Race support equipment: all useful tools and resources are mobilized

Ivakkak staff members rely on a range of equipment, from large vehicles to small implements, to operate race activities. There is a wide range of objects/technologies from different eras. A senior staff of Makivik who oversees the race expressed the idea that Inuit today are successful at what they do, because from old tools to new technologies, everything is used to its practical advantage.

- **Planes**

Planes are the primary transportation method between communities. The larger freighter (model: De Havilland Canada Dash-8 Cargo 300) is used to carry dogteams, sleds and supplies

between different villages. Mushers and Ivakkak staff travel in the smaller aircraft (model: De Havilland Canada Twin Otter 300). In addition to these two types of planes, helicopter (model: Nunavik Rotors Aerospatiale AStar AS350) can also be used to follow the dogteams once they are on the trail and to produce aerial coverage (for example, this was done in 2017 for the 16th edition, when the Ivakkak Marshall and Coordinator followed the last stretch of the race in the air).

- **Snowmobile**

The snowmobiles are the most common ground vehicles in Northern Villages today. A large number of family-owned snowmobiles are equipped with a homemade qamutik (box sled, built from scratch at local carpentry center). All Ivakkak staff members traveling on the race trail along the mushers are required to have their own snowmobile and qamutik. Skidoo (pronounced "si-ki-doo" or "si-ki-too") is a common appellation among mushers and support crews. Skidoo parts' damage/replacement is the most frequently discussed topic among Ivakkak Support Crew members. In theory, Ivakkak budget covers the fuel cost for all the participants. When it comes to purchasing skidoo parts, the boundaries are suddenly blurry. Some senior staff members acknowledge the need to compensate support staff when their skidoo get damaged while assisting the race; others tend to be less lenient and generous. It appears that some Support Crew members would try to "take advantage" of the rules – buying parts to fix what are already damaged before joining Ivakkak, or change functional parts for small upgrade. None of these tensions erupted openly during the 19th Ivakkak, but the increasing demands in skidoo parts were a real headache to some senior staff members. A more serious problem is when a skidoo breaks down and stalls on the trail. Older vehicles might be harder to start. When engines fail to launch, it is always a very stressful situation. "Technology is good when it works." as a staff member observed. When the snowmobiles fail to respond to any stimulus and tricks (there are a lot of "Inuit tricks" to kick start a stalling skidoo), village mechanics are called to help – sometimes they have to travel for hours to reach the caravan. In the worst scenario, a replacement skidoo is needed. Borrowing a skidoo from local villagers poses real challenges. Ivakkak staff need to rely on their personal networks, and also on chance. Even with good cash rental offer, people are still generally reticent to lend their machines. For many villagers, the snowmobile is the biggest investment and the most valued object in their households.

- **Truck**

Trucks are borrowed from local village administrators and officials. Support staff (mostly the senior staff members) use trucks to go around town, but also to carry dogteams and mushers to/from the local airport when needed. The trucks are all large 4x4 pickups – commonly used models include the Ford F150 and the Ram 1500. There are often 2 or 3 trucks (depending on their availability in the village), shared between the senior staff members. The most frequently heard messages on the Ivakkak radio checks are "who has the white truck", "who has the grey truck", "where is the truck", "where is the key". In some instances mushers also borrow trucks from the senior staff to run personal errands. When transporting dogs during Ivakkak, the trucks were used as a bigger skidoo with a more spacious qamutik trailer. The way dogs were tied to the inner rings along the truck bed was the same as how the tie-down was done in a box qamutik pulled by skidoo.

Some villages along the trail appeared to be slightly more "motorized" than others, where more private-owned cars were counted at large Ivakkak gatherings (for example, big lineup of SUVs and pickup trucks were observed at the arrival and the departure line in Kuujjuaq). One veteran musher noted that in the early days of Ivakkak, there weren't as many vehicles: "Most people just walked."

- **Camping supply and additional items**

Support staff traveling with the mushers carry their own camping supplies: canvas tent, lamp, floor mat and caribou skin mattress, gun and ammunition, ice saw/knife, axes, small stoves and utensils, etc. Food and fuel are refilled at each checkpoint village. Along the 19th Ivakkak trail, some staff members also collected "tundra souvenirs": one support crew picked up a pair of large caribou antlers; another one bought an enormous muskox skull from a hunter in Tasiujaq. A widely shared anecdote from the previous Ivakkak (2019 edition, along the Hudson Bay coast) is that the staff shot a large male polar bear and brought it to the village. The bear intruded the campground where the teams were resting overnight. Early in the morning, the bear walked around the tents and woke up the Support Crew members: he sniffed the tent and pushed the feet

of one Support Crew who was sleeping. One staff member recalled: “Maybe he was hungry. But he should’ve never done that, these men are hunters by instinct.” The bear was shot on the spot within minutes, and brought to the next village checkpoint. Many kept pictures of the incident on their smartphone[30].

5.3. Ivakkak’s gift culture: partially inspired by mainstream sport culture

Gift giving is an integral part of Inuit social life. It can be seen as one of the pivotal social and political institutions in traditional Inuit societies. Ivakkak exemplifies this gift culture, and also condenses it in a specific sportive/festive context. When analyzing the sharing of meat gift in Saqqaq (western Greenland), Dahl noted that meat is given deliberately to strengthen social relations. The gift giver’s motivation and his/her choice of the gift recipient are based on strategic calculations and local custom rules. Sometimes these two sets of considerations overlap. The exchange of gifts and the reciprocal relations are the symbolic expression of a community.

> Sharing and exchange are often mentioned as epitomizing Inuit societies […] sharing and generalized reciprocity is central to the hunting and gathering way of life, and the saving, or husbandry of resources, is equally central to the farming and herding way of life. (Dahl, 2000: 175)

During Ivakkak, meat (Country food) is offered to everyone attending the community feast in any given village. A community feast cannot exist without free for all Country foods. At each feast, frozen meat (depending on the regional availability: arctic char, seal, caribou, beluga, ptarmigan) piled up like small mountains. Free Country food constitutes only one part of the Ivakkak gift culture. Since it is first and foremost imagined and designed as a modern competitive sport event, a large part of the Ivakkak gift catalogue replicates sport souvenirs that we typically find in the South. To demonstrate its full scale, below we have included the main categories.

[30] Despite their picturesque quality, the photos of the big polar bear were not posted on the official Ivakkak pages

5.3.1. Freebies: everyone gets a Ivakkak souvenir (and a Ivakkak logo on everything)

For the 19th race, all Ivakkak mushers received a set of gift items: hoodie made from thermal/fleece fabric with embroidered Ivakkak logo (the brand for the 19th Ivakkak was Under Armor, one of the major sportswear brands today), hunting knife with Ivakkak logo etched on the blade, large thermo (1.5L capacity) with printed Ivakkak logo, knitted hat with embroidered logo, headlamp, iron-on Ivakkak patches, Ivakkak stickers, among others. In addition, large quantities of gifts were also distributed to villagers at each community feast. The production cost and the shipping cost of all these Ivakkak-themed gifts were part of the annual Ivakkak budget. Days before the race, several large boxes of "Ivakkak merch" were delivered to the first village. The items were unpacked, counted, and rationed; some were repacked and sealed in different boxes and sent to the next villages along the race trail. The gift items to the villagers included:

- **T-shirt**: standard Gildan cotton t-shirts in three colors (blue, pink, heather grey) with Ivakkak logo printed in front. Sizes were M to XXXL. The blue color was the most popular one.

- **Custom beanies**: there were two kinds of knitted custom beanies, one loose fit and one snug fit. The snug fit beanies came in black and white. All hats had the same embroidered Ivakkak 2020 logo. The hats were not only given to villagers attending the community feast, but also to Air Inuit staff at the village airports (pilots, flight attendants, and ground personnel in Kangirsuk and Kangiqsualujjuaq, where all the dogs disembarked/boarded the plane).

- **Neck warmer**: made from polyester fleece fabric with forest-camo print. They came in white and light brown tones. They were custom embroidered with the Ivakkak 2020 logo as well. The brand is Realtree, a US-based manufacturer specialized in hunting wear (it is a very popular brand among Inuit hunters).

- **Stickers**: 3x1 inches oval waterproof stickers with Ivakkak logo. Compared to t-shirts, hats and neck warmers, these were ordered in smaller quantities. They ran out quickly at the beginning of the race.

- **Ivakkak mini flags**: an Ivakkak classic. These small white flags with colorful Ivakkak logo can be seen in photographs from many past editions. The flags were distributed to the public at the race start/finish lines; some were also given at the community feast.

The Ivakkak Coordinator and the assistants managed the production, shipping and the distribution of all these gift items. A small batch of high quality gifts (for example, the hunting knife and the Under Armor thermal hoodie) was set aside and reserved for Ivakkak sponsors and local village officials. Planning and anticipating the right amount of gifts for each village was not an easy task. Some of the gift items might also not arrive on time due to production delay and shipping delay (weather was not always cooperative). From my observation, the neck warmers didn't arrive at Kangirsuk and were only distributed in Kuujjuaq and Kangiqsualujjuaq. On the other hand, most t-shirts ran out early on during the race. There were surplus at the beginning of the race in Kangirsuk, but arriving at the final village, there were not many t-shirts left. Despite the complicated logistics, Ivakkak staff did their best to make sure that there were gifts for people in every village along the trail.

5.3.2. Race memorabilia: status symbols for race participants

Symbolic objects of reward common to modern sport are replicated in Ivakkak competition. Trophies and medals have been an integral part of Ivakkak since its earliest editions. The three fastest teams were rewarded custom engraved trophies (one for each musher, two per team) and medals (gold, silver and bronze, two per team). The sport's culture adaptation is also seen in custom-built podiums. Painted wooden podium was used in earlier Ivakkak editions. For the 19th race, a tall snow podium was carved and set at the finish line. This snow podium was not used however, because the staff had decided to announce the winners during the last community feast. The award ceremony was held indoors. One additional note: it has now become a tradition for winning teams to open champagne bottles to celebrate their victory. At the 19th Ivakkak award ceremony, mushers from the winning teams poured champagne into their trophy cups and drank from their cups on stage. The crowd was ecstatic.

Race bibs were also given as gifts/souvenirs to all the mushers at the end of the race. In the days following the race, some mushers from the winning teams posted on Facebook pictures

of their children wearing their own race bibs. One can imagine the symbolic meaning embedded in a winning musher's race bib. In the particular case of Willia Qullialuk, the deceased team 7's assistant musher, his race bib became a highly symbolic and emotionally charged object. The bib was framed to honor and to immortalize Willia's legacy. It was presented as a precious gift to the musher's mother. One year later, during the 20th Ivakkak[31], when team 7 arrived at Akulivik, the former team 7's family members were all waiting at the village finish line. Willia Qullialuk's younger brother was standing in the snow, cheering for the teams, while holding the framed race bib of his brother.

5.3.3. Other promotional material

As in most public sport events, Ivakkak also has a rich collection of promotional items, from physical objects to digital publications.

- **Sponsor flags**: these are 13 feet feather flags, equipped with ground spike to pin in the snow. Each sponsor flag features the official logo of a major Ivakkak partner or sponsor. The ones seen during the 19th race were Makivik, Air Inuit, KRG, and Newfound Resources Ltd. The sponsor flags were used to decorate all race start/finish lines in every village. They were also used to decorate the community feasts and ceremonies (the flags were either fastened to the main stage or secured against the wall).

- **Banner**: the large horizontal vinyl banner features a large Ivakkak logo and the logos of all the sponsors. During the 19th race, the banner was pitched at every village departure/arrival, and also posted on the wall at community feasts. The banner was an important object and a constant source of stress for senior staff. In addition to its important marketing function, the printing and shipping cost of the banner was also very high (for reference, the printing cost alone was over $1000). Since it had to be pitched in each village along the trail, it had to be carried by one of the support staff travelling with the teams. Two copies were ordered in case of loss or damage. Throughout the race,

[31] The 2021 Ivakkak is set on the Hudson coast, from Salluit to Punirnituq. Akulivik – Qullialuk family's hometown – is the third village on the trail.

"Who has the banner?" was a stressful remark (and literally "running" joke) among the senior staff members.

- **Ivakkak race flag**: It has a decorative function when presented in public events, but most importantly, it is used to give visual signal "start run" at departure points. Throughout the race, the Trail Coordinator kept the flag – since he was the person who signals the start for each section of the race. The race flag has a large Ivakkak logo printed over a vibrant orange background. The orange color was a recent change (only since 2019). It used to be white. After the 2018 race, mushers complained that white fabric made the flag hard to see and it caused too many false starts.

- **Posters**: large Ivakkak posters were printed by Tumiit Media (based in Kuujjuaq). Before the race week, they were posted at locations frequented by the villagers – Coop store and general store such as the Northern, and in airport waiting rooms.

- **Digital promotion**: Ivakkak has an official event photographer. Photos must be taken daily, and transferred to staff members in charge of social media when the teams arrive at village checkpoints. The Ivakkak Facebook page has a constant stream of photos and videos. There is also a regularly updated photo blog on the Ivakkak official website. In addition to these visual documentations produced in sync to the race, the Ivakkak organizing team had also commissioned promotional videos in the past years. For example, a professional video was commissioned for the 2019 race, and a 20th anniversary video was produced to celebrate the 2021's edition.

5.3.4. Villagers' contribution

Ivakkak gift giving is not unidirectional. The villagers reciprocate the exchange with their homemade goods. In every village, school children made large and colorful paper banners to welcome the mushers. In some communities, children and their art teacher painted collective murals to celebrate the arrival of Ivakkak teams.

Figure 8. Ivakkak mural created by high school students from Kuujjuaq
(Photo by Jaanimmarik secondary school art teacher Monique Stanton)

Some old villagers made Ivakkak-themed crafts such as miniature qamutik and carvings. Others made gift items for mushers and staff members, such as nasak (wool hat) and pualuuk (skin mittens). These crafts are not only labor intensive, but also have real economic cost. A pair of pualuuk made from high quality hide and furs (the most famous ones are from Kangiqsualujjuaq) is normally sold for $200 - $300. At the 19th Ivakkak closing ceremony, six mushers from all three winning teams each received a pair of high-grade deer hide pualuuk made by local artisans.

5.4. Modern Arctic nomads: a regional circulation of goods/services during Ivakkak

Before the settlement, Inuit were Arctic nomads. Today, Nunavimmiut reside in villages. However, some nomadic elements are still part of their contemporary lifestyle. Inter-village visits between relatives and friends are frequent (by plane or by snowmobile). These are small scale, individual mobility. When we look at Ivakkak, the nomadic aspects are on a larger scale and even more evident: it follows a recurrent and distinctly delineated yearly cycle; it is a collective land

(and air) travel of a large group of peoples and dogs; it is a relatively long trip (2-3 weeks) through several villages (at least 5 each year); it involves large traveling cargos (equipment, supplies and gifts). On top of these, to accommodate the large travelling caravan, planning temporary residences is also a very important part of Ivakkak logistics. Camping sites are selected on the trail before the race. When a storm hits, the travelling teams could spend two nights out on the land. In each village on the Ivakkak route, lodging must be planned for all mushers, staff members, family members who accompany the race, visiting officials and sponsors. The responsibility falls on the Ivakkak Coordinator and his/her immediate assistants. In the month leading up to the race, they have to make all the bookings (and if weather causes a delay, they have to update everything). They also need to process invoices and purchase orders. Once the race is launched, they need to coordinate check-ins and checkouts, and make any necessary adjustment to the lodging plan.

For an overnight stay on the tundra, there are two options: sleeping in a hunting cabin, or sleeping in a tent. Hunting cabins on the land can only accommodate a small group, so when the teams decide to camp at a hunting site, older staff members would normally stay in the cabin, while younger staff and mushers spend the night in their tents. Before the race, Ivakkak staff have to contact the cabins' owners to get their permission. Most cabins are family-owned, built by hunters/carpenters from nearby villages. After arriving in a village, teams and staff are dispersed. The temporary housing options are adapted to everyone's needs. They are arranged according to local housing situations and room availability. All cost of accommodation are covered by the Ivakkak budget.

- **Coop hotel and landholding hotel**: hotel rooms are assigned to Ivakkak staff members. The small hotel lounge and dining room in the landholding building are also used for small staff meetings.

- **Rental houses**: the owners of the houses leave the entire residence to the travelers. Rental houses are reserved for mushers only. Mushers in one team, or two teams from the same village, normally stay in one rental residence. During the 19th race, family members

accompanied two mushers throughout the race. These two families had their own temporary house in each village.

- **Rental rooms** (cohabitation): the hosts do not leave their house; only one or two rooms are rented to accommodate Ivakkak staff members. In many cases, the host is also a close friend or relative to the travelers.

A key issue that comes with housing arrangement is the availability of Internet access. All Ivakkak staff and mushers need to connect to social media for race updates, but also for group conversations on Facebook Messenger. Coop hotels are equipped with Wi-Fi, but that is not always the case in private residences. In one case, the rental house did not have Internet access. Mushers raised the issue to the Ivakkak Coordinator, who immediately posted an announcement on the local village Facebook page calling for help. The team managed to rent a router from a local within a few hours. Nothing is free, but money alone cannot guarantee the access to resources (rental house, room, or router). They are only available to those who have extended social networks and trusted partners in local villages. Kinship, friendship and political alliance are all part of the equation.

5.5. Cash flows in Ivakkak

Cash is an integral part of Ivakkak. Cash transactions occur in several contexts.

First, all members of the support staff receive cash payment for their work. Though some of them might not sign a paper contract with Makivik, they are de facto contract workers and they are paid a fixed day rate. I did not inquire about specific salary for each position on the Ivakkak team, for it might appear incongruous and impolite. However, I did learn that other than fixed salary, Ivakkak staff members and mushers were also given a C$100 daily allowance (store credits at FCNQ Coop stores). Second, payments were made for all rental and services (Air Inuit tickets, cargo shipping, housing, equipment rental, etc.). Some of these require formal invoice processing (such as hotel booking and house rental) and filing with Makivik accounting department, but there were also informal services that were paid more expediently (such as the router rental). Villagers who offered their garage/woodshop space and assisted mushers in sled

tuning were also paid for their work, even though Ivakkak organizers did not formally contract them before the race. Third, there were large sums of cash prizes and rewards. Not only the winning teams received prizes, the teams that did not win the race also received participation prizes. The 2021 prize value for the top teams is slightly higher than the 2020 edition. It can serve as a reference:

Winning position	Cash prize	Gift certificate	Gift certificate	Total prize value
1st place	$20,000	FCNQ - $12,000	Air Inuit - $5,000	$37,000
2nd place	$16,000	Canadian North - $3,000	Air Inuit - $5,000	$24,000
3rd place	$14,000	Canadian North - $3,000	Air Inuit - $5,000	$22,000
4th place	$12,500	Canadian North - $3,000	---	$15,500
5th place	$10,500	---	---	$10,500

Table 4. Ivakkak prizes *(for 2021 race, list published on the Ivakkak website)*

All other teams in the 2021 race also received cash prizes (from Makivik) and gift certificates (from local sponsors). Total prize value range from $10,000 to $5,000. The teams who were not able to complete the race also each received a participation prize: $1,000 cash gift from Makivik.

All the formal and informal cash transactions during Ivakkak (contracts, purchase orders, payments, cash rewards, etc.) together form a dynamic economic landscape. The large majority of the cash flows circulated between villagers and local organizations. Some production jobs had to be outsourced and sent to cities in the South, but whenever they had the option, Ivakkak organizers always prioritize Inuit business partners in Nunavik. For the printing jobs, for example, all promotional materials were ordered from non-Inuit companies in the South. However, Ivakkak still made sure to use a local Inuit-owned media company (Tumiit Media, based in Kuujjuaq) to design the products and to coordinate the production. With a handful of exceptions (the Ivakkak Veterinary, for example), everyone who received cash payment from Ivakkak/Makivik is a JBNQA beneficiary. Returning to the debate on whether Ivakkak is "too expensive and wasteful", one support staff told me:

> It may look like a lot of money, but all the money are actually going back to the community… the Makivik fund is the land claim money, the funds are created to serve the community, so what is the issue of giving back to the community?

Each year's Ivakkak has a large bill, and expenditures keep growing from one edition to the next. From an investment perspective, it is not difficult to see why some Makivik leaders would rather prefer to invest in more concrete and long-term business plans. Yet, to all Ivakkak participants, as well as the majority of the Ivakkak spectators, it is "money well spent". This is not only because the materials are circulating locally and benefiting Nunavimmiut. Wealth management and economic calculation are certainly crucial, but they are not at the center of Ivakkak – they certainly are not the centrifugal force that brings mushers and local villagers together every year. As we will discuss in the next chapter, the "immaterial" aspects of Ivakkak are decidedly more important.

Chapter 6.
Ivakkak's "intangible" assets: knowledge and skills, colorful personalities, and strong emotions

Ivakkak is in all likelihood the most popular and the most long-running public event in Nunavik. For such a costly and logistically complex event to return year after year, it must have a deep-seated social foundation. In other words, Nunavimmiut (or at least the dominant majority) must truly value and genuinely appreciate this event. The appeal, as we have mentioned, is not primarily economic gain. On top of its rich and evolving material expressions, the annual race competition is a meeting place of different knowledge systems, different personalities, and a unique emotional catalyst. In this sense, it is an unparalleled cultural tradition. We should also emphasize that Ivakkak is a totally grounded experience. "Intangible" designates aspects that cannot be plainly manipulated in the material sense, but it does not imply a dualist mindset that distills the physical from the mental, the rational from the emotional.

This chapter will present three intangible aspects of Ivakkak: knowledge and skills, personalities and legacies, and collective expressions of feeling and emotion. The goal is to render the array of sensory experiences and emotional textures unique to Ivakkak. The goal is also to exemplify the social importance of Ivakkak from the local perspective – how persistently it permeates Nunavimmiut's life, and how strongly it resonates with their collective psyche.

6.1. Knowledge and skills: acquisition through direct experiences

From an outsider perspective, Inuit mushing techniques and know-hows constitute one of the most appealing facets of the Ivakkak competition. Many practical knowledge and working skills are strengthened and shared during Ivakkak. These sets of knowledge not only cover everything specific to Inuit dogteams, but also encompass various elements in its surrounding environment (the weather, the land, the wildlife, the history, the people, etc.). The key purpose of Ivakkak, as it has been continuously highlighted in its every official account, from Makivik statements to external media coverage, is to ensure the continuity of qimutsik practices among Inuit of Nunavik. Its very existence is a source of motivation that encourages young people to learn about Inuit dogteams, and to eventually raise their own dogteams. Through the race,

traditional knowledge is revived and passed on from older generations to newer ones. “Keeping our ancestor’s ways alive” and “bringing back the Inuit dogs” are the race’s core messages. However, reviving traditional knowledge is not a straightforward grand narrative, or a one-dimensional historical reenactment. It is composed of many small-scale creative re-iterations, where multiple knowledge systems intersect, cross-fertilize, and evolve concurrently.

6.1.1 Teaching and learning by doing: how the environmental perception is sharpened through place-based practices

To master a dogteam, there are no textbooks and no classrooms. The acquisition of basic skills, the improvement of performance and technique all rely on action-driven, integrated ways of knowing/learning. Reflecting on the differences between the standard information acquisition model in mainstream societies and the knowledge systems in Indigenous societies, Adams observed that multi-modal processes prevail in the latter – knowing is four-fold: intellectual, experiential, spiritual and mythic. Whereas Indigenous worldviews value all four realms, classic Western worldview tend to consider only one of the knowing, namely the intellectual, to be valid. A lot of information that is available to human perception is not admissible according to Western standard, and therefore is neglected and discarded. Whereas modern sciences are primarily built on “hard” logic, to many Indigenous people, “information arises from the dance-like, participatory interaction between humans and the natural world of which we are an inextricable part” (Adams, 2018).

This “dance-like” flow of information is precisely how mushers develop knowledge and learn new skills. On the trail, knowledge is acquired from first-hand observations and experiences. Qimutsik lessons are taught on the run. They might look like unstructured improvisations, where the instructor randomly pulls out tips from a nebulous knowledge cloud. There are no formal protocols to follow. Information is not systematically collected and tightly knitted into a dense teaching plan. With serendipity, revelations arrive sporadically. Things can feel slow and unorganized. Even so, from a slightly different angle, formal protocols do exist: be quiet, patient, alert and observant. With Inuit teachers, pupils should not ask unnecessary questions, for information is available through one’s first-hand experiences. The learning of qimutsik cannot be done through classroom/textbook simulations. It has to be done on the trail,

through actual bodily experiences, where teachers and learners are exposed to all kinds of stimuli. This environment favors curiosity-driven learning experiences, or incidental learning as opposed to intentional learning (Gruber *et al.*, 2014). Any unplanned occurrence (a blizzard, a land feature, a presence of wildlife, a dog's particular behaviour, etc.) could hit with impact, initiate a conversation and a lesson, and leave the learner with a vivid and lasting impression. The state of alertness and curiosity enhance memory and knowledge acquisition. Curiosity manifests as feelings of tension elicited by uncertainty, as well as the delightful expectation of discovering something fun or aesthetically pleasing (Litman, 2005). This state of mind/being also makes the learning experience at once pleasurable and meaningful. As Tim Ingold has pointed out in his reflections on skills and environmental perceptions of the hunter-gatherer societies, technical skills are not predetermined and operation systems in abstract forms, but acutely sensitive perception and action deeply embedded in social relations. In addition, social engagement is activated with all person-like agencies in the environment (human, animal, plant, force of the weather, etc.). Technical skills are essentially a form of direct dialogue, a series of adaptations, and ultimately social links that connect people to the world. Their purpose is not emancipatory (Ingold, 2011: 289-290).

I had planned to visit three young Ivakkak mushers in fall-winter 2020, to observe their pre-race training sessions. Due to the pandemic, the plan had to be canceled. During the 19th Ivakkak, I had the opportunity to follow one training session, where a veteran Ivakkak musher supervised his younger partner for a 3-hours test run on Stewart Lake in Kuujjuaq. The total duration of this training session was close to 5 hours, including the pre-run setups and the post-run settling-down of the dogteam. Although the purpose of this test run was for leisure and not for future Ivakkak competition, it could serve to illustrate how knowledge (and what kind of knowledge) is shared, and how the "curiosity-learning model" is applied on the sled trail.

First, snow conditions and wind patterns were discussed. The teacher talked about seasonal variations of snow density, comparing the current year to past years. When the dogteam passed by an open area with a small hill in the distance (the hill range was parallel to the lake's west bank), the teacher explained that this particular configuration produces the best snow for

building igloo. He recalled that an older musher once taught him that wind rolling down the hill packs the snow, therefore creating the perfect snow density for cutting out big clean blocks.

Techniques of qamutik construction and proper maneuvering of the qamutik were explained through hands-on practices. Before getting the sled on the trail, the teacher inspected the sled runners. He pointed out that the correct way to drill holes on the side of the runners (holes through which ropes are threaded to fasten the crossbars on top of the two runners) is to offset them in a zigzag or slightly irregular pattern. Drilling all the holes along a single straight line is a big (and dangerous) mistake. It will weaken the runners, make it more susceptible to crack and split when under physical stress. Once we hit the trail, the teacher ordered everyone to take turns and run besides the sled. He commented that running is not only to keep warm: "We need to build the stamina, dogs too." Running with a dogteam also requires body (or proprioceptive) skills – in particular when jumping off/hopping back on the sled. He explained that the right speed and momentum only come with practice; one should not cut the inertia of the sled with heavy jumps. He also pointed out that the correct weight point on the sled (once the dogteam attain a steady pace) is in the middle section; holding too close to the glove box will cut the inertia and put more stress on the dogs.

General and specific observations on dog behaviour make another key area of discussion. Throughout the run, the teacher and his mushing partner continuously monitored their dogs. All changes in pace and running direction were commented on (each dog was referred to by his/her name). The two mushers remarked how some younger dogs had been improving since they joined the team. They also discussed how dogs nowadays are more accustomed to follow ready-made trails (resulting from snowmachine traffic), even if mushers pushed them to go off-trail. During the run, one dog had a small diarrhea – half liquid discharge with some undigested pellets. A discussion about feeding schedule and dog food quality ensued. Reflecting on the incident, the teacher said that the ideal sled dog food should always be frozen fish, but due to time constraints store bought food is used more frequently nowadays. The conclusion was that in the future fish and meat should come as first choice. He also noted that after vomiting and emptying out everything from his bowel, the sick dog would feel better (also, that it would take awhile before this dog could adapt to "Southern food").

There was also a constant and precipitous awareness of elements in the surrounding environment. The teacher indicated the presence of wildlife whenever he noticed something. For example, footprints on snow were identified; small birds in the adjacent wood were named. When a few raven flew over the dogteam, the teacher told a raven story (one elder he knew had a raven friend). He then described raven's intelligence, breeding habits, and social life. He also explained why ravens are the most resilient bird in the Arctic (in sum, "they find their nest earlier than everyone else, they are tough and they work together and help each other, like a wolf pack"). It was completely dark by the time the dogteam returned to the home base. After returning, settling down with the dogteam, the teacher gave a quick reading of the night sky. He named a few stars and constellations, and pointed out one constellation. By the end of the winter, this particular constellation is the most reliable way-finder. Its axis leads to the sea: "Follow that tail, you don't get lost, you will always get to Ungava".)

Since I was not part of the Support Crew, I did not get a chance to follow the Ivakkak mushers on a daily basis on the race trail. From general observation (of the 19th edition and previous Ivakkak races), there is one consistent pattern: a mushing duo very often features an older, more experienced musher (the lead) and a younger partner (the assistant musher). The younger partner could be a direct family member (father-son or uncle-nephew duo), a relative (cousins), or friend (for the most part, mushers from the same village). Despite age differences and unequal levels of experience/skill, the two mushers respect each other and rely on each other. In some cases, the relationship between the younger musher and the older musher can be described as an apprenticeship. For example, after running with a lead musher for some years, an assistant musher registered in the 20th race with his own dogs and a younger assistant he had recruited. His older former partner supported his decision, gave puppies from his own dogteam to build up the new team, and encouraged his former student throughout the race.

The apprenticeship/partnership can be challenging to a young trainee. It demands dedication, perseverance, and autonomy (trainee is expected to be proactive, not passively waiting and following orders). An Ivakkak assistant musher's sister explained to me that the lead musher could be very tough on his young partner, but he has also continuously encouraged and supported the trainee.

> They go on full-day training every week, sometimes two or three times a week. He (the lead musher) took my brother on hunting trips, go get food to feed their dogs… they do everything together. He taught my brother to run, my brother had to run a lot that he got so sweaty and tired, but he's not allowed to stop. Whenever he slows down, he (the lead) would go "Come on, come on! You have to catch up! You can't stop!" My brother got really good from working with him, he learned so much. He (the lead) was really happy for him. They were like best friends.

Running on snow/ice-covered sled trails is an entirely different experience from running on solid ground (asphalt road in cities, for example). It demands different footwork and leg power, not to mention how different types of shoes affect traction. A good run not only depends on muscle strength for speed and endurance, but on muscle memory and reflex for agility and balance. In a comparative study on traditional games and modern university team sports, researchers found that sportspersons participating in indigenous games have different balance abilities. Many of them can more effectively and quickly counteract forces that would interrupt equilibrium. The habit of practicing games barefoot versus doing sports in modern technical footwear also appears to affect how well athletes performed in balancing tests (Khan *et al.*, 2018). We cannot directly extrapolate from this study: no comparative studies have been done to evaluate movement patterns and balancing skills among regular runners, professional or amateur, versus seasoned Inuit mushers. Nevertheless, this idea of "body technique" could be an interesting analytical angle. During the 19th Ivakkak, I observed impressive and elegant "dances" at different race starts. Experienced mushers were able to quickly (within a matter of seconds) jump over tangled ropes and hop onto the qamutik, when dogs were pulling ahead with explosive energy. While these older teams had remarkably smooth and clean start, other less experienced mushers struggled to find the right pace. One assistant musher got tripped by his dogs, completely lost balance and had a spectacular fall (the kids gathered at the starting line quite enjoyed this moment). Similar to human runners, some dogs also appeared to be more skillful and well coordinated than others. After the starting signal, dogteams who were past Ivakkak winners shot forward like an arrow, while some younger teams pulled in all directions – a few confused wheel dogs even ran backwards and were forcefully dragged by their front runner teammates.

There were frequent skill-shares among Ivakkak mushers. More experienced mushers often gave tips and advices to younger ones. At the race start, when preparing the dogteams and setting up the ropes, one lead musher demonstrated to three younger mushers (one being his assistant, the other two were partners on a competing team) the quickest way to tie a secured knot. He also helped his fellow mushers to fix the towline on their qamutik.

6.1.2. Teaching, learning, and perfecting knowledge through discussions

In one senior staff member's words, "there is always a lot of camaraderie in Ivakkak". The camaraderie implies a close-knit social circle formed by mushers and experienced support staff members. The resulting social space is an optimal learning environment, where younger mushers can develop their own understanding of Inuit mushing based on inputs from the senior members of the group. Information is exchanged without reserve, and often in a relaxed atmosphere. The technical discussions not only occur during formal meetings, but also in forms of leisurely chats, stories and anecdotes, as well as jokes. Mistakes or questionable practices in previous races were often recounted as jokes. Some of the discussion topics recorded during the 19th race were:

- **Dog training and caring tips**: mushers talked about what kind of dogs could make good runners (in particular, half-wild or wolf-dogs, and how to tame them[32]); paw conditions and what is the best thing to do when dog paws bleed from ice/snow; feeding and the traditional methods to cure dog's stomach sickness; experiences raising puppies; plans to build future teams (in many instances, mushers talked about teaching their children to run puppy teams)

- **Team formation**: mushers discussed the numbers of dogs to make a team functional – Ivakkak rules require 10-12 dogs at the race start, though some mushers said they managed to win races with only 5-8 dogs; there was also one discussion on the ideal length for sled's towline, and how it could affect the performance of the dogteam (some suggested that longer towline reduces the stress on wheel dogs)

[32] The actual existence of the "wolf-dogs" is debated among Inuit mushers. Not everyone believes they are real. Wolf-dog is not a widely accepted idea, here I am only relying on three Ivakkak mushers' discussion. This topic could be explored in a future study.

- **Mud runner versus plastic runner**: there was several technical discussions on how to make the "old-school" mud runner, and what type of plastic materials are available on the market for new runners

- **Inuit words/grammar**: the correct vocabulary to use to describe elements in dogsledding, weather conditions, land features, etc.; younger mushers often asked senior staff/elders about specific terminology; elders often corrected language mistakes when they noticed wrong use of words or wrong grammar

- **Geographical concepts**: mushers discussed geographical features along the race trail; in addition, they shared with each other many stories about old hunting/camping ground – where these were located and who used them; legends and ghost stories were also part of the discussion (for example, there was one story about invisible people's voices been heard in a mountain area near Kangiqsualujjuaq)

- **Past dogteam stories**: there were several stories from the pre-settlement era – one elder recalled how her uncle's dogteams fought a polar bear near the camp, another elder talked about how his father used to travel with a small but fast dogteam along the Hudson Bay. A retired musher also told me that one of his most cherished Ivakkak memories was a time in Kangirsuk, when everyone was forced to stay inside to wait out severe storms. During that time, the community radio hosted a special Ivakkak phone-in program; many elders called and shared their memories.

These discussions and storytelling continue outside the regular race season. I was able to follow many discussion threads through mushers' Facebook posts.

6.1.3. Integrating different systems: mushers' selective knowledge articulation

In broad strokes Ivakkak is often painted as the reservoir of traditional knowledge. If we look closer, it is also an arena open to new technical challenges and experimentations. As we have noted in the previous chapter, everyone on the Ivakkak teams uses a large set of modern

vehicles and devices along with traditional tools. This hybridity is also observed on the level of concepts and scientific knowledge. The world is in constant movement, and the Arctic is one of the most fast-changing regions on Earth. Our understanding of this region (and its vital roles on the planetary scale) is evolving. Inuit are an integral part of this process: on one hand, they receive and absorb information; on the other hand, they create and propagate information. Non-Inuit concepts (for example, scientific data, theories and practices) are incorporated with local knowledge. In the context of Ivakkak, two scientific knowledge systems were particularly relevant to the mushers: climate science and veterinary science. Mushers would retain information and follow practices that appear useful to them; they would contest or ignore recommendations that are deemed inapt or unnecessary. The integration of foreign ideas was selective and pragmatic. As it has been observed in other Indigenous communities, the articulation between native and foreign knowledge systems (ex. TEK and Western sciences) implies plurality, and co-creative and strategic knowledge assimilation and representations (Bala & Gheverghese Joseph, 2007; Diver, 2017).

On climate, shifting weather patterns and unstable ice/snow conditions preoccupy all Ivakkak teams. The consequences of global warming are clearly observed and felt. Senior staff members discussed the challenges they face in choosing the right time window for the annual race – setting the race too late in March-April, weather tends to be warmer and sunnier but the snow would become too soft (and it's only getting worse with warmer temperatures nowadays); scheduling the race too early in February, snow conditions would be better, but weather tends to be more chaotic, bad blizzards will make air/land travel impossible. Most Ivakkak mushers (currently active, or retired) pay close attention to temperatures and abnormal temperature fluctuations. One veteran musher even has a weather-resistant precision dial thermometer installed right outside his kitchen window, and he keeps track of his own temperature readings daily. Weather applications are one of the most popular digital applications – screenshots taken on unseasonably warm days are widely shared and commented on. Many mushers are preoccupied with climate change, because it is a real challenge not only in winter months, but also in summer. One musher told me that the summers are now getting too hot, and as a result his dogs suffered heat and dehydration. Another observation was on shifting rainfall/drought patterns. One musher noted that the vegetation around his village has less stable growing cycles,

possibly from the combined effect of temperature and rainfall changes. One year there were almost no berries to pick in August; the following year there were surprisingly abundant.

On veterinary practices, vaccines and dewormers are uncontested among Ivakkak mushers and staff members. In the 19th race, the Official Veterinarian was well respected by everyone on the team, even when people did not agree on certain ideas/protocols. Vet's recommendations regarding food supplements and injuries treatment were not always followed. Before the race, the vet distributed care packages to each team, and explained to all the mushers how to prepare electrolytes drinks for their dogs (the vet also took time to explain the benefits and the underlying scientific principles – how potassium acts on mammals' muscles). Despite the effort and the good intention, some mushers did not use any of the "energy drink", others gave everything to their dogs in one-shot (which the vet specifically advised not to do). In the care package, the vet also included small jars of paw cream to treat bleeding paws. Some mushers used the lotion, but others said the cream was not useful at all – their dogs would just lick it off. In two occasions (musher-only meetings), two mushers also pointed out that they learned from elders that paw bleeding is necessary. Callus will form after the initial injuries. After that the dogs will have less problem running on ice/snow.

> You let the paw bleed, then it gets thick (when saying this the musher rubbed his own palms to gesture the desired skin condition), and they run better that way.

6.2. Noteworthy personalities: Ivakkak's own small "stardom"

In introducing the race-competition event format, Ivakkak partially emulated the rituals and symbols pervasive in modern speed-race sport. Through Ivakkak there is also a growing number of "musher-celebrities" in Nunavik. The phenomena surrounding charismatic athletes in contemporary societies have been examined in recent studies (Delaney, 2020). A charismatic sportsperson arises when his/her personal magnetism and athletic prowess overlay. In our globalized, consumerist world, the athlete's personal aura can also be strategically marketed by agents and amplified by the media. In Ivakkak, mushers who achieve celebrity status do enjoy concrete social benefits, much like many professional athletes elsewhere – fame, adulation, power of influence, and economic fortune. However, in Ivakkak, the environment and the social conditions necessary for gaining the celebrity title are unique. At one point, sport journalists can

describe Usain Bolt as “the face” of sprints in track and field, or Michael Jordan as the legend of basketball. In Ivakkak, mushers are not “the face” of competitive dogsledding. A musher is not a human sample who embodies the greatness, the miraculous, amazing athletic power. Their success is not framed as individual merit. What they represent is broader (connecting families and villages) and deeper (connecting histories and cultural identity). A visual metaphor can illustrate this distinction between “heroic sports” and “community sports”: in heroic sports, the winners’ most glorious moments are often pictured with trophies and medals, set apart from large crowds of spectators (sport legends are often framed as people with “superhuman” physical abilities); in Ivakkak, celebrity-mushers’ most elated moments are when they are lifted up, on their qamutik, by a jubilant crowds of villagers. Mushers’ greatness can only materialize through the support of their fellow countrymen. Also, dogs and children are always part of the winning shots. They share the glory.

Figure 9. Ivakkak winning teams
(Photo by Pierre Dunnigan/Makivik, 2017 – left; photo by author, 2020 – right)

As mentioned earlier, Ivakkak is a totally grounded experience – “grounded” not only because the successes or the failures of any team (and of the entire event) depend on the external world (snow, ice, wind, temperature, dogs, terrains, etc.); also because the Ivakkak’s “sport culture” is people-centered. We can say that modern Inuit qimutsik is “people culture”, as opposed to the “talent culture” that prevails in most modern sport competitions.

6.2.1. Sportsmanship: the role model, an ideal Inuit musher

Each year, a Sportsmanship Award is given to one musher at the award ceremony. The award is not necessarily given to the race champions, as an MVP in modern sports (most valuable player, title awarded to the most performing athlete in an entire league). The award recipient can be from any team. He is not selected by Ivakkak officials, but elected by his fellow competitors. This Award was first introduced in 2016-2017 and named after the late Adamie Inukpuk. Inukpuk was himself an Ivakkak racer, and inspired many young mushers. The symbolism of the Sportsmanship Award is described in official Makivik statement as follow:

> His legacy as an inspirational person and an Ivakkak racer will not be forgotten. This award calls for Ivakkak racers to be ethical, well mannered, fair and sportsmanlike throughout this race, which celebrates and upholds our Inuit culture through dog teaming. (Makivik Magazine, spring 2017 issue)

In Ivakkak, no one can become a celebrated sportsperson without the endorsement of his peers and his fellow villagers. During one of the pre-race meetings in the 19th Ivakkak, a senior race official specifically reminded everyone: “The younger ones are looking up to us, to all of you. Mushers, you are their role models.” With their perseverance and success stories, many young Ivakkak mushers have become the image bearer for modern Inuit - not only in Nunavik but also in the larger Inuit Nunangat. For example, two Ivakkak mushers (Willie Cain Jr. from Tasiujaq, Jani-Marik Beaulne from Puvirnituq) are also the protagonists in short videos produced by Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami to promote Inuit knowledge and lifestyle.

6.2.2. Legendary figures: mushers as Nunavik’s social-cultural icons

Although little known to outsiders, there are many colorful legendary figures among Ivakkak mushers. Over the past 20 years, many of these local heroes left powerful legacy, and with the younger mushers there are many new ones in the making. Some well-known mushers include: late Adamie Inukpuk (Inukjuak), late Tamusi Sivuarapik (Puvirnituq), Harry Okpik (Qaqtaq), Peter Ittukallak (Puvnirnituq), Allen Gordon (Kuujjuaq), Junior May (Kuujjuaq), among others. These mushers not only participated in Ivakkak multiple times, many of them were also political and spiritual pillars in their communities. The story of Adamie Inukpuk is a good example.

Adamie Inukpuk was born around 1943. He passed away in February 2017. He served as the president of the Kativik School Board in the early 1980s. He raced in the first Ivakkak in 2001, and almost every year until 2011. He was revered by many for his generosity, knowledge, commitment, and sense of humor. One elder remembered him as a "living encyclopedia", because he was not only skillful with dogteams, but also all aspects of life on the tundra. He always hunted seals with a harpoon, and not gun, so as to avoid losing the seal (an injured seal or a dead seal can slide back under the ice, therefore impossible to retrieve). Adamie Inukpuk was the grandson of Nanook, who starred in one of the first documentary/ethnographic films ever made, *Nanook of the North* (1920). In 1994, Inukpuk played the role of his grandfather Nanook in the film *Kabloonak*, a dramatic reinterpretation of the making of the original feature-length documentary. He also took part in two other film projects in the early 2000s. Like many elders of his generation, he made soapstone sculptures in his free time, although he wasn't remembered as a famous Inuit sculptor. In 2009, he authored *Qimutsiutiliurniq: How to Raise a Dog Team*. The book is based on his personal experiences and covers every important aspect of an Inuit dogteam. It is a reference manual for everyone learning about Inuit dogsledding. Some young Ivakkak mushers explained that they followed advice in the book to raise their own dogteams.

6.3. Emotions: Ivakkak as a unique locus for Nunavimmiut's collective feelings

In Ivakkak, the weight of history is always present. At public events, every time a senior staff member gives a formal speech, the events of the 1960s' dog slaughters are mentioned. The subject is also evoked in collective prayers before the race and during community feast. As such, every Ivakkak ceremony is a collective recalling of past trauma. These moments are colored with a deep feeling of sadness and melancholia. Concurrent to this pain of loss, Ivakkak events embody an optimistic determination to surpass the colonial tragedy. Its story of collective grieving, healing, resilience, survival, and triumph is reflected in the event's official title, "the Return of the Inuit Dogs". Speaking of the new dogteams and young mushers of today, one senior Ivakkak staff told me defiantly: "They tried to kill all our dogs, they tried to kill all of *us*, our way of life… they think they succeeded, huh, but we never went away. *They* left, and *we* are still here." In this sense, Ivakkak is an empowering experience to many older Inuit. It exhilarates their feelings of pride, dignity, belonging and self-confidence. Similar expressions can be found

in records of earlier Ivakkak as well. In a school project, a group of high school students from Kangiqsualujjuaq wrote:

> After the sled dogs disappeared, some Inuit starved to death. They could never have dreamed that it would be almost half a century before the sled dogs returned to Kangiqsualujjuaq.
> For many of us, the day of the Ivakkak race was one of the most exciting days of our lives. (Makivik spring 2007, issue 80)

Strong emotions are waved into large historical narratives and punctuate Ivakkak events. They are the forces, albeit not always clearly explicit, that animate all race activities. To render people's emotional experiences is a challenging exercise. It requires not only analytical skills, but also timing (being present at the right moment in the right place) and prowess in poetic and aesthetic expressions (one need to have the ability to experience and to convey the affective resonance with others). I find it challenging to capture feelings in writing, let alone academic writing. Each medium has its own bias and limitations. A sensory medium such as film would perhaps be more apt to transmit felt experiences. However, a proposition by John Leavitt in revisiting anthropology of emotion is promising:

> Emotion involves both meaning and feeling. While it does seem naïve to assume the universality of a particular affective response, it is perfectly possible to play on one's own and one's reader's emotions to attempt to convey those of the people under study, not only in their meaning but also in their feelings. This is precisely what happens, without explicit acknowledgement, in good ethnography. (Leavitt, 1996: 518)

We can argue that all emotions are subjectively felt and interpreted. Yet, it is precisely the thinking human bodies that are feeling the emotions in a specific social context. Emotions are thus socially and symbolically produced, expressed and felt. In order to present the emotional landscape of Ivakkak, I will attempt to capture the many "feeling-tones" of specific social and symbolic contexts through empathetic description – that is, to try to accurately replicate and translate the affective resonance of a given moment, in a given situation.

6.3.1. Race-start morning prayer

On the open ice, mushers and support staff gathered. The Marshall called for everyone through his loudspeaker (decorated with the Ivakkak logo sticker) – he made some humorous comments in Inuktitut. There was a great deal of laughter. The mood was playful and light. One assistant musher rode a mini-sled to join the group, a goofy gesture cheered by his colleagues. Once they formed a prayer circle, everything quickly quieted down. Mushers, staff members and village guests held hands and stood in silence, eyes shut. The stillness contrasted sharply with the earlier cacophony. One elder (the village priest) recited a prayer, solo in Inuktitut. The word "qimmiit" appeared a few times throughout the recitation. The prayer lasted about three minutes. At the end, everyone pronounced "Amen" in unison. The prayer circle was far out on the ice, and with the wind, the prayer would be inaudible if one were to step out from the circle. However, the crowd of villagers standing far behind the dogteams was praying at the same time – people were quiet, heads down, hands crossed. The moment was solemn and serene.

6.3.2. Crowd at the finish line

Large crowd gathered at the village's port area, facing the frozen fjord and the distant mountains. It was cloudy and extremely windy. The dogteams were to arrive in the next 2-3 hours. Despite the chilling wind, the crowd had a warm, upbeat and infectious energy: adults greeted each other (loud exclamations, hugs and handshakes when people bump into each other); children were running everywhere. Many pictures were taken – it was a large, animated outdoor party. Some were dancing to keep themselves warm. Several older Inuit ladies talked to me, even though they had never seen me before in the village. Part of the younger crowd climbed over tall snow piles to have an unobstructed view. All were waiting impatiently for the arrival of the dogteams. The Ivakkak Coordinator addressed the crowd in Inuktitut through a loudspeaker, stirring up loud cheers every few minutes. There were several fun warm-up games (jumping, singing, wolf-howling, clapping, etc.). The staff also had to constantly push back curious children off the road to keep the finish line clear. Right before the first teams appeared at the distant horizon, a patch of cloud cleared up, a bright sunbeam illuminated a distant mountaintop. This weather transition impressed many spectators. An elder commented that the weather "is cheering for the teams to run home fast". There was a sense of excitement, anticipation and wonder. When the dogteams travelled closer to the village, a few support crews shouted to the crowd "Quiet and

listen!" The order was first given in Inuktitut and repeated in English. People kept quiet and listened. The moment was tense and suspenseful – since the dogteams were coming in from beyond the tidal line (which was covered by gigantic ice blocks), most people could not see them. The idea was that when all keep quiet and listen carefully, one could hear the dogteams trotting.

6.3.3. Emotional avalanche at the 19th closing party

The party was held at the community gym. It lasted nearly 5 hours. First Ivakkak senior staff, Makivik representatives, local officials and sponsors gave several speeches. Then there was the flag procession and the commemoration of the deceased assistant musher. The ceremony was accompanied by live music and a video specially edited for the occasion. It had all the emotions one can feel at a wake: sorrow, despair (the deceased's mother was howling during the entire video clip with an indescribable force, almost everyone in the room cried with her), and compassion. Right after it, there was the screening of the commissioned short film from the 2019 Ivakkak. The film was epic, with dramatic visuals and a powerful score. During this small movie screening, the room was filled with a sense of amazement and pride. When the serene snowy scene was on screen, the room was totally quiet. When the action scenes kicked in, everyone cheered and clapped, and even counted down together when the race-start sequence was shown. There was something entrancing to a dark room filled with spectators, all holding their breath for their musher heroes projected on the silver screen. A staff member told me that it gave him shivers down the spine. The official award presentation was next – a jubilant crowd applauded winning teams. When winners popped champagne bottles and sprayed jets into the air, some villagers jumped forth with their mouths wide open to catch droplets. The crowd laughed a lot. The feast followed the award presentation. Foods were abundant and people ate together in large groups. After eating, there was a live band performance and a dance party. Many mushers and Ivakkak staff joined the dance circles. Two Ivakkak staff also made guest appearance on stage with the local band (one played accordion and one played keyboard). Lightheaded youthful energy flowed with folksy rhythms. The dance party was followed by heated games – players competed for prizes. Once again, there was lots of laughter (plus clownish mimicry of greedy acts). This 5-hours long closing party covered an entire spectrum of emotions. Ambience went through ups and downs like a roller coaster, from extreme sadness to total bliss. One Ivakkak staff said that at one point he was not even sure if it was a funeral, or a party, or a concert, or a

feast. All emotions were mixed up. Transitions from one state to another were as abrupt and raw as the Arctic weather.

6.3.4. Fireworks celebration

This particular event did not occur during the 19th Ivakkak, but at the 20th Ivakkak. On the last race day, there was an animated outdoor celebration at the finish line (large crowds gathered; two igloo were built and hot tea was served). In the early afternoon, all the dogteams crossed the finish line one after another. At night, Puvirnituq NV and Ivakkak organizers hosted a big firework show to celebrate Ivakkak's 20th birthday. People stayed out to watch the fireworks. Many videos were shared on Facebook: dazzling glitters filled the sky, colorful sparks were reflected on the frozen tundra, people cheered and whistled to the loud crackle and whoosh. It was a beautiful and spectacular conclusion to the 20th Ivakkak.

There is another significant element in Ivakkak's emotional/felt experience: fun. The exhaustion and physical pain of running a dogteam are real, but these do not diminish the enjoyment and the sentiment of accomplishment. Running dogteams is a uniquely pleasurable thing to do. Mushers all talked about how Ivakkak is amazing and fun:

> I'm proud of everything that goes through Ivakkak. Some days it's tough, hills, soft snow, bad weather. But it's fun, a lot of fun. Lots of exercise too.
>
> I found it long, but it was fun. We were well taken care of… I missed my family back home. But there is nothing like it, it's incredible. Out on the land, it's my medication, my get away from everything. Dealing with civilization can be quite hard sometimes.
>
> We get to see each other once a year, so just the camaraderie around the camps is a lot of fun.

When asked if he would return to the next Ivakkak, a musher pointed at his dogteam and said "You have to know them well", then he pointed to his knees and told me with a big smile: "I will run as long as these are with me." This same positive, bright emotional energy infuses most aspects of Ivakkak. To the mushers, the feelings of pleasure are inseparable from the movements and motions of a dogteam. In Ivakkak, feelings are rarely individual and compartmentalized

experiences. They are always embedded in a large web of interactions (and the web is made of everything: humans, dogs, weather, land, object).

Figure 10-11. Dogteams and crowds at the finish line

(Photo Ivakkak Official Photographer Felix St-Aubin, 2020)

Chapter 7.
Discussion: thinking about Ivakkak

Before this thesis project, Ivakkak was a totally unknown territory to me. When I first joined the staff at Kangirsuk, one team leader asked me musingly: "How did you find us?" Visibly, Ivakkak has been a niche event for most of its existence. Despite its enormous popularity among Nunavimmiut, it was rarely highlighted in mainstream media outside the region. In recent years, news sites such as *Nunatsiaq News* and CBC (CBC North, in particular) have covered the yearly race more consistently. Still, events such as the Arctic Games enjoy far more media attention; and compared to dogsled races such as the Iditarod Trail, Ivakkak's presence on the global stage is very modest.

When it comes to the Inuit sled dogs, they are far from being the trending research topics today. Arctic explorers and ethnologists clad in fur and riding dogsleds with local informants seem to be things of the past. Sled dogs and mushing competitions could seem trivial in today's academic circle, especially in comparison to more pressing issues in the North: health, education, language, sovereignty, religion, conservation, resource management, climate change, etc. Yet, here comes the blessing of being an off-track, inexperienced student in anthropology – with the support of dedicated professors, I got the opportunity to dive into a topic that does not feature on the A-list of Indigenous studies. Little did I know that this would be the chance encounter with a well-hidden gem, a unique window into the Inuit modernity. Working alongside Ivakkak staff, mushers, dogs, and the villagers over the past 1.5 year (online and in the field) has been a deeply moving and eye-opening experience. It was a privilege to record the precious moments, objects, ideas, feelings… everything experiential, so "trivial" yet so indispensable to the locals.

So how is Ivakkak running a different trail? What is so unique and precious about this race? What insights can we gain from my tentative ethnographic portrait of the event? In this last section, I will try to open up the reflection in three steps: from the Ivakkak race, to Inuit sled dogs, to the larger social context in the modern Eastern Arctic.

7.1. Running a different trail: how does Ivakkak differ from other dogsledding competitions?

7.1.1. The Ivakkak hybrid format: creative space and alternative time-philosophies

Ivakkak puts forth a unique Inuit winter sport formula. In this formula, Inuit mushers and their dogteams are encouraged to practice ancestral knowledge and skills, in conjunction with imported non-Inuit technological support, administrative models, and event design/programming. Ivakkak's rules and regulations are intentionally built to prioritize Inuit technologies, which are passed from older mushers to younger ones over the past 20 years. On the race trail, only purebred Inuit sled dogs are allowed, only Inuit mushers can participate, and only Inuit style qimutsik techniques can be used (for example, dogs must be tied in fan-hitch pattern and not in tandem; sleds must conform to the traditional shape and specifications proper to Nunavik; cheating is not tolerated – whether it is sled modification or secret use of sport drugs; whip maneuver must respect Inuit modalities – only to guide the dogs and to impose discipline when necessary, but never to hit them; dogteams cannot ask snowmobile safety patrol for assistance once they hit the trail; etc.). In some way, it is very tempting to describe Ivakkak as a "pure land" or a "safety zone", where Inuit occupy the centre, and Qallunaat influences are kept strictly on the peripheral, only to play minor supporting roles when absolutely necessary. In the larger context, one can argue that with snowmobiles, cars and airplanes, dogteams are no longer needed for living in the Arctic. Qimutsik is an obsolete technology; it has lost its utility and has become irrelevant. From this perspective, Ivakkak gives young Nunavimmiut a reason to keep raising new dogteams. Inuit qimutsik practice can only survive thanks to this annual sport event. Of course, Ivakkak was first conceived to promote qimutsik and bring back the Inuit sled dogs. However, the picture is more complex than this one dimensional "cultural preservation" discourse.

First, we cannot judge the values of Inuit dogteams solely according to its transportation function. This would lead to mechanical reduction. In the schematic opposition pitting qimmiit against skidoos, one risks overlooking all the historical burdens and the emotional weight carried by the Inuit dogteams. Anyone who has befriended an Inuit elder or an Inuit musher knows that qimmiitt are not machines. They are partners in blood and in flesh, with their own will power and personalities. The affection and the mutual trust that bonds an Inuit musher to his dogteam are

deep and long lasting. To many elders and Inuit villagers in their fifties, the memory of dogteams from the pre-settlement era translates into strong visceral emotions. Before stating that sled dogs are irrelevant today, one should perhaps think twice: Who is making the "irrelevancy" arguments? In what contexts? If qimmiit were irrelevant, then why would elders shed tears of joy when they see dogteams arrive at the Ivakkak finish line?

Second, we should not interpret Ivakkak as a "rescue mission", for this will brush off its impactful generative power. The metaphor of an incubator would be more accurate. Life depends on transmission and continuity – parents pass on their cells and genetic materials to their children; but life is never a machinic replication – children will always be different from their parents. Ivakkak is the offspring of a millennia-old art. Over the past 20 years, it has grown by incorporating many new elements from the non-Inuit worlds: technologies, knowledge systems, organization models, cultural and aesthetic elements, even a substantial Qallunaat fan base. Ivakkak has been a space where Inuit mushers and their dogteams learn to master the qimutsik traditions. It is also a space where they experiment with new formulas and connect with the contemporary globalized world (for example, sled dogs are learning how to behave on airplanes and how to run alongside a large and noisy snowmobile caravan).

Before expanding the discussion further, here is an anecdote from my time at Kangirsuk right before the start of the race. A large fight occurred at the dogs' resting area in the afternoon of February 23rd (all teams had arrived in town that morning). 6 strong mushers had to jump-in to pull their dogs apart. At the mushers' meeting later that night, 2 support staff members (A and B) and a lead musher (M) mused on the "timing" of this "dog war".

> Support crew A: "That's a lot of fighting."
> Support crew B: "The moon is phasing…"
> Followed by M: "…they are full of testosterone, some wild energy."

On the previous day, I wrote down another comment made by the same musher (M). Readers might recall an event described in chapter 3 (Qimmiit, the Ivakkak dogs), when one sled dog with a bleeding front paw was brought indoors and given a warm bath. After the bath, while the vet, the dog owner and his assistant musher cared for the canine patient in the bedroom, I chatted with the lead musher (M) in the living room. We shared some nikku that he had made from catches

from the 2019 fall-winter hunting season (nikku: dried caribou meat; later he also gave a piece to the injured dog, to comfort him after the bath). At one point, he walked to the window. Pointing to the clock on the wall next to the window, he said: "This is *not* real time. I only use it for reference." Then gesturing to the direction of the Kangirsuk river outside, he said: "*This*. This is the real time. The ice goes up, and it goes down, with the tide up and down. This is what Inuit follow."

Shifting ice level and phasing moon are cyclic phenomena with ruling physical presence. They are only two of the innumerable manifestations of the "Inuit time". Unlike Western/modern industrial societies, where time is essentially perceived to be something absolute, quantifiable, linear and mechanical (the "clock time"), in the Inuit world, time is not a rigid system of control, but flexible and full of unpredictability.

> Rather than rigid planning and prediction, many Inuit instead focus on efficient response and improvisation to whatever reveals itself in the present, alongside a certain amount of general preparation to cater for any eventuality. (Bates, 2007: 96)

Inuit time is lived as raw physical experiences, organically integrated into the surrounding environment. In a discussion on the Inuit conception of time, Gombay observed that in Inuktitut, the postbase "-vik" signifies both time and place. In traditional Inuit societies, experience of place and experience of time is interconnected. Inuit time is a "place-based form of time" (Gombay, 2009). This proposition might seem metaphysical, but it is not something totally unfamiliar to Qallunaat. We can simply refer to popular sci-fi stories, or films, TV shows, anything that involves the idea of time travel: when a fictional character travels in time, the temporal dimension is always pictured in spatial terms – the travel destination is a place, but the place is an alternate point in time (or it can also be an alternate point in time and in space).

Thinking and experiencing time in spatial terms is not science fiction to Ivakkak staff and mushers. When traveling on the tundra, each day is not defined by hours, but by the total distance the dogteams have covered that day. Time follows the activity (running the dogteams), not the other way around. In all the planning sessions and staff meetings, I only saw mushers and Ivakkak staff mark daily distances, never daily travel hours. No one from the Ivakkak teams

would say: “Today we are going to run approximately 5-6 hours”, but “Today we are going to run maybe 45-50 kilometers”. The daily targets are set on geographical locations, with specific spatial references to the starting point (the race start, the current camping ground, or the current village check-point) and the end point (the next camping site, or the next village check-point, or the finishing line). The total race time is a by-product of the total distance traveled. While “record-setting time” exists in competitions such as the Iditarod Trail, in Ivakkak, there is no “fastest winning time”. Fundamentally, the total race time in Ivakkak is always dependent on the spatial distance (which varies from year to year, because of the alternating trails), and on fluctuating weather conditions, which in turn affect the terrain, the snow condition, the visibility on the trail… in short, all the contingencies that can directly impact dogteams’ performance, and the daily running distance. When reading the official Ivakkak statements, one would notice that the total race distance is always mentioned first, not the race time.

This is not to say that “clock-time” is absent from Ivakkak. The chronometered time is the key element in all speed-race sport protocols. The clock ultimately decides the winner. As competitive as they are, Ivakkak mushers also obsess over minutes-based penalties and the accuracy (to the second) of their daily time calculation. However, even if the mechanical, abstract “clock-time” makes champions, *Tim*e must remain open and flexible in Ivakkak. The race can be set to begin and end on certain dates, but almost every Ivakkak race in the past has experienced date changes. A bad storm can upend everything, an unexpected incident can pause the race. Sila[33] has the last say, not the clocks.

Weather is out of the human control, and sled dogs are “under control” only to a certain extent. In the 2021 race, three teams dropped out – the trail and the weather were too hard on the dogs. The last team to quit had to stop at the midpoint of the race trail, because the mushers could not get the dogs to go any further, for no obvious reasons: “The dogs refuse to run” (as posted on

[33] Chisholm gave an eloquent description of sila, when he analyzed how this concept inspired Alaskan composer John Luther Adams: “Sila, a concept that derives from the Inuit lexicon to signify in the largest possible sense the weather, its cosmic and chaotic modalities, and the wisdom that attends to them […] The *Inuktitut Living Dictionary* lists 217 usages of *sila*, many of which aptly denote chromatic and/or dynamic character […] Words like *silaaqsiaq* (“darkening, changing outside air”), *silatsiaq* (“sunny weather”), or *silarqiqpuq* (“calm, without wind”) describe atonal harmonies and temporal modalities, while *silarjuamiut* (“air breathing creatures, humans, animals”) suggests the animated, sonic sensations that populate and punctuate his musical environments.” (Chisholm, 2016)

Facebook). The team was already on its way to the next camping site, but seeing that they would not be able to make it to the camp before nightfall, the musher and his assistant decided to return to Inukjuak.

Today, Inuit are forced to conform and adapt to non-Inuit institutions: politics, economics, legal systems, healthcare, education…and above all, time. In Johannes Fabian's concept of "chronopolitics", time is deployed as an instrument of power and conquest. It had advanced colonial projects in the past, and it is still playing key roles in implementing modernization projects all over the planet (Kelly, 1998). The "Qallunaat time" is not always to Inuit's liking (and to an Ivakkak musher, a clock on the wall is simply not real). In this asymmetrical world, Inuit are not allowed to live according to their rhythms. To many mushers, Ivakkak comes in as a suspension of the constraining non-Inuit time: they leave their wage employment or skip school for the duration of the race. In one musher's words, getting on qamutik and traveling the land with his dogteam is a "getaway from civilization".

7.1.2. Ivakkak as an active and multi-layered political entity

Ivakkak is a social event. It brings villagers together through sport-spectatorship, but more importantly, it involves people directly through feasts, parties, and outdoor gatherings. Ivakkak is where Nunavimmiut have the most outdoors handshakes (handshake is the first greeting gesture when Inuit meet; and it has to be bare hands. No Nunavimmiut would shake hands with gloves on, even in frigid -40° C.[34]) Ivakkak is also an event completely administered by Inuit, for Inuit, on Inuit territory. There is very little external interference, and practically no dealing with qallunaat institutions.

Inspired by Bruno Latour's Actor-Network theory, we can use a Gap junction metaphor to describe Ivakkak. In cellular biology, Gap junction are clusters of intercellular channels that allow direct diffusion of small molecules between adjacent cells, through a narrow gap of ~2nm; they are polymorphic; and their mechanisms overlap different timescales at multiple levels – a

[34] On the Inuit handshake, its extra-lingual nuances in a two-way communication, please watch the first 20 minutes of Zacharias Kunuk's 2019 film *One Day in the Life of Noah Piugattuk*.

few thousands units can be involved in an intercellular communication (Goodenough & Paul, 2009). Metaphorically, we can describe Ivakkak as a Gap junction system in the organic, living body of the Inuit society, because:

- It is an open space that actively bridges different historical times;
- The gap exists not as a void, or a definitive rupture. It is an interconnected space (a nexus) that allows dynamic diffusion of a wide range of information and materials – knowledge, skills, cash, objects, memories, stories and emotions;
- It is polymorphic – practically all layers of the Inuit societies can be mobilized through Ivakkak; on the race trail, it directly involves dogs, mushers and staff; on the communal level, it involves a great many of individuals from various backgrounds, social networks and political institutions, each bringing their own contributions to the events; all can exert their individual influences, but collectively they drive the outcome of the events;
- It operates on different timescales – the activities are carried out in hybrid temporal orders (flexible Inuit time and mechanical Qallunaat time; technologies from the past combined with tools from the present; pre-settlement memories waved into young mushers' experiences); there is no singular, linear time progression, and Ivakkak itself is a cyclic event that merges space and time.

Returning to Bruno Latour's conception of politics (Latour, 2011), Ivakkak is a space where people are engaged in real, continuously changing compositions. Contentions arise naturally among individuals or groups with diverging interests, concerns, values, perspectives...Their harmonizing efforts do not necessarily lead to unanimous agreement but sustain a slow (a slowness to exacerbate anyone accustomed to the modern meeting/decision-making process), complicated, gradual process, aiming at finding a reasonable and viable solution to a shared problem, or to mend a fissure in the social fabric. As we have observed, throughout the course of the race, Ivakkak staff members and key participants are directly engaged with each other in small decision-making circles. In relying on local leaders, sponsors, and contributors, Ivakkak senior officials are also constantly dealing with diplomatic matters. Except the staff paid by Makivik to work for Ivakkak, no one is bound to the enterprise through any obligations. The very existence of Ivakkak is a fluid network of relationships, and it must be carefully nourished and preserved through sustained social interactions.

Ivakkak is also a space where alliances are formed and validated between villagers and Inuit political representatives. Only by respecting and recognizing local history and local identity (village-based), can an aspiring Inuit politician acquire the legitimacy to lead and represent Nunavimmiut. The "-miut" postbase in Inuktitut indicates the belonging to a specific place, and to the group of people living in that particular place. It is a much more localized and land-based identity marker than more abstracted ideas such as province, nation, ethnicity, or race. In every official announcement delivered in public, Ivakkak senior staff members always start by acknowledging the people of the particular place who welcomed the Ivakkak teams. The villagers are addressed in their place-name. At opening and closing ceremonies, all the "-miut" involved in the race event are enumerated one after the other. That is also the only part of a Ivakkak speech in Inuktitut that I can instantly understand: "Big thank you, to people of Kangirsuk, people of Aupaluk, people of Tasiujaq, people of Kuujjuaq, people of Kangiqsualujjuaq, …". Gratitude is an essential quality in local sociopolitical solidarity.

7.1.3. From cosmopolitics to inter-species alliance: the qimmiit-Inuit integration

Reflecting on a cosmopolitical answer that would allow us to overcome today's ecological crisis together as Earth-bound creatures, Philippe Descola wrote:

> Une véritable écologie politique, une cosmopolitique de plein exercice, ne se contenterait pas de conférer des droits intrinsèques à la nature sans lui donner de véritables moyens de l'exercer […] elle s'attacherait à ce que des milieux de vie singularisés et tout ce qui les compose – dont les humains – deviennent des sujets politiques dont les humains seraient les mandataires. (Descola, 2015)

To acknowledge the reciprocal relationship among sentient beings is the first step in securing a future for the world's human and non-human constituents. The multispecies assemblage, as a theoretical concept, a legal and political tool, may evince a moment of rupture of modern politics, an insurgence of indigenous forces with the capacity to disrupt prevalent cultural-political models and to reshuffle hegemonic nature/culture antagonism (De la Cadena, 2010). Ivakkak and modern Inuit dogsledding embody this interspecies relationship, with the capacity to unset some of the hegemonic worldviews promoted in modern industrial societies. Though we should note that Indigenity could also lead to a hegemonic system that paves over the multiplicity in the configurations of human/non-human collectives. The substance and the manifestation of animal-

human assemblage in Ivakkak are unique to its context. It is not expressed as an elegant philosophical discourse, or an epic origin myth from time immemorial, although the Inuit dog-musher alliance can be pushed to either of these interpretative directions (we know that a good number of Inuit legends feature a dog or two). The interspecies relations that I observed in Ivakkak are emotionally raw, collective, political, and pragmatic. In this particular instance, one does not need to rely on erudite epistemic or semiotic concepts to tease out subtle or hidden connections. The connections are bold and on full display, first through a survival story, and, also through open political/legal battles.

"We Inuit wouldn't be here if it weren't for the Inuit dogs." This is a statement that I have heard repeatedly throughout Ivakkak[35]. Before moving into the settlement, Inuit and qimmiit were locked in one single, united survival story – this is actually what the term qimuksiq means: an Inuk, together moving with his dogs (or dogs with their Inuk). This statement can evoke a historical fact, recounted as an epic origin story with romanticism and maybe even a touch of primitivism. However, there are more complexities to such a statement, especially when one notices the emotional tones embedded in it. Humans and dogs are on equal footing – in this story, dogs are humans' counterparts with superior survival skills. It is not that Inuit simply attribute personhood to their dogs. The animals have full agency, and they live alongside humans in an unbroken and unquestioned relationship. Returning to Viveiros de Castro's cosmological picture of the Amerindians, we can note this idea of continuity:

> Amerindians postulate metaphysical continuity and physical discontinuity. The metaphysical continuity results in animism; the physical discontinuity (between the beings of the cosmos), in perspectivism. The spirit or soul (here, a reflexive form, not an immaterial inner substance) integrates. Whereas the body (here, a system of intensive affects, not an extended material organism) differentiates.
> (Viveiros, 2019: 33)

[35] Several people made this remark on different occasions. In my field notes, I counted 3 senior staff from Makivik, 3 senior Ivakkak staff, 2 retired mushers, and 3 Ivakkak mushers. These were only the ones that occurred in English conversations. There were many more mentions of "qimmiit" in Inuktitut conservations, but I was not able to capture those.

This metaphysical continuity is also a psychological continuity, and a social continuity, concretized through shared life conditions and emotional interdependence.

The Arctic survival story is at the core of Inuit identity. When senior staff, elders, and mushers bring up their collective memory, they are always speaking of their ancestors and their ancestors' dogs. The story come with a strong emotional undertone: those long-gone dogs were not only the ancestors of the qimmiit today, but also the ancestors of people themselves. "No dogs, no Inuit." The furry ones were always part of the family picture, not as superficial decorative elements, not as accessory pet animals, but as people's lifeline, as dependable partners that one can count on even under the most difficult circumstances. The symbiosis is not merely biological, but profoundly emotional. This survival story is enveloped in an enormous sense of gratitude and trust. To say "dogs are man's best friends"[36] is truly an understatement here. To Inuit, dogs are the ones who made life possible in the Arctic. Popular songs (or religious hymns) sing: "Take my life" – placing one's life in someone else's hands is the greatest act of love, at least in the Western canon. Inuit's ancestors placed their lives in the paws of their dogs. In Pangnirtung elder Peter Akpalialuk's words:

> Owning a dog team was very crucial to our survival. The dogs were the only transportation when searching for wildlife and for transporting meat to other camps far away that needed food to avoid starvation. It was still the same during the summer and one would *always* be accompanied by dogs wherever they travelled, and with dogs' help we would bring back a lot of meat for consumption. The dogs were like people and they were treated as such. When we went hunting and came empty-handed, as an owner you would feel badly for the hunger they were experiencing and that was a fact of life for us. (QTC, 2013: 326-327)

This witness from the Qikiqtani Truth Commission leads directly to our second point: the cosmopolitical human/animal assemblage is activated in major political/legal battles between the Inuit and the Qallunaat governing bodies. Sled dogs were at the center of concrete political actions and comprehensive social justice inquiries, which were led (and sponsored) by Inuit organizations. Historically, animals have long been entangled with the cultural politics of colonial projects. For example, cattle and horses as labor animals were deployed as foundational

[36] The popular phrase was coined by an American lawyer in 1870, see "A Tribute to the Dog", Kobbé (1910).

civilizing instruments in the conquest of North America (Gillespie & Narayanan, 2020). War dogs were used by Spanish conquistadors to instill fear and subjugate the South American Indigenous populations (Varner & Varner, 1983). In the opposite direction, qimmiit are mobilized to carry Inuit's decolonial struggles in the 20th and 21st century. Through sled dogs, Inuit from the Eastern Arctic asserted their sovereignty and held Federal and Provincial governments accountable for the pain inflicted on their communities. Beginning in the early 2000s, supported by Inuit elders in Nunavik and working alongside Inuit leaders in the Qikiqtani region, Makivik leaders launched a long breath battle against the RCMP and the Quebec Government. In 2011, Quebec Government apologized and gave $3 million in compensation. The mechanisms and processes involved in this case are beyond the scope of our discussion. We could tentatively assume that this political victory was possible because Inuit actors had an unstoppable momentum – sharp focus, irrefutable arguments, and powerful testimonies[37]. The fact that dogs, a familiar and domestic species in most human societies, were at the centre of this particular case definitely helped the Inuit. Had it been another animal, the outcome would probably be different (for example, think about the conservation issues involving Inuit and belugas, or Inuit and the EU seal ban – these cases had totally different momentum). Dogs were such an integral part of Inuit societies, with dogs, Inuit were able to mobilized their cultural assets, gather their political allies, and push through the human-centered Qallunaat legal framework.

One more element, we should note that in the pre-settlement era, qimmiit were essential to earn one's social status (therefore political influence).

> If an Inuk man didn't have a team of his own, it was interpreted that he was yet not quite a man... An Inuk was judged in accordance with the dogs' performance, appearance, health, and endurance. If the dogs looked well-fed and well-mannered, the owner was seen as a great hunter and admired by others. If an Inuk man's dog team was notably happy and well-fed, they would be able to take him long distances [and were] aids to his independence and masculinity. That is how significantly important dogs were to Inuit. (QTC: 412)

[37] Justice Croteau who was mandated to report on this issue was also a close ally of the Liberals who were governing Quebec then. That may have helped a little too.

What was observed during Ivakkak is a contemporary echo to this testimony. Dogs can still weigh significantly on contemporary Inuit's social status. Owning a strong dog team and becoming a star-musher in Ivakkak bring social merit (and cash rewards too). Many well-respected elders that I met during the 19th Ivakkak were once active mushers/hunters. The non-Ivakkak mushers that I met in the Northern villages are also current political leaders or administrators. It could be that in Nunavik, this special "Inuit upper-class" has the resources (money, time, knowledge) to afford a "recreational" home team. Skidoo is a nice luxury, on top of it, a dogteam completes the cultural heritage and prestige. This might be comparable to the falconry practiced among elites in the Arab Gulf Region[38].

Additionally, the concept of encounter across differences (its unstable entropic nature, its spontaneous and creative qualities) is highly relevant in the context of modern Inuit dog racing. The dog teams are hybrid entities to begin with. In addition to this first inter-species encounter, many other actors are involved. People holding different ideas and agendas are bound together through the seasonal *qimutsik* activities and the yearly race event. Through these activities and sports gatherings, actors are locked momentarily in the "encounter across difference". The dog race becomes an arena for making (or dissolving) alliances, for harmonizing (or clashing) ideologies. In this way, modern Inuit dogsledding is a complex matrix where some existing links can disappear, and new associations can emerge, the "assembly and disassembly of connections". In the next section, I will try to highlight some of these active processes, and to demonstrate that a dog race like Ivakkak is not necessarily a straightforward "revival of Inuit tradition", a social project unanimously shared and unconditionally supported by all. Modern Inuit dog sledding could be a concrete manifestation of the Latourian cosmopolitics – a fertile and evolving social and political incubator.

7.2. The Arctic qimmiit, towards a richer animal-human aggregate

7.2.1. Rethinking the categories and breaking down the barriers

By analyzing mitochondrial DNA from archeological remains of Thule-period Arctic dogs and those in modern Inuit sled dogs, researchers found a strong genetic continuity. Modern

[38] For reference: Yuri Ancarani's documentary/art film *The Challenge* (2016) is a contemplative portrait of the Qatari sheikhs, the contemporary amateur falconry and the annual Falcon Isfari Championship.

Eastern Arctic dogs maintain indigenous ancestry, whereas modern Alaskan dogs lack the genetic signature, as a result of post-colonization replacement by Eurasian bloodlines (Brown *et al.*, 2013). From this perspective of genetic science, Inuit sled dogs are irreplaceable in the *Canis* genus. They are an important part of Earth biodiversity, and they carry ancient genetic imprints that could further our understanding of Neolithic continental interchange and human-dog co-migrations. From the cultural perspective, in terms of our conceptual diversity about human-animal relations, Eastern Arctic qimmiit are just as valuable. The way they are integrated into Inuit societies not only challenges the hegemonic Nature/Culture dualism, but also our contemporary stereotypes of "domestic animals".

The modern pet culture and animal rights movement in industrial/urban societies reflect a deep-seated humancentric mindset. While trying to "love" and "save" non-human species, many fervent defenders of "Mother Nature" seem unable to step outside their habitual thinking patterns. One uses a scale of psychological and physical resemblances to measure the human-animal relations, as well as to define/structure one's emotional experiences with the non-humans. Today's "conservationism" is primarily hinged on anthropomorphism – measuring the "worth" of a species based on how "human" they are. This results in what we can call "the survival of the cutest": conservation groups always prioritize (and sometimes only pay attention to) cute-looking animals, the charismatic mega-fauna. Those who rely on such "conservation poster child" for subsistence and traditional lifestyle (for example, Inuit hunting seals) draw thundering criticism and the harshest, coldest prejudices from the "civilized" societies. These clashes are detrimental to all: they hurt people's feelings, weaken local economies in already marginalized Indigenous communities, and most importantly, nullify sincere conservation efforts – locals would no longer trust conservation biologists because of their cultural biases (interpreted as absurdity or hypocrisy).

In addition, urbanites today rarely question the ways our mainstream culture defines domestic and pet animals. We adore our cats and dogs (sometimes also rabbits, hamsters and parrots, and very occasionally, snakes and spiders…) as endearing family members. Like popular zoo animals, domestic/pet animals are once again appreciated according to their psychological and physiological resemblances to their human "masters". They can only exist and thrive if they

fit in an artificial and humancentric universe. The "domestic" categories are taken for granted and fed to younger humans through a deluge of media brainwash (cute animals abound in family movies, children's TV shows, books, advertisement, product packaging…). We forget that only a few centuries earlier, domestic animals also include foxes, weasels, ravens, magpie, sparrow, rats, ants and bees… not because they are "like human", but because they are wild animals who chose to live in proximity to a house ("domus" in Latin). The category of pet animals is an even more recent invention. The boundary between wild and domestic is not set in stone, but a historical and cultural construct:

> La réconciliation de l'homme avec sa propre biologie en passe par l'évacuation des stéréotypes, la déconstruction du conditionnement anthropomorphiste et la fin de la moralisation de la nature. L'abandon d'une structure de pensée dualiste et l'adoption d'un rapport authentiquement ouvert à la différence permettent de ne plus considérer les animaux (tout comme l'ensemble des vivants) au moyen de prismes anthropocentrés. Les animaux ne sont ni nos amis, ni nos ennemis, ils sont des partenaires terrestres, ces autres créatifs, avec lesquels Baptiste Morizot nous demande d'imaginer des modèles « diplomatiques » pour penser leur l'altérité et nos relations avec eux.
> (Logé, 2019: 129-130)

To surpass the stereotypes, to remedy the conceptual/spiritual/relational poverty that plague the modern mainstream culture, Arctic qimmiit and their mushers could give us some helpful tips. Inuit run a different kind of team, and non-Inuit can learn from it by opening up to another type of human-animal partnership. This is a partnership that most urban dwellers and modern mechanized farmers had forgotten (or had never considered), a relationship that challenges today's conventional "domestic" categorizations. It proposes relational patterns that we still lack the conceptual clarity and the life experiences to fully understand – there is no Inuit dog-human equivalent in English and French vocabulary, and the best we can do is to define it through negative space, as something that is "neither pet, nor working dog" (Lévesque, 2019).

The real challenge is whether we are open enough, willing enough, and truly ready to go beyond the cultural hegemony that sustains modern industrial societies. A story an elder shared with me during Ivakkak could be telling. As a young man, he visited Montreal one winter in the 1970s. While walking on Main Street, he was stopped by a White lady[39], who complimented him

[39] It was the expression used by the elder.

on his handsome features and his gorgeous parka. The elder paused his narration and made a clarification: his mother made the parka for him, the hood is trimmed with dog fur (so is the fur trim on his mittens), because "it's the best fur to keep you warm". Continuing his tale:

> I told her that this is made of dog. She was a nice White lady. When I told her it's dog, she was like *this*! (The elder made an exaggerated frown, mouth wide open) And I said: ok. (He raised his eyebrows, smiled and nodded, then a shrug). She was so angry. She just walked away.

A Euro-Canadian woman was outraged when an Inuk revealed to her the source material of his parka. The elder simply laughed at it and concluded his story with a cunning gesture: finger on the lips – "secret". Qallunaat do not understand why dog fur is used on winter clothes, keep it simple, and keep it silent. Adding to this story, the elder also said that he had to kill many puppies in his younger days (an unacceptable bloody crime to shock any animal rescuer in the South). Females were in heat every 3 months; a litter would have 6-10 puppies. "Do the math," says the elder, "You kill the weak puppies, and keep the good ones. That's how we do it." Is the killing of puppies fundamentally unethical? Is neutering a dog fundamentally ethical? Different people would likely give different answers. Refusing to hear the differences for one's moral convenience will not help anyone to go very far.

7.2.2. The possibility of a Circumpolar alliance

In Nunavik, Ivakkak creates a context for Eastern Arctic dogs to thrive. As we have previously observed, the Inuit sled dogs continue to cross lineages between Nunavik, Nunavut and Greenland. There are also other Indigenous Arctic dogteams in Western Arctic, Eastern Siberia, and Scandinavia. For the past 20 years, Ivakkak has grown from a completely niched local event to be more visible to outsiders. Ivakkak and its contemporary sled dog culture can be considered now as part of a large circumpolar network, with the potential to connect many peoples in the North. Horizontally, it joins contemporary Arctic communities. Vertically, it can cut through history and link different localities. After attending the 19th Ivakkak, I came across an ethnographic record of the Hezhe from the early 1930s.

Figure 12. Hezhe dogteam pictured in the Qing Portraits of Periodical Offering, 1751
(From Ling's monograph on the Hezhe tribes in the Sungari River basin, 1930)

I shared this image with some Inuit mushers that I have met during Ivakkak. They were surprised but thrilled to see an old Qing dynasty sketch that shows a similar lifestyle on the other side of the planet. One musher commented that maybe it was how Inuit moved to North America many thousands years ago. I am not fantasizing about an Arctic-Subarctic Indigenous revival in Northeast Asia, given the extent of damage that had been done[40]. However, if events like Ivakkak become more popular, it could encourage other Northern communities to think about their own dog-related traditions. Ivakkak could lead one to carefully consider the intercontinental, pan-Arctic nature of the dog/human alliance. This concept has been clearly stated in the 2016 Arctic Nomads project in Sisimiut:

[40] URSS and Chinese governments had different assimilation strategies, but the consequences are comparable from radical ethnic dislocation and selective cultural erasure.

> The sled dog is a valuable part of our common culture.
> Fundamentally, we believe in respecting and acknowledging the cultural significance of indigenous societies that foster dog sledding culture.
> Cross border collaboration would strengthen our national and local engagement, increasing our chances of preserving the sled dog and sled dog culture.
> (Løgstrup, 2017: 9).

With digital media (film, TV, web) and social media, dog sledding culture can create a soft power, which, alongside other cultural and political bridges, helps to strengthen Indigenous people of the circumpolar world. Modern Inuit qimutsik competitions can carry cultural images that respect local people's history and strengthen their sense of belonging. Arctic people are facing unprecedented challenges: climate change, fast-evolving international politics (new geopolitical ambitions from powerful governments in the South), land and ocean management (business interests from the globalized extractive industry)… all of which are adding more pressure to social and identity crisis inherited from the colonial past. Young generations are caught in-between different worlds, and unbridled consumerism trends confuse even more. It would be presumptuous to think Arctic dogs can bring a geopolitical solution, but perhaps they could lead their people to imagine a pathway to the future together – in other words, to travel safely through the modern storms.

7.3. Techniques du corps: Qimutsik as body culture and body esthetics

Inspired by the concept of techniques du corps that Mauss first introduced in 1934, my initial plan was to create a (relatively) comprehensive inventory of all the important gestures observable in qimutsik competition. However, I quickly realized that this was not feasible, and the reason is twofold. First, I faced physical limitations: I was not able to follow the dogteams throughout the entire trail, and therefore most data I gathered were at the departure and the arrival point (plus a handful of video clips shared by mushers – those were the only source material of the *in situ* dogsledding). My plan to visit mushers during the pre-Ivakkak training season could not be realized due to Covid. This remains a substantial shortcoming in my project. Second, and here I am attempting to turn my weakness into a strategic advantage, I started to question myself whether a "Body Technique Dictionary of Modern Qimutsik" is the ideal path to take. What can

"body techniques" possibly mean to an Inuit musher? Or to a team of hardworking qimmiit on the harness? According to which (cultural, historical, and symbolic) register do we define the idea of "techniques" and the concept of "body"?

I also question whether I can directly apply the Maussian conceptual framework to produce a systematic study of all the physical activities that are involved in Ivakkak – not only of the racing dogteams, but the entire "caravan", including everyone who travels alongside the mushers and the dogs (in close physical proximity). Although I cannot present an in-depth and all-inclusive analysis here, there are some elements that I think could be relevant.

We know that Mauss proposed his ideas in a time when "body" was primarily a topic of physiological, anatomical, and medical studies. Mauss's model, on the opposite, insisted on the cultural and the social dimension of all human gestures – whether it was utilitarian and specifically formulated, as swimming and equestrian arts, or "naturalized" and unconsciously performed everyday such as walking, resting postures, eating, showering, etc. When body and gestures are brought into the social and cultural sphere, they also become elements that are actively transmitted (either explicitly through models, or implicitly through non-verbal learning) from generation to generation, or from one group to another. Body techniques, to Mauss, can be summarized as "acte traditionnel efficace" (Mauss, 2001: 371). Thinking about the Ivakkak mushers and the Inuit sled dogs, we can also note that qimutsik skills are acquired primarily through the non-verbal mode of transmission. If I were to come up with a "Qimutsik gestures' inventory" in written forms, for the large part it could turn out to be a fiction or a word game, for Inuit mushers rarely verbalize their qimutsik "poses" or "drills", as in basketball ("dribble, block, dunk…"), boxing ("jab, cross, hook…"), or other modern sport disciplines. Certainly, we can name all the tools of qimutsik, because they are stable structures, with relatively simple mode of operation. For example, tying one dog on a harness is nothing complicated. Yet when it comes to setting everything in motion, such as running 12 dogs in fan-hitched formation, gestures and the range of improvisations become exponentially complex. For an inexperienced outsider like me, when watching the dogteams run, the first thing that comes to mind is "poetic" – qimutsik does not lend itself to mechanical and rational dissections. The body (bodies), in this context, appears to be more "esthetic" than "technic". It becomes an exciting and pleasing activity – to do (for the

mushers) or to watch (for the spectators). When Ivakkak mushers told me "qimutsik is a lot of fun", it is possibly their way of telling me that qimutsik is a convergence between something very simple and something that allows endless improvisations and combinations (free play). Perhaps this is also one of the reasons why qimutsik racing competition would be hard to replace, even with the most high-adrenaline skidoo speed race.

"Body should be bodies" is another thread that branches out from the original Maussian techniques du corps. In Ivakkak, "corps" is plural. Not only because there are two mushers per team, but 10-12 furry bodies pulling together. In most anthropological studies of sports, we can zoom in on the human players and theorize their physical performance, gestural energy, and the social and symbolic dimensions of their activities. In qimutsik, in addition to the human corporeal techniques, there are animal corporeal techniques. Therefore, in order to accurately understand the body techniques of qimutsik, both human and animal participants need to be acknowledged. Also, it could be intellectually convenient to analyze the human and the animal (the dog driver and the dogs) separately. Yet in the actual mushing practice, the human gestures and the animal gestures are melted into a singular whole. Can we come up with an expanded model of body technique that is adapted to inter-species alliance, and not only human actors? It appears that in most sports, even the ones involving animal partners (such as equitation), the animal body is often seen as the human body's extension or subordinate, and animal gesture is a direct (and unidirectional) result of the human will. In future studies, if qimutsik competition becomes the foundation of an expanded "*human-animal* body technique", its configuration would be very different from the ones based on horsemanship. A dogteam is a pack of highly intelligent and social animals that co-evolved with humans. Inuit sled dogs are one of the most ancient canine types on Earth. Their genetic profiles are the closest to the ancestors of modern dogs (Sinding et al., 2020). If we think in terms of genetic memory, these animals have a deep history older than most current human civilizations. They cannot be reduced to a plain and simple human body extension.

This historical consideration brings us back to the notion of transmission, and we should add transformation. To think how bodily techniques transform over time is important. For example, the evolution of sport techniques (or the models and the formulas) is entangled with a

society's moral values, collective imaginations and desires. Certain traditional sport/performative arts are embedded within its intellectual history (we can think of the practice of Yoga and Hinduism, the practice of Tai-chi and Taoism, the spinning dervish and Sufism); in the modern nation-states, physical education of the youth is designed in accordance to specific political ideology (Loudcher, 2011). Bodily techniques evolve not only to adapt to environmental conditions, but also to social expectations. Therefore, in the case of qimutsik, understanding the bodily techniques mobilized in Inuit mushing will also allow us to understand the collective conditions that gave birth to them.

7.4. The renewal of Qimutsik and its potential social power and cultural implications

7.4.1. Modern Inuit mushing and youth

Today, all the young mushers were born in settlement. Almost all have formal schooling, and many have wage jobs. With cash income, they can afford to raise a dogteam. At the same time, work schedules impose many constraints on the amount of energy they can spend on dogteams. Dog caring/training is a responsibility shared with other members in the household – parents, partners, and children – although they might not always be involved directly. All Ivakkak mushers in the 19th race were supported by their family. Two households followed the teams throughout the entire race (not riding with the skidoo patrol, but via Air Inuit); four other families joined their mushers at the finish line and the award ceremony. With the support of their kin, many mushers have competed in several Ivakkak, and are planning to do more in the future. Evidently, dogteams are not incompatible with a modern Arctic lifestyle. To sustain this Inuit qimutsik culture, large social investment is necessary.

I have met a few employees at the Kuujjuaq Youth House, one of them raced in Ivakkak six years ago. When asked if he would consider running again with the dogteams, he said, "Cain's Quest[41] is more exciting." Younger generations growing up in modern Arctic villages could eventually lose interest in traditional Inuit dogsledding. It takes dedicated mushers to

[41] A snowmobile endurance race in Labrador, described as "the ultimate extreme racing", and "a true northern adventure that gives racers the experience of a lifetime". https://cainsquest.com/about/

inspire them. Such effort was put into practice in Kangiqsualujjuaq, where a land-based curriculum, Individual Paths of Learning (IPL), was added to regular school programs at the Ulluriaq School. Mark Brazeau and Daniel Annanack were two of the main project leaders, together they implemented the Qimmiit Utirtut Program to revive the Inuit sled dog and to teach Inuit dog sledding culture to their students (Brazeau, 2005). In the 2007's edition of *Quebec Roots: The Place Where I Live*, a group of students[42] from the Ulluriaq School wrote:

> It's a great project to boost our self-esteem. Not many Inuit have high self-esteem because our culture is going through great changes and some of us go through great questioning. In 2005, when the Ivakkak came to Kangiqsualujjuaq, Mark saw strong interest in young and old Inuit people. He also saw excitement in the faces of the elders because after many years, the elders finally got to see Inuit with dog sleds. The pure Inuit sled dogs are almost extinct up North. Mark and Daniel wanted to help reintroduce them. This project's goal is to revive the pure Inuit dog and to bring back the dog sledding culture. (Makivik Magazine, spring 2007, issue 80: 51)

To young Inuit students, qimutsik skills have significant pedagogical potential, running a dogteam can be beneficial, both as a good physical training and a source of emotional wellness. As one Ivakkak musher observed:

> If you have dogs, five or more, then you're always busy. You always have something to do, you have to get dog food, you have to hunt for the dogs, you have to run the dogs to keep them in shape. You never get bored. It keeps you healthy. Plus they're fun.

Another musher also pointed out:

> It's a healthy lifestyle, mentally and also physically. I would tell people, give it your all, be patient and strive for your culture. Ask elders about dog teaming, they'll tell you, and you'll learn along the way.

To be able to run a dogteam, one must be willing to learn from the elders, to learn from his/her dogs, and to learn to work together. In the process, a young person could build his/her emotional intelligence and develop a balanced mental disposition – humble, respectful, patient, caring,

[42] The project was initiated by the Blue Metropolis Foundation, the group included Matthew Annanack, Noah Annanack, Sandy Annanack, Shirley Annanack, Jari E. Leduc, Joe C. Etok, Louisa Etok, Rosina Kajuatsiaq, Eva Obed, Sapina Snowball.

curious, observant, resourceful and adaptive, etc. To my knowledge, there have been no studies from the angle of psychology on how qimutsik learning could shape one's character. However, from the Ivakkak mushers' point of view, dogteams will not only make winter life "less boring", it can also help to give a purpose and sense of belonging to young people who are struggling to find their place in the world.

7.4.2. The potential of recreational qimutsik

Two mushers that I met during Ivakkak (but who did not participate in the 2020 edition) were also owners of small ecotourism businesses. Before Covid, tourists can enjoy dogsled outings with the musher-guides in Kuujjuaq. There is considerable debate over what "ecotourism" means and what it should mean. For many years, ecotourism has been thought to be the antidote to aggressive and consumerist mass-tourism. To truly benefit local communities, however, the desirable management strategies should be implemented to shift the ecotourist experience from simple enjoyment and satisfaction through stages of greater understanding, to more open attitude and more environmentally responsible behaviour-lifestyle (Orams, 1995). It is also argued that ecotourism management regimes could empower local communities through four channels (Scheyvens, 1999):

- **Economic empowerment**: more income sources and more job opportunities
- **Psychological empowerment**: confirm local communities' land -ownership, enhance their confidence and self-esteem (when outsiders recognize the uniqueness of the local life, and learn to appreciate their natural resources and their traditional knowledge)
- **Social empowerment**: community cohesion can be improved when individuals and families work together to build a successful ecotourism venture
- **Political empowerment**: local agencies to provide support to new projects, and create opportunities for community members to be represented on decision-making bodies and/or be directly involved in the decision-making processes

When Inuit mushers take tourists on qimutsik trips, the aforementioned channels for empowerment could all be activated. Like most small-scale Indigenous business initiatives, independent recreational qimutsik projects would need local government's support to be

economically viable – at least in their initial phase. In the post-Covid era, the tourist sector is facing a nebulous future. One of the eco-tour owners told me that he had European and American clients scheduled for spring 2020 and 2021, but everything had to be cancelled. The rebooking plan is still pending. Many challenges lie ahead, but the opportunities should not be overlooked. The development of a viable recreational qimutsik could run parallel to Ivakkak and help strengthen modern Inuit dogsledding culture, not only to the benefits of tourists, but most importantly, to empower future Inuit mushers. For outsiders, a trip on the qamutik with a knowledgeable musher could be a deeply transformative experience. If a tourist could see the tundra through an Inuit musher's perspective, to appreciate the rich sensory and aesthetic qualities of dogteam travel, the Arctic landscape would no longer be the exotic white desert, but a land with unrivaled history and vitality.

7.4.3. Some challenges

While Ivakkak gained popularity over the past decade, it also brought up new issues that go beyond simple economic considerations – dog population control, canine disease treatment and prevention, managing dogs' aggressive behaviour and preventing their attacks on humans (especially children), implementation of adequate veterinary services... All these topics have to be addressed in order to allow villagers and qimmiit to live in peace (Aenishaenslin *et al.*, 2018). A modern qimutsik culture would need modern management solutions. As one researcher who worked on the eco-health project (as part of the larger multidisciplinary project: IPDW – Indigenous People and Dog Wellness project) observed:

> We should stop falling back on the same old management strategies…chaining up the dogs is not solving the problems. Elders have told us that tied dogs tend to adopt wild behaviours with people. Why can't we consider alternative risk management methods? Why can't the dogs be let free? We didn't try to think forward, we didn't consider innovative technologies. We are always using the same control measures.

In the pre-settlement time, sled dogs were free to roam around the camp – this was considered the right way to treat the dogs, for their social and physical well being. Tying up sled dogs was an order imposed on the Inuit by provincial and federal agencies in the mid-1960s (Lévesque, 2010). Half a century later, despite the availability of advanced technologies, chaining

is still the only officially acceptable way to keep the sled dogs "under control". One ought to ask whether this is perpetuating the colonial attitude towards traditional patterns of Northern animal-human cohabitation. When I asked the Ivakkak mushers where they keep their dogs, many explained with frustration that they have to comply with the rules (which they despise) and chain their dogs. One musher told me:

> It's bad for the dogs, they can't go where they want, they can't find a spot to stay comfortable, the snow is too hard for them to dig under it if there is a storm. They get exhausted quickly and they waste a lot of energy. In summer I let them free on an island, they stay in good shape, they can work out their social hierarchies by themselves. That's how we do.

If they had a choice, mushers would not chain down their dog. However, only some mushers have access to "dog islands". To the rest, the chain is unfortunately a necessary evil. One musher from Puvirnituq complained that all the islands near his village had already been taken, leaving him no option but to tie his dogs. Another musher from Kuujjuaq said that he scouted the outskirts of his village with some Ivakkak staff, to find a spot where dogs can have more free space, but so far they still do not have a solution.

Technologic solutions are crucial, but they would remain largely ineffectual if the local perspectives and sociopolitical aspects are not included in the equation from the start. As researchers have observed, the lack of trust, the communication barriers, and the incomplete assessment of the dog-management problems from the villagers' point of views all lead to non-engagement. On the structural level, it is also explained in terms of:

1. Priorities: Inuit villagers have more serious issues to deal with - housing, employment, education, healthcare, resource management, etc. Dogs are not their top priority.
2. Administrative void: local organizations have no mandate to specifically address dog-management in their communities (Simon, Saint-Charles *et al.*, 2017).

From the Ivakkak mushers and staff, I have learned one thing. Inuit teams (human teams and mushers' dogteams) can be structurally loose, but that does not compromise their efficiency. However, the efficiency, or the smooth running of a team, fundamentally depends on a balanced coordination between everyone involved. The coordinated operation is not based on rules, but

rules were generated from coordinated practices (which are accumulated experiences, formulas that have worked in the past). The coordination can be planned through meetings and discussions, but on many occasions "working-together" does not require verbal discussions, it is primarily action-driven. One comments from a retired Ivakkak musher, when we casually talked about healthcare in Nunavik, was "more board[43], no health." The top-down administrative model was clearly not to his taste, and he questioned the efficiency of a structured/bureaucratic administrative institution. The fact that the Board's administrative team is largely composed of non-Inuit very likely aggravated this sentiment of dissatisfaction and resentment. When a project is not built on social legitimacy through actions, Inuit would likely feel no emotional connection to it. The resulting disjuncture not only leads to non-engagement, but also can induce inaccuracy in assessing the weakness (or strength) of management strategies, and failure to budget resources adequately. From mushers' perspective, raising a dogteam is labor-intensive, and it requires long-term dedication, plus the patience and the modesty to learn from experienced elders. Successful dog-management plans in Northern villages would likely require a similar mode of action.

From an administrative perspective, it is true that Inuit organizations have to solve a great number of problems, and that dogs are probably not the most pressing one. However, it would be aberrant to think that qimmiit represents a completely marginal issue. Considering the political actions led by QIA and Makivik on Qimmiijaqtauniq (dog-killing) investigations, we can see that dogs can be (and have been) placed at the forefront of Inuit struggles for self-determination. Any non-Inuit involved in dog-management efforts in Nunavik should seriously and thoroughly consider qimmiit cultural significance, and what "dog control" means to Nunavimmiut – politically, historically, and emotionally.

7.4.4. Future teams

Would new generations of Makivik leaders be willing to invest in Ivakkak for the next decades? I am not in the position to answer this question. However, as long as qimutsik has a

[43] Board refers to the Nunavik Regional Board Of Health and Social Services.

meaning to Inuit, it will continue to exist. Through the Qimmeq project conducted in Greenland between 2015 and 2019, Greenlandic and Danish researchers have noted:

> The number of dogs is declining. The sea ice is retreating. Dog food is becoming more expensive. And snowmobiles are replacing dogsleds as the means of transport for hunting and fishing. While the sled dog is a proud and vibrant symbol of Greenlandic culture, the challenges are legion, and many people have doubts about the future. (The Qimmeq Project, 2020: 3)

The relentless negativity is common to many "extinction storytelling" in conservation biology (Kohl, 2017). With the Anthropocene narrative, it has now an even firmer grip on the public imagination (Panu, 2020). The same apocalyptic tone also colors the discourses on endangered cultures, where societies worldwide are thought to become "McDonaldized" through cultural homogenization (Nederveen, 2015). In this context, how will Inuit dogsledding culture move into the future? What exactly will this new (or renewed) qimutsik culture look like? Through my Ivakkak experience, I can imagine a form of revitalization through teaching. Several mushers and Ivakkak senior staff members also expressed their belief in well-designed education programs for the younger generations.

The ideal form of teaching is through first-hand skillshare between older mushers and younger mushers. To cultivate modern qimutsik practices, this master-apprentice formula will have the most direct impact. Experienced mushers can guide young Inuit throughout the learning process, to give them the opportunity to appreciate the uniqueness of their Inuit sled dogs, the joy of qimutsik, and the challenges (and the responsibilities) that come with a dogteam. This form of teaching is not necessarily compatible with the more structured curricula devised by Kativik Ilisarniliriniq (Nunavik School Board), but as a land-based teaching, it is malleable and has much unexplored pedagogical potential. Education design is not the topic of this paper, but "the art of Inuit mushing" can encompass a breadth of modern disciplines, from general biology, climatology, to physics and arctic history. Based on personal communications, such a pedagogical curriculum is currently in an early stage of development by a team of researchers and veterinarians – a collaborative effort between Makivik officials and academics.

Teaching is also done through media. During Ivakkak, I visited Pitakallak School in Kuujjuaq. This elementary school is equipped with advanced classroom technology (interactive wall projection, integrated with teacher's computer and teaching software, school wide Wi-Fi coverage, among others) and media set (large flat screen TV and media player in student's activity room, theater/auditorium). The "infrastructure" is impressive, but the media content that was delivered to students leaves a lot to be desired. When I popped into the activity room, the TV set was playing a bright CGI cartoon (dubbed in English) featuring a tropical parrots driving a futuristic rocket through clouds. Three young boys were watching with great interest, until a gym teacher stepped in and called them away. The animation was obviously produced in a studio down South, encapsulating the "Disneyesque" ideals for children cinema: bright colors, slapstick humor, simple storyline, boisterous soundtrack… nothing to reflect any Arctic cultural sensibility. This was quite a memorable facepalm moment to me. Outside school, the Inuit youth is submerged in YouTube videos, Facebook posts, TikTok clips… these media platforms can offer powerful digital networks through with circumpolar alliances are built (the Ivakkak fan base on Facebook is a good example). However, to younger users, the massive media invasion from southern consumerist cultures can be quite overwhelming. If we think about qimutsik, or dogsledding culture in general, as "media theme", there are only a handful of films that is aimed at younger audience[44]. More balanced documentary films on Inuit dogsledding culture also exist, such as *Okpik's Dream* (2015), but they are again produced for distribution in the South, and they do not necessarily appeal to young Inuit audiences. The modern Inuit dogsledding culture is still in the making, and the media could play a pivotal role in shaping this culture. Until now this aspect of media representation is not properly addressed (especially for youth, who are the big majority in today's Inuit population). Qimmiit can be imagined to be future partners in Arctic people's lives, but to do so we cannot rely on cultural programs (both analog and digital) that are modeled on dominant mainstream cultures. They would inadvertently perpetuate cultural stereotypes in the process. Ideally, a new image of modern Inuit dogteams would be anchored in

[44] Animated feature film such as Balto (Universal Pictures, 1995) or the more recent live-action production Togo (Walt Disney Pictures, 2019) – these films present dogsledding and history from an American/Southern perspective. Alghouth beautifully executed, they are produced for southern consumption and they feed into the romantic imagination and stereotypical ideas about the North.

the Arctic environment, reflecting Inuit contemporary socio-economic reality, and respect Inuit cultural roots and sensibilities.

As a highly anticipated communal event each year, Ivakkak punctuates the seasonal life cycle in Nunavik's northern villagers, as well as the political life cycle of Inuit leaders and figures of influence. As a competition built on cultural heritage (such as traditional skill sets and Inuit's own time philosophy and pedagogical philosophy), it creates a sense of belonging and serves as an active ingredient to Nunavimmiut's modern self-awareness and cultural identity. To the Qallunaat, Ivakkak is also a living example of non-normative interspecies alliance. Despite these unique qualities, the world of contemporary qimutsik practices is still a niched territory. Inuit mushing is not something well known to many outsiders. Ivakkak offers an entryway to this undeniably exciting domain – to spectators, it impresses with its unparalleled spectacular qualities; to dedicated scholars, it has the depth that withstands serious anthropological inquiries. My personal experience with Ivakkak is limited; therefore the ethnographic portrait that I painted so far remains incomplete. I was nonetheless able to observe some of its core values, and to feel the potential it represents to Inuit communities and beyond.

Conclusion

Through this ethnographic portrait, however incomplete due to the circumstantial limitation, I tried to present Ivakkak and to demonstrate how this modern Arctic sport event is unparalleled in its sociocultural implications. Unlike other famous dogsled races in the Arctic and Subarctic regions, this qimutsik competition is (to date) the only annual long-distance race completely owned and operated by Inuit, on Inuit territory, for Inuit communities. Ivakkak's event organization might seem similar to other speed-sport competitions. However, upon a closer look, it is animated with an organic and multi-faceted life force, coalescent of many constituents (dogs, people, equipment, goods, techniques, knowledge systems, personalities, memories, and emotions…), across historical gaps and social, economic, and political fields. In this paper, I tried to paint Ivakkak through several lenses:

In the Ivakkak context, the interspecies connections are first and above all directly embodied in the uninterrupted and all-encompassing teamwork between the sled dogs and the mushers. Like in the pre-settlement time, travelling on the tundra with a dogteam is only possible when humans and dogs are in sync with each other. Besides directing/coordinating their canine teammate on the race the trail, mushers spend a large part of their energy on a daily basis caring for the entire team. On the surface, the technical aspects of running a dogteam might appear quite straightforward: put the qimmiitt on the rope and let them run – nothing complicated. The apparent simplicity and banality are an extraordinary effort in disguise. It is the result of an ongoing and long-term mutual conditioning, in other words, "team training". On one hand, Ivakkak mushers raise their dogs from puppies (or from puppies' parents, grandparents, or great-grandparents…) and accompany them through their entire life cycle. On the other hand, mushers must be able to follow the pace of their canine partners; they have to be in good physical and mental conditions to keep up with the four-legged leads. In order to comprehend the subtlety and the depth of this dogs-mushers mutuality, interviews and questionnaires are useful but will not suffice. An outsider would need to hop on the qamutik and follow the team on the trail. During the 19th Ivakkak, I was only able to engage competing mushers when the teams were in stationary mode. My observation of the team dynamic remains very limited.

For a dog-owner from the South, it might be natural to project one's pre-existing mental picture of dog/human interactions onto Ivakkak dogteams. There could be nothing mysterious or surprising in dogs and mushers communication. And it could be easily assumed that with advanced veterinary science and ethology knowledge, we already know practically everything about canine biology and behaviour. But do we? How can we fully understand a humans-canines collective without the life experiences of being an integral part of that mini-society? Can we affirm that, in line with the ontological shift, one ought to deploy a non-human-centric perspective (thus a dog perspective)? This might be problematic, not only because a human being cannot pretend to know everything from a dog's point of view, but for the fact that sled dogs and Inuit mushers are so tightly integrated in a long-lasting partnership.

In contemporary ethology, some animal behaviour scientists have adopted a phenomethology approach[45]: in order to understand certain social behaviours of a particular animal, the researcher's entry point relies on physical proximity, social immersion, and emotional empathy with members of the target species; the human observer must attempt to live the animal's social experience as closely as possible, in order to gain adequate analytical insight (Sarano, 2017, p70-71). In other words, one must (at least attempt to) become a part of the animal's society, leaving behind all notions of "ontological divide". Such an undertaking is comparable to doing ethnography. This immersive observation is what Inuit mushers have been doing for countless generations with qimmiitt, except that instead of passive observations, Inuit mushers actively worked the behaviour of their sled dogs, and designed technologies and working models in accordance. The dogs' and the humans' societies included each other. There were no dog societies in the North without humans (and vice versa). In this context, the human/dog interspeciality implies a hybrid mind. It is not a mechanical addition, the lump sum of mushers and sled dogs; it is not a romantic fusion either, where dogs and humans are completely merged. Human masters dominate dogs, but not always, and not absolutely. As we have noticed, vis-à-vis the sled dogs, many Ivakkak mushers refer to themselves as "boss" – a flexible term that can be used with different undertones. Boss rules – in a reductionist mind frame, we can call this

[45] Dr Jane Goodall's work was a key inspiration for this approach. For more details on current animal behaviour researches using the phenometological framework, one can consult the works of ethnologist Dr Fabienne Delfour.

a relationship of domination. However, relational/structural configuration is not enough, a boss is first and above all defined by his/her functions and actions. A boss rules, but also leads the team, plans tasks and activities, oversees and supervises the course of the events, serves (or cares) and listens to his/her subordinates, arrange his/her assets strategically, coordinates his/her team, allocates resources (compensations or gifts)… What I was able to observe during Ivakkak is that Inuit mushers rarely place absolute values in relational/structural ideas. After all, for pragmatic reasons, the power structures are fundamentally flexible. Imposing a "theoretical ontological order of things" on modern dogteams would be mostly to the convenience of non-Inuit academic writers, for such abstract "relational configurations" has little to do with how mushers run their teams. Mushers, like bosses, and dogs, like teammates, are defined primarily by their respective tasks and actions. In this mushers/dogs partnership, status distances are carefully maintained, and each party's respective integrity is also preserved and acknowledged.

Outside the close-knit Ivakkak dogteams, the interspecies relationship is also ingrained in stories, legends, distant and recent memories cherished by many Nunavimmiut. Based on my Ivakkak experience, I think it's safe to conclude that even in the age of snowmobiles and airplanes, qimmiitt still have an irreplaceable place in Nunavik. Certainly, today the dogteams are no longer the essential transportation method for any Inuit family. This doesn't mean that the sled dogs are no longer relevant, and that they will be "naturally eliminated" by new technology. Their functions simply shifted to other domains – sport, recreation, cultural heritage, social status/economic wealth, emotional well being, place identity (the "-mmiut" concept, linked to family and community), and ethnic identity. "Ivakkak – the Return of the Inuit Dogs", this official event title implies this transitional moment in the Inuit/qimmiitt alliance in Inuit history: the Inuit dogs are returning to the communities as renewed social components.

To most outsiders, Ivakkak appears first as a local sport event. Indeed, this is how media generally portray Ivakkak, and it is also the branded image crafted by its organizers. Upon a closer look, one would notice that it is much more complex than a regular community sport event. We can apply the notion of cosmopolitics to its multifold dynamics: through Ivakkak, local and regional sociopolitical constituents together form a dynamic matrix, where activities are defined (in flexible manner) by written rules, non-written code of conduct, real-time interactions between parties involved, and activities of many elements of the external world which are outside

human control (for example, storms, snow condition, dogs' mood, etc.). Using a gap-junction metaphor, we can also note that Ivakkak form a peculiar intermediary space between large bodies/systems: it is first a connecting space between the pre-settlement "traditional Inuit world" and the modern Inuit winter life; it is also a juncture between different political entities (a range of large and small decision-making units); finally, it is also the spectacular meeting space between dogteams and Nunavimmiut (the communities).

In this open space, a wide range of information circulates. Inuit and non-Inuit knowledge systems are blended together through mushing tools and techniques, skillshare, and technical discussions where different perspectives (scientific rationale and hunter/musher expertise) are included. On the material level, the state of mixture can be observed in Ivakkak's impressive resource mobilization. A significant chunk of the annual Makivik budget is invested in the race events; this fund is subsequently redistributed to many local organizations and individuals (from staff members to mushers, and public events' participants) in cash and/or in kind. The amount of collective labor invested in Ivakkak by each community along the race trail is also remarkable, although the intensity and the type of local involvement vary from one village to the other. The success of the official race events relies on cooperative effort, and on the smooth operation of all parties. We can highlight the air and ground transportation of goods, staff, dogteams and spectators. We can also emphasize the efficient (but in many way "last-minute" and quite volatile) lodging arrangement and equipment lending, from community woodshop to NV trucks, through extended region networks. Concerning economic activities, to many of its participants, Ivakkak is also a space of "suspension", or "switching gear". Over the course of 3 weeks (sometimes longer, depending on sila and the non-human forces), Ivakkak mushers and staff members slip away from their regular wage/school work. And on the day the dogteams arrive in town, even school can be cancelled. Thus, Ivakkak effectively shuffles the established time order.

In domain of politics, Ivakkak integrates several dimensions. On the internal level, Ivakkak's organization and administration is intertwined with the political aspirations of Makivik. The senior staff members, or the core Ivakkak team, are all directly affiliated with Makivik. In terms of daily operation and event coordination, the decisions are made through decentralized and deliberative (and sometimes ultra-slow) democratic work. Everyone's opinions

are acknowledged and weighted in the process – with the ideal that mushers' preference should take precedence (in practice this is however not always the case). On the external level, as a popular public event, Ivakkak offers a platform where local figures of influence can exercise their power, both formally (through performance in large public events) and informally (with smaller groups or individuals in public events or private gatherings). Regional and local village leaders can use Ivakkak to amplify their voices, and build/consolidate their political alliances. Qimutsik race competition is the center of Ivakkak. Adjacently, there are many concurrent indirect competitions (cake and sewing, for example) through which people can earn their social merit and rise as new role models.

In Ivakkak, body and emotion are two indispensable elements. Without giving them proper consideration, the picture of Ivakkak remains not only incomplete, but also hollow from the inside. However, there are difficulties – and maybe these are the limitations of anthropology as a medium – felt experiences cannot be easily translated into words and using academic text to record feelings and human/animal body motions is difficult. At best, we can produce an inventory of all the essential bodily skills to operate a dogteam (knot making, harnessing, whipping, voice command, dogteam control on different surfaces, weight and gravity maneuver on a qamutik, jumping on/off a qamutik, running and pushing alongside the dogs, uphill and downhill techniques, etc.)[46]. However, such an inventory will ultimately remain a sampler, or a fictional, dry dictionary – we can outline the general practices, but mushers and dogteams have their own habits and styles, and they can perform endless improvisations and adjustments on the run. Mushing can appear simple (again, tie the dogs and let them run, that is the basic technique), but it is in practice complex team effort, with individual nuances. Think about a basketball team or a hockey team, the rules and regulations, as well as techniques and strategies are not hard to pinpoint, but how can we produce an exhaustive written ethnographic record of all the plays, all the individual players (and/or multiplayer formations), and their evolution over the course of their careers? Written analysis remains the academic norm, yet the current state of digital tools (both visual and audio) could largely expand the classic text-based ethnographic approach. Film as an

[46] It was initially planned as part of this master thesis. Unfortunately I was not able to produce such an inventory, since I only spent limited time with the teams. Such an inventory would require visiting different dogteams and learning their running patterns over a long period of time.

ethnographic tool was explored by pioneer figures such as Jean Rouch, but much of its potential is still untapped. Returning to the basketball and hockey example, coaches and players would use game footage to analyze their performance, understand their opponents, and devise/adjust team strategies for future games. In modern ethology, film is also used as an analytical tool, and it has been especially helpful to untangle complex, multidirectional social behaviors involving a large group of animals in their natural environment (Sarano, 2017, p77; Hughey *et al*., 2018). The mechanical eye of a camera can capture things that escape a researcher's attention "in the heat of the moment". When trying to understand the operation of an Inuit dogteam, I think the same could apply. More importantly, using a visual device in the qimutsik context will be more in tune with the Inuit communication style. Western knowledge systems tend to value objectivity over subjectivity, structure over improvisation, and texts over all other information vehicles. Inuit do not live in a text-based universe. In the world of Inuit qimutsik, all essential knowledge and skills are incarnated in sensory experiences; the teaching is place-based and mostly non-verbal. Seeing and doing consist of the most important information channel, while text is the most ineffectual medium (among mushers, even verbal communication remains limited).

Qimutsik is a physical experience and an emotional experience. To describe running and raising a dogteam, all Ivakkak mushers that I talked to during the race have expressed the idea of happiness and gratification – some in more poetic and elaborated language than others. Saying that musher's joy is the dominant emotion of Ivakkak might be too simplistic. Yet, "happy" and "fun" is how mushers describe their experience in English. For now, the real meaning of these Qallunaat words in Inuit's conversations, as well as their nuances in different contexts, remains an open question. Though decidedly, if the mushers were not having a great time, they would not be racing in -40 for nearly a month, nor would they return to Ivakkak year after year. But there is no lyric romanticism; everyone remains totally lucid about the physical hardship in running the qimutsik race. When things are not proceeding smoothly, and when the situation becomes too difficult to handle, many would complain openly. Bad storms and terrible snow conditions pose extremely unforgiving challenges. If not well prepared, one can also get injured and easily lose his/her life out on the land. Perhaps this is also why an elder told me that every successful Ivakkak edition is a blessing. The exposure to harsh weathers, the physical pain and the exhaustion all prepare the body and the heart to such a degree that everyone arriving at the finish

line so fully enjoy the moment. All the stress and tension are released when dogteams complete their journey.

The emotional power of Ivakkak also comes from the weight of sled dogs in Inuit's collective psyche. As we have observed, running a dogteam, although no longer essential in Inuit's daily life today, remains a core element in Inuit collective narrative and historical consciousness. Dogteams still is one of the fundamental identity markers to many Inuit villagers. To many elders, the drastic disappearance of sled dogs and decades of their absence were traumatic and deeply painful. To witness new generations of Inuit dogteams competing in annual events brings not only joy and fun, but also hope. Through Ivakkak, broken heart can be healed. Elders can once again recall their proudest and happiest moments. The sense of trust, pride, but also admiration, marvel, and empathy that many Inuit hold towards the dogteams are palpable in every public Ivakkak gathering.

Parting thoughts

On a closing note, the Inuit communities have been under constant pressure from government agents and non-Inuit researchers over the past half-century. At present, it will not be an exaggeration to say that many Inuit have developed research-fatigue, if not anthropologist-phobia. Locals' prejudices can block meaningful collaboration and annihilate research ideas at their embryonic stage. This is unfortunate, but as a by-product of the traumatizing colonial history, inevitable. One key lesson that I learned from working with Ivakkak staff is that when trying to understand local events or local practices, sit-down interviews are not the most appropriate way to gather information. Questions can quickly become irritating. The data are best acquired in action – by participating directly in local activities and, above all, by proving oneself useful to the local event organizers. Resources are scarce to begin with; a high-maintenance external researcher would not be desirable from the local perspective. If an outsider can bring concrete contributions that immediately benefit the locals, he/she would have a better chance to be accepted by the locals, and thus to conduct fruitful fieldwork.

Appendix 1. List of 2020 Ivakkak dogs' names

Kangiqsujuaq team

Puigu, Qinirq, Mauju, Boy, Fab, Tuni, Pualuk, Quppak, Kinnapalik, Pumpa, Qaku, Buzz

Tasiujaq team

Atsak, Tarsak, Palluk, Amaruk, Black 1, Napuk, Qajuttak, Sakkuk, Tiguak, Qirniq, Black 2, Angutik

Kangiqsujuaq team

Atsak, Batman, Kajuq, Qimmiq, Minion, Panda, Amaguq, Beast Bog, Nanuq, Yada, Penguin, Taqralik

Kuujjuaq team

Yapper, Taqak, Suru, Batman, Amaruk, Shawn, Kajuk, Kamik, Puppi, Nasalik, Dusty, Qiqnik

Puvirnituq team 1

Kajuk, Atsak, Kamilik, Sinaak, Kaatjik, Kamilika, Qirnik, Kajuqik, Sirmik, Sirpik, Tarraq, Qungiarillik

Puvirnituq team 2

Nasalik, Kamilik, Tahuliapik, Tahulialuk, Nukialuk, Kutsuk, Kallaluk, Ululik, Tahulik, hakulik, Himu, Ululik 2

Puvirnituq team 3

Takati, Napua, Taqu, Kakinik, Tarsalk, Alaqi, Nauk, Kadjilik, Talirpik, Sinarnalik

Appendix 2. Video references (accessible online)

A look back - 20 years since the first Ivakkak race
February 2021
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KQRw8Fx9x70

Ivakkak 2019 - The time in Chisasibi
April 2019
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H2Qa7txM15w

Ivakkak Behind the Scenes
October 2020
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B4MtQYsXJ6o

Puvirnituq - Qimutsiq (Dog Sledding)
July 2018
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zDnR41wd4R0

Return of the Qimutsiit
2008
https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=2429787337308678

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