

# Far Off Metal River

## Inuit Lands, Settler Stories, and the Making of the Contemporary Arctic

EMILIE CAMERON



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The Indians who are now appointed your guides, are to conduct you ... to a river represented by the Indians to abound with copper ore, animals of the furr kind, &c ... The river, which is called by the Northern Indians Neetha-san-san-dazey, or the Far Off Metal River, you are, if possible, to trace to the mouth ... and observe what mines are near the river, what water there is at the river's mouth, how far the woods are from the sea-side, the course of the river, the nature of the soil, and the productions of it ... If the said river is likely to be of any utility, take possession of it on behalf of the Hudson's Bay Company.

— The Hudson's Bay Company's instructions  
to Samuel Hearne, 1769

# Contents

List of Illustrations / ix

Hivuniqhuut, Preface / xi

A Note on Language and Spelling / xvii

Acknowledgments / xix

1 Summer Stories / 3

2 Ordering Violence / 41

3 To Mourn / 63

4 Copper Stories / 84

5 Resistance Stories / 111

6 Toward an Emerging Past / 145

7 Ptarmigan Stories / 169

Notes / 193

Glossary / 233

Bibliography / 235

Index / 245  
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## 4

# Copper Stories

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Place making ... relies on the hard work of nature making. This is not just because nature, in its biophysicality, is never in stasis, although it does have something to do with the way this forces a constant reinvestment and reinvention of labor, debate, and knowledge. Nature, also, becomes a vibrant actor in the contemporary politics of place making and the ongoing struggle to mark and claim ... As individuals travel with their stories, narrating this placed nature and its associated histories, so these proliferations spread, becoming mobilized simultaneously in different contexts and with disparate meanings.

— Hugh Raffles, “Local Theory”

The living person and the land are actually tied up together, because without one the other doesn't survive and vice versa.

— Aupilaarjuk, in John R. Bennett and Susan Rowley, *Uqalurait*

We have a lot of activity around Kugluktuk. Seems like our community doesn't profit from the mines. We need old folks home and community infrastructure. We need to start seeing some benefits.

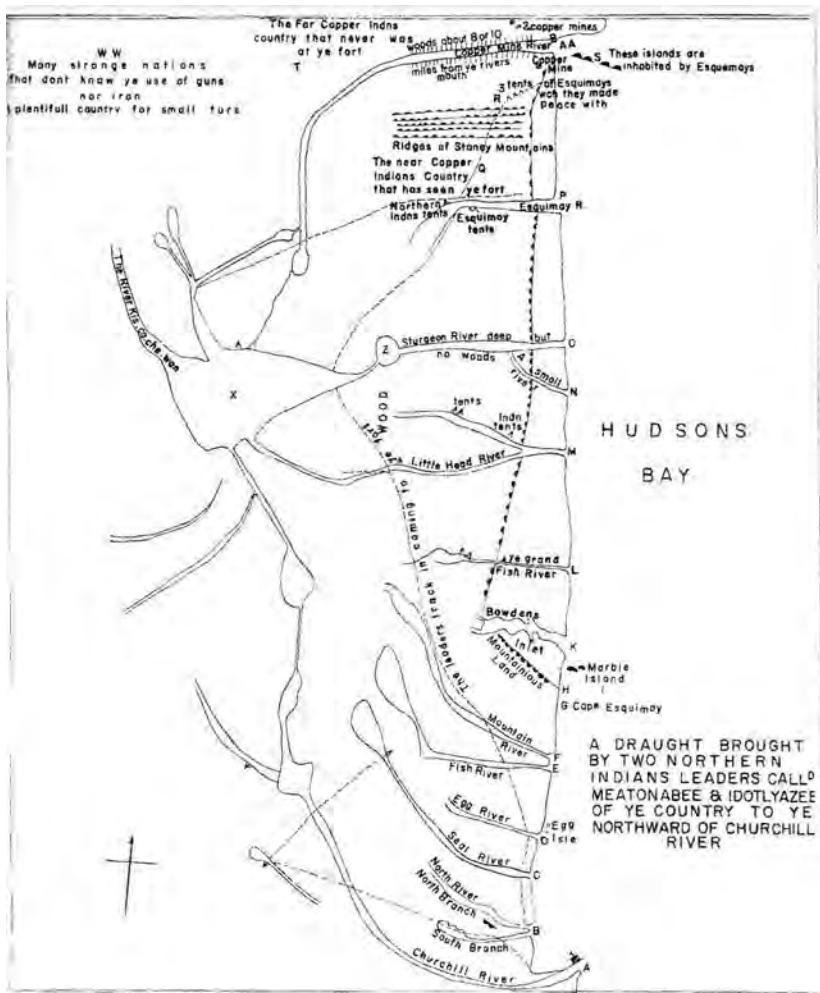
— Colin Adjun, NTI Lands Policy Advisory Committee meeting,  
Kugluktuk, May 2007

Mining is big business in Nunavut today. Every summer, airplanes and helicopters filled with mineral survey teams zoom in and out of the hamlet of Kugluktuk. Most families have someone who works in the mines south of town, and a significant proportion of Nunavut is

either under claim, exploration, or active extraction. By 2017, as many as eight mines are expected to open in the Kitikmeot region, several of which will extract copper. As Millie Kuliktana, former director of the Tahiuqtuit Society and Kitikmeot School Operations, made clear to me, moreover, the current scale of mineral development in Nunavut may be unprecedented, but outside interest in the region's mineral resources is by no means a recent phenomenon. When asked about the significance of the Bloody Falls massacre in local history, Kuliktana replied that Hearne was the first of a long line of outsiders who have exploited and colonized her people and the people's land. "It's the monster of economy that made this happen," she said. "It was the first act of colonization."<sup>1</sup>

This is not generally how Bloody Falls is storied outside of Kugluktuk. In the South, it is primarily known as the location of a savage act of violence committed by a barbarous tribe of "Indians." It is an event narrated by a supposedly neutral, civilized, and horrified European witness, Samuel Hearne, who looks on as the poor, innocent "Esquimaux" are ruthlessly murdered by their "Indian" attackers. Hearne goes to great lengths to establish not only his neutrality but also his efforts to prevent the killings, and in so doing he sidesteps the possibility that he might have been in some way responsible for the event. Kuliktana, on the other hand, along with a number of other Kugluktukmiut, considers Hearne both personally responsible for the massacre (because he led the Dene into Inuit territory and failed to control their behaviour) and representative of a broader history of economic exploitation and colonialism in the North.

Kuliktana's critique of Hearne is based on the fact that he was in her people's territory only because he was looking for copper. Although Hearne's journey is memorialized outside of Kugluktuk as an act of immense physical endurance (not so much as an economic venture), and his book is known primarily for its eyewitness account of the massacre, Kuliktana rightly pinpoints European interest in copper as the principal motive for his journey. Throughout the 1760s, the HBC had heard reports from Dene trappers and traders of a "Far Off Metal River" where lumps of native copper were so abundant as to ballast a ship. Facing mounting pressure to make better use of its economic monopoly and bolstered by a 1767 map produced by Dënesǖliné leaders Matonabbee and Idotliaze, the HBC dispatched Hearne to locate and determine the richness of this potential "Copper-mine."



*A Redrawing of a Copy by Moses Norton of the Deer-Skin Map Brought to Churchill by the Northern Indian "Captains," Mattonabee and Idotlyaze, in 1767.* The "A" at the base of the map indicates Prince of Wales Fort, and "B," just above it, the present-day location of Kugluktuk, where the Coppermine River meets the Arctic Ocean. Bloody Falls (not yet named as such) is just upstream. Note the location of "copper mines" on both sides of the river, as well as "3 tents of Esquimays wch they made peace with," in itself calling into question claims that Dene and Inuit were perennially hostile toward each other. The lake in the centre of the map, "X," is Great Slave, and the Sturgeon River was later named the Back River. Although the map does not follow European cartographic conventions, it is a tremendously accurate representation of a vast stretch of land. Reproduced with permission from the Manitoba Heritage Society and the Hudson's Bay Company Archives.

Hearne's mission, as we know, was largely a failure. It was his alleged witness of a massacre at Bloody Falls the day before his fruitless search for copper that recuperated what would otherwise have been a profoundly anti-climactic travel narrative. But his failure to locate an economically viable copper deposit was nevertheless productive: his would be the first of innumerable subsequent attempts to enrol Kitikmeot copper into international networks of extraction and trade, and his narrative ordered relations with copper in significant ways. Indeed, although it is not generally memorialized as such, Hearne's account of the Bloody Falls massacre, I suggest here, is a *copper story*; it emerged from and ordered particular relations with copper.

This chapter traces the making of copper as a particular kind of nature – one most appropriately extracted from the land and converted into capital – and the ways in which the Bloody Falls massacre story has participated in this ordering of relations. Although the production of copper as an industrial resource represents, at first glance, its ultimate abstraction and removal from the sets of relations animating its traditional importance to “Copper Inuit,” such an assessment belies both the dense and profoundly material relations underpinning Inuit relations with contemporary resource extraction in the region, as well as the complex historical geographies of producing Inuit as inherently and exclusively “traditional” users of this metal. In fact, the production and naturalization of Inuit as a traditional copper culture coincided with the acceleration of industrial mining in the region, and these developments, I argue, are intimately related. What follows, then, is a series of “copper stories” that not only offer a different reading of the massacre itself but also highlight the ongoing importance of copper in constituting and undermining life in the region.

Key to the drama of Hearne's massacre story is the supposed senselessness of the Dene attack and their lack of a rational motive. The Dene are described as caught up in a kind of collective, bloodthirsty trance, intent on murder and torture; no arguments can dissuade them, and they delight in the suffering of their victims. If one reads the narrative closely, however, and particularly in comparison with transcriptions of Hearne's unpublished travel notes, it becomes clear that Hearne was not the only member of the exploration party with an intense interest in copper. Immediately after the massacre, the Dene raided the Inuit tents “of all the Copper Work and any other trifling things they thought worthwhile to take.” Hearne made extensive notes on the importance of copper in local trading economies, remarking on the annual journey undertaken by the Northern Indians to

the region in search of copper to “shoe their arrows and make other necessary tools such as hatchets, Ice Chizzels, etc.”<sup>2</sup> He recorded a list of trading ratios for copper tools and noted that the Indians of the region valued copper almost as much as iron, employing it for both personal use and trade. More than once, Hearne recorded the plundering of neighbouring groups, depicting such events as economically motivated theft intended to amass goods sufficient to trade for copper and iron tools, not as the acts of an inherently uncivilized people. In fact, his field journal is littered with references to his “surprise” at the civility of his companions and his admiration for their character traits. Clearly, the very metal Hearne had hoped to locate and claim for the British Crown was already circulating in a regional economy, embroiled in acts of war and trade throughout the Central Arctic and Subarctic. It would seem that the Bloody Falls massacre was motivated as much by copper as the “violent tendencies” attributed to Dënesüłiné and T’satsqot’ine men.<sup>3</sup>

Until very recently, however, explorers, missionaries, and scholars have persisted in the racialized belief that copper use was not centrally important to the Indigenous peoples of the Arctic and Subarctic, believing instead that their interest in metals emerged with the European introduction of iron. Recent research challenges this long-standing belief and suggests that throughout Arctic Canada metal was in use long before even indirect contact with Europeans.<sup>4</sup> The Thule, who preceded Inuit in the region, are known to have relied on metals traded over hundreds and even thousands of kilometres, and members of the Franklin expedition made extensive notes about Dene copper-prospecting practices, including the detailed topographical and geological information used by the Dene to locate sources of the metal.<sup>5</sup> Notably, according to John Richardson, who was responsible for the expedition’s “geognostical [geological]” findings, Dene had ceased, by 1821, to make their annual journey northward in search of copper. “The establishment of trading posts near their hunting grounds,” he suggested, had enabled them “to obtain a supply of ice-chisels and other instruments of iron,” and thus they no longer needed to make “weapons and utensils” with copper.<sup>6</sup>

Stories of the discovery of metals, particularly copper, have been recorded by Arctic explorers and missionaries for the last two centuries. John Franklin recorded a story told by Rabbit’s Head, a Dene member of the Franklin expedition, regarding the origin of copper in their lands. “In the earliest ages of the world,” Rabbit’s Head allegedly recounted, a party of Inuit men came over to Dene lands “and stole a woman from their tribe, whom they carried to [their] distant country and kept in a

state of slavery.” She eventually escaped and, after many days of wandering, was assisted by a wolf in crossing the ocean that separated Inuit and Dene lands. She survived for a winter by killing some caribou and building herself a house “after the manner she had learned from the Esquimaux.” When spring came,

she emerged from her subterraneous dwelling … [and] was astonished by observing a luminous glittering appearance on a distant hill, which she knew was not produced by the reflection of the sun, and being at a loss to assign any other cause for it, she resolved on going up to the shining object, and then found the hill was entirely composed of metal.

The woman broke off several pieces, and “perceiving that it yielded so readily to her beating, it occurred to her this copper (for that was the metal), would be very serviceable to her countrymen, if she could find them again.” She eventually found them, “and the young men, elated with the account she had given of the hill, made her instantly return with them; which she was enabled to do, having taken the precaution of putting up marks to indicate the path.” Here, the story took a turn that Franklin determined to be a “melancholy catastrophe”:

These youths, overcome by excess of joy, gave loose to their unrestrained passions, and offered the grossest insults to their kind benefactress. She powerfully resisted them for some time, and when her strength was failing, she fled to the point of the mountain, as the only place of security. Immediately she had gained the summit, the earth opened, and ingulphed both herself and the mountain, to the utter dismay of the men, who were not more astonished at its sudden disappearance, than sorrowful for this just punishment of their wickedness. Ever since this event, the copper has only been found in small detached pieces on the surface of the earth.<sup>7</sup>

Missionary Émile Petitot recorded a similar story from Dënesüłiné storytellers in the 1880s.<sup>8</sup>

Although surely reworked in the idiom of nineteenth-century explorers and missionaries, these stories allude to both a pre-contact copper economy in the region and indicate that copper was “good to think with” in Dene oral traditions; copper and other stories helped convey a broader legal and moral framework within which the Dene operated.<sup>9</sup> Copper remains good to think with. Rachel Qitsualik’s recent story “Skraeling” imagines a meeting of Inuit, Tuniit, and Vikings long before the British or French were

even aware of the Arctic, from the perspective of Kannujaq (Inuktitut for copper or metal), an Inuk who stumbles on a Tuniq community in crisis. The community has been experiencing attacks from Siarailli (Skraelings), as well as manipulation by one of its own members, who uses a stash of treasures gleaned from the invaders to secure his power. His collection includes remarkable knives, one that shines “like a fish belly, handle decorated with yellow-hued *kannujaq*” and others that, though rusty, make Kannujaq’s heart “beat faster … This was not *kannujaq* but something far better.” Qitsualik refuses to tease out the meaning of the story for those who are not familiar with Inuit histories, practices, values, and lands; to do so, she states, would be to offer the “cognitive equivalent of living on marshmallows.” But the story’s nuanced exploration of the relations made possible by copper – the dangers of hoarding, the survival made possible by carefully crafted tools, the “trepidation, uncertainty, and outright horror that early peoples knew” – exposes the folly and insult of imagining that northern Indigenous peoples came to value metals only through contact with Europeans.<sup>10</sup>

Copper was an important part of the regional economies and imaginative geographies of the Central Arctic and Subarctic long before Qablunaaq involvement in the area, but it was also implicated in longer and larger networks of technology, labour, and trade. Copper was mined across the Americas and in Britain from pre-industrial times to the early industrial era.<sup>11</sup> The British copper-mining industry expanded rapidly in the mid-eighteenth century due to an influx of capital and technological expertise from Europe, and by the time Hearne left on his mission, Britain had become one of the world’s leading producers.<sup>12</sup> In Britain – not unlike in the Arctic – copper was used primarily for household utensils such as pots, pans, and pewter mugs, as well as in roofing, guttering, piping, and cisterns. But unlike the relatively circumscribed networks of copper extraction, manufacture, and trade in the Arctic at the time of Hearne’s journey, copper in Britain, influenced by international capital and imperial acquisitions, moved through more widely dispersed and longer networks of mines, smelters, manufacturers, distributors, and consumers. What had once been a very local industry in Britain was extending into other places and involving more and more things. Hearne’s journey must be understood in relation to this expansion. His mission was to connect Arctic copper with industrial and imperial networks extending outside the region; doing so would ultimately require not only the discovery of sufficient deposits but also the displacement of Indigenous uses and claims to the resource. Consider the following observation, recounted shortly after his futile search for copper:

The Indians imagine that every bit of copper they find resembles some object in nature; but by what I saw of the large piece, and some smaller ones which were found by my companions, it requires a great share of invention to make this out. I found that different people had different ideas on the subject, for the large piece of copper above mentioned had not been found long before it had twenty different names. One saying that it resembled this animal, and another that it represented a particular part of another; at last it was generally allowed to resemble an Alpine hare couchant: for my part I must confess that I could not see it had the least resemblance to any thing to which they compared it. It would be endless to enumerate the different parts of a deer, and other animals, which the Indians say the best pieces of copper resemble: it may therefore be sufficient to say, that the largest pieces, with the fewest branches and the least dross, are the best for their use; as by the help of fire, and two stones, they can beat it out to any shape they wish.<sup>13</sup>

Hearne intended this passage as a curiosity for the reader and used it to underscore his own reliability and precision as an observer. But it can be read in quite another way: it also exemplifies the different narrative geographies within which eighteenth-century copper circulated. By storying the copper as deer, the Dene made connections between the piece of metal in their hands and a diverse network of relations that enabled them to hunt, eat, and imagine their world. Their co-existence with copper enrolled a particular network of things. Hearne, on the other hand, was more interested in connecting copper to international networks of trade and manufacture, to his own reputation as an explorer, and to the esteem and wealth that would surely follow. Indeed, Kugluktukmiut consistently criticize him for “wanting to make a name for himself,” and in a sense their indictment gestures toward the very different narrative geography within which Hearne operated, even as these geographies overlapped in 1771.<sup>14</sup>

Exploration for copper deposits in the Coppermine River region continued after Hearne’s time. Although the Hudson’s Bay Company abandoned the venture, subsequent British, American, and Canadian expeditions were inspired by Hearne’s effort and continued the project of identifying and mapping copper resources in the Far North. The Franklin expedition report included an appendix on “geognostical” findings, penned with “economic importance” in mind and emphasizing copper formations.<sup>15</sup> Geologists were dispatched by various government and private organizations throughout the nineteenth century, including a venture by

well-known geologist J.B. Tyrrell, sponsored in 1893 by the Geological Survey of Canada, a trip that was widely publicized and that amplified expectations of “great mineral wealth” in the barrenlands, particularly in the form of copper. Tyrrell (who went on to edit the 1911 version of Hearne’s *Journey*) was quoted in an imperial report on world copper reserves that anticipated the Canadian Arctic and Subarctic would yield “as much copper as is now mined in Northern Michigan,” thus reviving imperial dreams of copper riches in the region.<sup>16</sup>

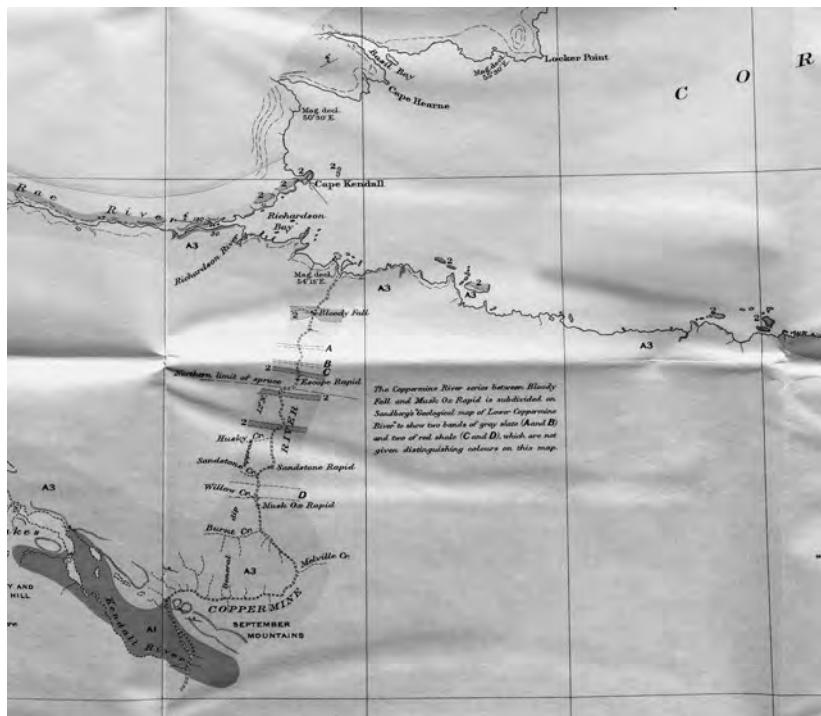
In the summer of 1900, geologists Charles Camsell and James Mackintosh Bell explored the Great Bear Lake region in search of mineral resources and replayed Hearne’s fearsome descent into Inuit territory. “As we proceeded farther into the barren lands we saw more and more signs of Eskimo,” Camsell recorded. “These signs were rather disturbing to Johnny Sanderson, who like all the local Indians had at that time a wholesome fear of Eskimo, just as the Eskimo had a fear of the Indians.” As more and more Indians abandoned their party “for fear of meeting some Eskimo,” Camsell and Bell found themselves alone and hungry, and came upon a group of thirty or forty Inuit. “Johnny Sanderson had always told us that the Eskimo we might meet in this country would certainly be dangerous and might want to kill us,” Camsell recalled, but he and Bell decided to approach them. The Eskimo fled, abandoning a stash of caribou meat and various supplies, including “arrows tipped with native copper.” Camsell and Bell ate the meat but left two steel needles and a tin plate as a gesture of friendship. Throughout their journey back to Great Bear Lake, the men “felt certain that they would be watching us from a safe distance away and might even be looking for an opportunity to kill us. These same people actually did kill the next two visitors to this locality, Fathers LeRoux and Rouviere, by sticking a knife into them.” In the end, Camsell and Bell survived and saw no further signs of Inuit. Three decades later, however, Camsell would learn from fur-trapper D’Arcy Arden that the Inuit party had indeed followed them all the way back to Great Bear Lake:

The experience of August, 1900 was gradually becoming little more than an interesting memory until actively revived in August, 1936, by a conversation with D’Arcy Arden during a brief visit that I made to Great Bear Lake. Some years after my visit to that country Arden had gone on a fur-trading expedition to the same region, and in the course of his operations established friendly relations with the Eskimo of the Coppermine River ... When in time he was able to converse with them, they told him the story

of the visit of two white men to their camp some years previous – possibly the first many of them had ever seen. They told Arden that on catching sight of us they first took us to be Indians, but when they found that we did not run away at the sight of them, they came to the conclusion that we must belong to the same race of people who had visited the country many years ago of which their fathers had told them ... They were naturally suspicious of all strangers, for the locality was not far from Bloody Falls on the Coppermine River where Samuel Hearne's party of Chipewyan Indians had, in 1772 [sic], slaughtered a band of Eskimo men, women, and children in their sleep, and no doubt the story of this massacre had been handed down to these people from one generation to another. They told Arden of having watched us from behind some rocks as we ate our meal in their camp. They were determined to kill us if it could be done without risking their own lives; but as their only weapons were arrows and broad, foot-long knives beaten out of native copper found in the neighboring hills, this could not be done without coming to close quarters. When we left their camp in the evening some of the men followed us ... looking for an opportunity to stick a knife into us. The chance did not come ... In the mean time our needles had been found in the camp, and from that time on our lives were safe ... Human life has never been held in very high regard by these Eskimo, and killings were perpetuated sometimes for very trivial reasons. A few years after the visit of Bell and myself to this locality, two Roman Catholic missionaries were killed in almost the same locality, and possibly the murderers of these two priests may have been the same men who watched for an opportunity to murder us also. Death by the thrust of a blunt, copper knife is not one of the pleasantest things to contemplate, and it makes one shiver even after a lapse of fifty years to think what might have been the result if we had not left those two needles behind us in the Eskimo camp.<sup>17</sup>

This passage not only emphasizes the importance of story in constituting both Inuit and Qablunaat knowledges; it also traces the significance of copper in constituting and undermining life in the region. Camsell and Bell lived to tell their own copper stories in part because “sticking a knife” into them would have required a dangerous proximity, and according to their account, copper knives were the only weapons the Inuit party had. The fact that, a few decades later, Inuit possessed rifles and thus “were no longer a Stone Age people” amplifies the drama of Camsell’s recollection, transformed from “little more than an interesting memory” to a moment of historical significance.<sup>18</sup>

Inuit, Dene, and Qablunaaq copper stories would increasingly converge throughout the first decades of the twentieth century. The use of copper tools among Inuinnait had virtually disappeared by the early twentieth century as iron and other metals became more readily available. Ironically, it was at this time that anthropologists first visited the area and assigned the name “Copper Inuit” to the people living in the vicinity of Coronation Gulf, in reference to their historic use of copper tools. While Diamond Jenness, anthropologist with the Canadian Arctic Expedition, catalogued Copper Inuit language and culture in 1915 and 1916, expedition geologist J.J. O’Neill searched for copper deposits in the Coppermine River and Bathurst Inlet region. In addition to producing a detailed map of the deposits, both O’Neill and Jenness relayed stories of copper trade, theft, and usage, including accounts of copper-related trade and conflict with Dene.<sup>19</sup>



*Detail of Arctic Coast of Canada between Darnley Bay and Bathurst Inlet, District of Mackenzie, Northwest Territories*, prepared by J.J. O'Neill. The shaded “A3” sections indicate areas of potential copper deposits. *Canadian Arctic Expedition and the Department of Mines*, 1924.

But these “historical” stories, which dealt with post-contact events, were merely anecdotes to the expedition members. Jenness was primarily interested in “traditional” Copper Inuit stories, and it was through his work that they came to be cordoned off from other forms of knowledge, along with the economies that underpinned their telling.<sup>20</sup> Jenness’s field diary reveals some of the exchanges involved in extracting stories from his informants. In January 1916, when Uloqsaq proved reluctant to tell him stories, Jenness

told him that he could not expect me to treat him very liberally if he did not tell me any stories. He said there was someone always hanging about the tent and he was afraid to tell. However, he came over late in the evening and told us a few shamanistic stories. I asked him whether he would care to have Ikpuk present, and he said no, Ikpuk would be angry with him.<sup>21</sup>

Uloqsaq, who went on to become one of Jenness’s primary informants, was soon coming to Jenness’s tent “each evening to tell me stories,” under the arrangement that he would “have his .44 rifle changed to a .30–30 if I am satisfied with him.” Satisfaction came to be contingent on whether Uloqsaq would tell decisively contemporary stories, however. On 17 January 1916, after a rifle was stolen from the camp, Jenness made clear to Uloqsaq that any information he might have regarding its whereabouts would be rewarded. Two days later, “the rifle was discovered – by Uloksak.” Later, Royal North-West Mounted Police inspectors used intelligence gleaned by Jenness to locate Uluksuk and Sinisiak, who had allegedly murdered two Catholic priests in 1913, though Jenness made clear his wish “to have my name kept out of the case altogether.” His request was granted, and “the Corporal in stating his case for the prosecution made no mention of my part in acquiring evidence and the property of the murdered men.” Jenness went on to write a “document containing information concerning the Copper Eskimos for the benefit of the Police Department in their future dealings with the natives.” Clearly, his ability to “worm out a little information” from the people with whom he lived for so many years facilitated more than merely anthropological goals.<sup>22</sup> The intimate, long-term, power-laden relations Jenness had developed with Inuit to extract traditional stories from them also enabled him to produce authoritative information that could be used in the extension and imposition of Qablunaaq legal and judicial structures. It is no surprise that missionaries and anthropologists were so heavily consulted in efforts to impose the “rule of law” in the Arctic.



*“Copper Nugget Weighing about 40 Pounds, Found in Hills on West Side of Coppermine River between Bloody Fall and Dismal Lake, Taken to Coast by Mupfa ...” Photo by Rudolph Martin Anderson for the Canadian Arctic Expedition, 12 May 1916, Canadian Museum of History, 38798.*

Indeed, the production of knowledge about Copper Inuit in the first decades of the twentieth century was informed by a particularly colonial interweaving of anthropological, economic, legal, and scientific interests.<sup>23</sup> As Vilhjalmur Stefansson and Diamond Jenness published the first detailed anthropological studies of Copper Inuit culture, traders, prospectors, and missionaries arrived in the region.<sup>24</sup> Archaeologist Donald Cadzow travelled throughout the Northwest Territories between 1917 and 1919 and produced a leaflet describing the various copper artifacts that he collected. The leaflet presents Inuit copper tool use as a kind of primitive iteration of more “civilized” natural resource economies, which were inaugurated by the “discovery” of copper for Europeans by Samuel Hearne. Indeed, Cadzow’s short history of the region begins with the Bloody Falls massacre, an event, he claims, that unfolded while Hearne was busy surveying and identifying copper reserves. After page upon page of photos and descriptions of copper artifacts, the report closes with the following comment:

The Copper Eskimo are at present rapidly becoming semi-civilized. The Hudson’s Bay Company has opened a trading-post near the mouth of the

Coppermine river, and the Northern Trading Company operates a trading schooner along the shores of Coronation gulf. Within a few years the utilization of native copper by these Eskimo for making weapons and utensils will have ceased, the white man's handy and practical materials having taken its place.<sup>25</sup>

Copper tools are made to make sense, in this publication, by situating them in a historical progression from savagery to “semi” civility, a progression that involves a shift from making copper snow knives and *uluit* (knives with broad, rounded blades used for skinning and cutting) toward mapping and mining copper as a capitalist resource.

Indeed, by the 1930s, as stories of a traditional copper culture proliferated in the South, airplanes had arrived in the North, revolutionizing mineral survey practices and enabling aerial identification of copper reserves.<sup>26</sup> In the early 1960s, Echo Bay Mines began to mine silver and copper near the headwaters of the Coppermine River, and with a few lulls, mineral exploration has only intensified since then. In the late 1950s, as miners and prospectors scoured the region for promising deposits, missionary-anthropologist Maurice Métayer recorded a series of stories in Coppermine (Kugluktuk) that included “Texte 80,” told by James Qoerhuk, regarding a group of seal hunters that suddenly became stranded on an ice floe. The full story was recorded in Inuinnaqtun and summarized by Métayer for English readers, leading to a distinctive interpretation of its meaning and particularly its revelations about Inuit relations with copper. The English summary is worth quoting in its entirety:

It probably happened before I was born. A group of seal hunters were out on the ice when it broke loose from the shore and a thick vapor filled the sky. Ulukhaq realized the danger they were in and cried: “The ice is broken.” They started running towards the shore but it was too late: they were already drifting westward along with the ice. They built a snow house the following day, by the time the ice had stopped drifting, Nualiak urged them to try again to reach the land. However, they did not succeed and had to come back to their igloo where they remained for a good part of the winter. They were lucky enough to have among them real shamans who saved them from disaster by preventing the ice they were on to be crushed by an iceberg and by performing the rites that would bring them a good wind. One by one they let their knives sink in the water and offered them to the spirit of the sea. The last knife to be offered was a weapon made of solid raw copper; it floated a while before

sinking. Qorvik also took a small block of ice and threw it towards the land. At the same time he asked the spirits to return them home, safe and sound. A short while afterwards the wind changed direction and brought them back home. The men leapt from an ice block to another finally making their way back to the shore. They reached it by the time darkness was falling. They yelled with joy, ate snow, cried, laughed, and walked home where they found their wives. Some of them, thinking that they were dead, had taken other husbands. Qinglorqana felt for a long time as though the roll of the ocean was still in his body, waking him up during the night.<sup>27</sup>

The elements of the story that Métayer chose to emphasize in this abridged translation are revealing. The copper “weapon” (which was more than likely a snow knife used to build igloos, the loss of which was particularly difficult for Qinglorqana because the knife *audlartijjutiplu*, or “enabled him to travel”) is understood by Métayer to be more valuable than the other knives, and its sacrifice is a central element of the summary. Although Qinglorqana laments its loss in the longer Inuinnaqtun version, and it is, indeed, considered the most valuable tool in their possession, he agrees to offer it because “ajornarhingman utilimaermik … pingneramegoq audlartijun … kivijaugame utqutilertainnarqaingoq kinranun kingunranun” (because there is no more hope, and they are not returning … because it is beautiful and it was used for travelling … [and then] because they let it sink, it brought them behind, to the land left behind).<sup>28</sup> The knife, in the Inuinnaqtun version, has agency; it is the knife that brings them home, not a sea god, as in Métayer’s understanding of “sacrifice” to the “spirit of the sea.” Furthermore, the fact that the knife leads them home is noted but not dwelled upon in Qoerhuk’s account. The bulk of the story is devoted to extended descriptions of snow and ice conditions, to the subtleties of decisions about how to travel and under what conditions, and to the painful separation and complications of reunion with their wives.

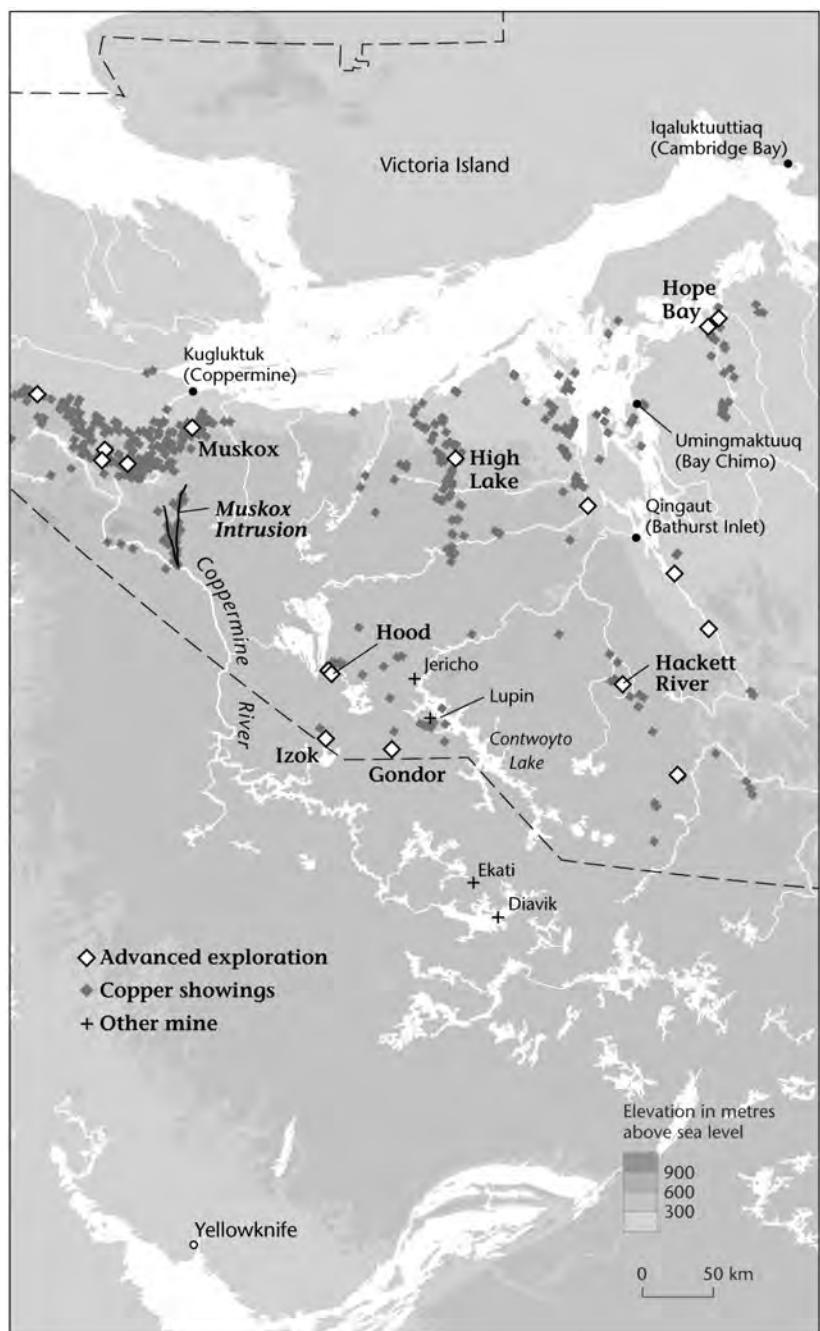
“Texte 80” is thus as revealing of Qablunaaq interests as it is of Copper Inuit oral traditions. As a story told in Inuinnaqtun to a Qablunaaq missionary in the late 1950s, recorded on tape, transcribed, translated into French and subsequently into a short English summary, this text has undergone multiple twists and translations. It is a story that draws lines between the spiritual and the real, and places copper in an abstracted material hierarchy in which a copper knife is always more valuable than an iron or other tool, rather than conceptualizing copper’s value relationally and contextually. In Qoerhuk’s version, the knife’s value is relational; he suggests that Qinglorqana drops it into the sea because its value as a

survival tool has shifted. The men no longer need it as an igloo-building survival tool – they need to get off the ice floe – and the copper knife can lead them home from under the sea. By contrast, Métayer implies that the absolute value of copper knives makes Qinglorqana’s “offering” the ultimate sacrifice and appeasement of the spirits of the sea.

Métayer’s abridged version thus produces a particular relationship between Inuit and copper in which copper is an inert natural resource whose value derives from its relative scarcity and its material properties, thereby rendering the metal object a particularly compelling sacrifice to external spirits that exert control over the fate of Inuit. The story conveys an essentially Qablunaaq resource model of copper with a slightly Christianized pan-Indigenous spiritual realm layered upon it, a reading that should come as no surprise given the active mineral surveying taking place in Coppermine at the time, and a reading that works to naturalize industrial resource extraction in the region as a more sophisticated iteration of a traditional copper culture. To story Inuit relations with copper as more primitive iterations of industrial or modern relations, and to imply that Inuit, too, relate to copper in terms of its absolute, hierarchical, exchange value, was both inaccurate and ideological. This narrative strategy remains persistent and productive, however, not least in corporate histories of mining in the Arctic. As a recent brochure produced by multinational mining conglomerate Rio Tinto begins, “For centuries, people of the North have used the resources wisely ... Diavik is continuing this tradition.”<sup>29</sup>

Prior to the 1990s, mining in the Coppermine River watershed was limited to the Lupin mine, on the northwest arm of Contwoyto Lake. In sporadic production since the early 1980s, it exploited a deposit, primarily of gold, that had been located in 1960. But the discovery of diamonds in the 1990s prompted the opening of three diamond mines in the watershed (Diavik, Ekati, and Jericho), and a network of diamond, copper, gold, nickel, and other base metal mines is proposed to open during the next several years.

Although some might wish to imagine that the “Copper Inuit” resist this shift in their ancestral relationship to copper, this wish speaks more to Southern imaginative geographies of the Arctic than to the views of Kugluktukmiut. As wary as some community members are about the impact of mining on the land, very few entirely oppose mineral development in the region. Mining offers the possibility of a viable economy in the North, if only for a short period of time and for a segment of the population, and people in Kugluktuk are gravely concerned about the future of their young



people. Kugluktukmiut will be hired to build the ice roads and port facility necessary to service the proposed mine at High Lake, 175 kilometres south-east of town, and they will drive the trucks carrying copper-rich ore to the sea. Ships destined for Europe will indeed be ballasted with Arctic copper within the next decade, in a sense over two centuries late.

Kugluktukmiut have been active participants in the northern mining industry for decades in fact. Some, like “the famous Inuk prospector” Noel Avadluk, made a living as grubstakers in the 1960s and were celebrated as stand-out examples of Inuit modernization.<sup>30</sup> As bureaucrat E.A. Schiller wrote in 1965, Avadluk’s success was attributable to his “education” (which “enabled him to speak and write English well”) and to his blend of traditional land skills and self-taught geological expertise:

Noel has acquired many of the exploration talents of the modern prospector. He uses aerial photographs and geological and topographical maps. Once a mineral showing is found he investigates it with a plugger to drill a shallow hole and blast the rock with dynamite. If the showing looks attractive he will stake claims to get ownership of the minerals found. Using geology texts, Noel has acquainted himself with geological principles and his knowledge of mineralogy is adequate enough to identify the important sulphide minerals.<sup>31</sup>



Noel Avadluk playing cards with unidentified man, c. 1950s. NWT Archives/Holman Photohistorical and Oral History Research Committee/N-1998-004-004  
Sample Material © 2015 UBC Press

So celebrated (by Qablunaaq administrators) was Avadluk that, during the Nunavut land claim negotiations, he was presented with a plaque in honour of the “significant discoveries near Bathurst Inlet, including the Pistol Lake gold occurrence” he had made in the 1960s, along with “his now-disabled wife, who had also been his prospecting partner.”<sup>32</sup> In conversation with mining consultant Robert McPherson, Joe Allen Evaigotailak put this celebratory gesture into perspective. McPherson recalls:

When I first mentioned Avadluk’s reputation to Joe Allen Evaigotailak [sic] ... he said “Well, he hasn’t anything to show for it!” since Avadluk was now a humble senior citizen but Avadluk had worked for wages in his day, and none of his discoveries had ever reached production ... Another Coppermine resident, a woman speaking through her son, told me that her husband was denied any benefit after telling prospectors about a mineral showing in the late 1960s. She was referring to a copper sulphide showing (now the Hood claims of Kidd Creek Mines Ltd.) at the south end of Takijuq Lake, reputed to contain nearly a million tons of ore. The showing was at the site of an Inuit outpost camp frequented by her husband. As the Hood claims were acquired by the Inuit at these negotiations [the Nunavut land claim negotiations], I decided to check in to the story late, using the mining recorder’s archives at Yellowknife. Sure enough, the ground was staked by two prospectors during the Coppermine rush of the 1960s. However, no assessment work was done, and the claims lapsed after two years. Later, Kidd Creek Mines rediscovered the mineralization when they flew an airborne electro-magnetic survey in the region. It was explored and drilled between 1974 and 1982.<sup>33</sup>

Here, Qablunaaq interests in “modernizing” Inuit relations with mineral resources are laid bare. Although Inuit were prevailed upon to aid in the identification of mineral deposits from the earliest days of exploration, they were never expected to be more than assistants or labourers, and certainly not owners.

It was experiences like these that led Kugluktukmiut to agitate, as early as the 1950s, for fair access to and control of the mineral wealth in their territory. In February 1953, alarmed at the increasing presence of prospectors in the region, the people of Kugluktuk sent a petition to the federal government, outlining their concerns and demands regarding mineral exploration and staking in their territory (see figure on page 104).<sup>34</sup> Peter Kulchyski and Frank Tester suggest that this may have been “the first time Inuit as a group in the Canadian Arctic formally petitioned the government,” and

the petition states emphatically that Inuit have rights to the copper in the region.<sup>35</sup> The petition reads,

Dear Sir,

Father Adam asked you what was our position regarding the copper deposits some of our boys have found around Coppermine.

You said that we had to follow the same laws as the whites regarding the staking and holding of the claims. We feel such a law is not right, because,

- (1) The land is ours and we never gave it or sold it away and never will.
- (2) We are one of the poorest people in the world; we have no money to buy a licence or to register a claim.
- (3) We are too ignorant to stake a claim according to the regulations.
- (4) We Eskimo feel we should be given a chance.

Therefore we send you a petition requesting that any Eskimo finding ore deposit will have the right to stake it, and hold it free of taxes, and hold it free of taxes, and that he may well sell it to any Company free of taxes whenever he wants to do so.

Although we have no leader amongst us our signatures will tell you that we agree on those points.

Hoping that we find the Government most co-operative we sign:

The Eskimos of Coppermine

This would be the beginning of a larger movement among Inuit to assert their rights to the land and resources of Nunavut, a process that gathered speed in the early 1970s, following a meeting of Inuit leaders in Coppermine that led to the creation of Inuit Tapiriyat of Canada (ITC) the following year.<sup>36</sup> ITC (later Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, or ITK) was instrumental in advancing Inuit demands for land claims and resource rights, demands that became particularly urgent through the 1970s as “a new breed of explorer [came] to search for oil, natural gas, and minerals” in the North.<sup>37</sup> The Nunavut Land Claim Agreement (NLCA) was finalized in 1993, and the territory of Nunavut was created in 1999. The NLCA outlines Inuit mineral rights (notably, Inuit retain subsurface rights over only 2 percent of the territory’s 1.9 million square kilometres, although mechanisms are in place to negotiate limited benefits from mining on non-Inuit land). It also establishes protocols for environmental assessment, land use planning, and rights of entry and access to non-Inuit lands. Regardless of whether they hope to mine on Inuit or Crown land, mining companies must go through a process of community consultation and environmental impact assessment, a process that is poorly defined and in some ways moot.<sup>38</sup> In practice, the territorial

NAME OR MARK	LOCATION	NAME OR MARK	LOCATION
M. KATIAK	Coppermine	GEORGE READ ISLAND	
D. APALIK		BOBBY REENGBERG	
+ his mark		VICTOR EKKOTAK	
Sam alojak		JOHN MUNGOOGA	
J. KULITKUMA		CHARLIE KITULGITAK ODEMI	
Gabriel batuktuk		HIS + MARK @ John Cook	
ADA NIGLAK	① Kultkuma	W TAP TO RA	
HER MARK	② WALTER BOLT	ALLEN JOSS	
WALTER BOLT		EDWARD ALGIAK ① John Cook	
ALEX TAPTOAD		HIS + MARK ② ALLEN JOSS	
Edward Angiwance		DORS MIKIGIAK	
NORRIS ATIGIKAQ		JUNEAU LANAKI	
BOG-EKALOPIALOK		DORIS KONELUK	
TEDDY NOVOLIKAK		IDA AIVIK	
GEORGE EVAGLOK		J. KALLAK.	
John Evans		Charles Kett	
JACK HIKHAIK		W.M. PIGALAK	
FRANK KOPTANA		D. KATIK	
JIMMY		W. E TOKTOK	
Malene Stoece		John Kook ① Peter Kowiyak John Kook ② Peter Kowiyak John Kook ③ Peter Kowiyak	
ROY ENOKTALIK		W. E TOKTOK	
MATTHEW		PETER K. GUNNA	
Harry Egotak		SAM TABLO	
ESAU ELGAYAK		John Kook ① Peter Kowiyak John Kook ② Peter Kowiyak John Kook ③ Peter Kowiyak	
ALIC.		ALICE KADLOD	
SAM OLIKTOAK		WILLIAM KAKOLAK	
MARK IMIRAK	① John Cook		
HIS MARK	② JIMMY		

Coppermine petition signatures. Library and Archives Canada, RG 85, vol. 41, file R-1875-2-4, Acc. 95-96/310.

and federal governments and Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated (NTI) are all tremendously supportive of mineral exploration and extraction, seeing mining as a potentially lucrative source of employment, business and investment opportunities, education and training, and infrastructure improvements in communities.<sup>39</sup> Many community members express concern that regional land use plans have yet to be implemented in the Kitikmeot region (of which Kugluktuk is a part), limiting the ability of Inuit to assess mineral development activities on a regional, comprehensive basis. These concerns have become particularly urgent as plans shift from the development of an isolated mine or two toward the building of extensive road, port, and mine infrastructure in the Bathurst Inlet area, an area of great importance to Inuinnait. As it stands, environmental and socio-economic impact studies are done on a methodologically constrained and case-by-case basis, and no studies of the cumulative effect of multiple mines have been undertaken. In spite of these concerns, however, mineral exploration and mine development remain priorities in the territory.

In effect, Kugluktukmiut are as tied to copper today as they were two or three hundred years ago, although now Kitikmeot copper is connected to networks of commodity pricing, multinational investment, federal and territorial bureaucracies, and the expansion of shipping into an increasingly “warm” Arctic. Whereas in 1771, the Dene saw caribou shapes in the native copper chunks they would fashion into hunting tools, mine development today threatens the calving and feeding grounds of these same herds of caribou, even while the revenues from mines allow some Kugluktukmiut to access the capital and equipment necessary for hunting. Teenagers who occasionally steal skidoos for a night of joyriding are intimately familiar with the copper wiring systems that allow them to cut an ignition wire and jump-start the machine. The copper mined in the region will soon find its way into the GPS units they use to navigate unfamiliar lands and into the televisions that light up their living rooms. And ironically, the same copper that contributed to generations of conflict between Inuit and Dene has recently brought them together in a reconciliation process. The rapid increase of mining in their territories has motivated them to come together and resolve their conflicts in regular visits so that they might better coordinate their involvement in proposed mineral development plans (see Chapter 6). In fact, the visits began with an apology from the Sahtú Dene for past wrongdoings, including any involvement of their ancestors in the massacre at Bloody Falls.<sup>40</sup> Stories of cooperation, trade, and collaboration between Inuit and Dene were shared by elders in a recent visit, calling into being not only a different understanding of the past but also new terms for future relations.

MAKING LIFE

CL<sub>c</sub><sup>b</sup>: < ... Δ<sup>a</sup>ρ<sup>c</sup> ΚΔΛΤΣ<sub>b</sub>ρ<sup>c</sup> Λ<sub>c</sub>τ<sub>a</sub>ε<sub>b</sub>LC  
Δ<sub>b</sub>Δ<sub>a</sub>Γ<sub>c</sub>τ<sup>a</sup>σ<sup>c</sup> ρσ<sup>a</sup><< σαΓ ΛΔΓ<sub>c</sub>J CΔL<sup>a</sup>  
Δ<sup>b</sup>ΛΔ<sup>a</sup>Γ<sub>c</sub>Δ<sub>b</sub>Δ<sup>a</sup>ρ<sup>c</sup>τ<sub>b</sub>Δ<sub>c</sub> Κσ<sup>a</sup>Δ<sup>b</sup>τ<sup>c</sup>  
η<ρΓ<sub>c</sub>τ<sup>a</sup>σ<sup>c</sup> C<sup>a</sup>ρ ηΔ<sup>a</sup>ρ<sup>c</sup> ΚσΔ<sup>b</sup> ...

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CL<sub>c</sub><sup>b</sup>: Δ ... CLΔ<sup>a</sup>Δ ΔΔΔ<sup>c</sup> L<sub>c</sub>L<sub>b</sub>CCL<sup>b</sup>< C CLΔ<sup>a</sup>Δ<sup>c</sup>  
ΔΔΔ<sup>a</sup>Δ<sup>a</sup>Δ<sup>c</sup> ΔΔΔ<sup>a</sup>Δ<sup>a</sup>Δ<sup>c</sup> ΔΔΔ<sup>a</sup>Δ<sup>a</sup>Δ<sup>c</sup> ΔΔΔ<sup>a</sup>Δ<sup>a</sup>Δ<sup>c</sup>...

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*Janet Tamalik McGrath:* Mmm [pause] I have heard about the First Nations practice that if they find a rock on the land and they like it, they are not supposed to just pick it up and put it in their pockets ever, only if they give a gift in advance like a bit of tobacco, then they are free to take it [pause]

*Aupilaarjuk: Yes [pause]*

*Tamalik: Yes ... did Inuit ever have similar rules, like in general or towards specific things of the land [pause]?*

*Aupilaarjuk: I don't know about these things but I remember that it was said, and by my father too, that if we find copper we should pay for it with a tuft of fur from a brown dog.*

*Tamalik: Really [pause]*

*Aupilaarjuk: If I am to take the red substance there from the land that it comes from, if I have happened across some and I want to keep it for myself and if I have a brown dog then I would be required to pay for it with the dog's tuft of fur. This is the only instance that I heard of this from. I am sure that this is not the only such instance. It is clear that there are many such rules. And just hearing about the First Nations reminds me of when I worked in Yellowknife with one First Nations man and he was our leader in that project. There were many things that I heard from them that were identical to what Inuit would do. But of course there were other things that differed too.*

*Tamalik: Because they lived in a way so as to care for the land [pause] their culture was formed by that [pause]*

*Aupilaarjuk: Yes [pause]*

*Tamalik: They are not like Qablunaat. It seems the western way is to consume.*

*Aupilaarjuk: Because they are operating from a western patterning that is based on acquisition of money. For us first peoples of the land, we don't reject the use of money, it's just that we never had an attachment to it. Our whole focus was on having a good life and looking after the land well.<sup>41</sup>*

Following the settlement of the Nunavut Land Claim Agreement, Inuit became “the largest freehold owners of mineral rights in Canada.” Celebrated not only as a political triumph but also as the beginning of a “new era of cooperation between the Inuit of Nunavut and mineral explorers and developers,” the settlement of subsurface title in the territory was hailed as a catalyst for both Inuit economic development and an expanded multinational mineral economy.<sup>42</sup> The settlement would seem an occasion far removed from the Bloody Falls massacre, but, in fact, the “new era” of relations between Inuit, minerals, and “explorers and

“developers” initiated by the NLCA has a much longer history. Not only was Hearne’s journey geared explicitly toward facilitating mineral extraction in the Central Arctic, but the massacre story itself was shaped by long-standing geographies of copper extraction, trade, and conflict. Hearne’s narrative staked out relations between Inuit, Dene, Qablunaat, and copper that have shaped subsequent “copper stories” and had material consequences through to the present. If stories are material ordering practices that shape not only the imaginative but also the very tangible and concrete aspects of mineral extraction, then it would seem that these copper stories might provide insights into the ways in which “storying the North” has been implicated in opening the region to imperial capital.

Celebration of the subsurface mineral rights “awarded” through the NLCA is common but disingenuous. In fact, the settlement required Inuit to formally extinguish their rights to the entirety of Nunavut, in exchange for a cash settlement and rights to 2 percent of the territory’s subsurface and 18 percent of its surface, as well as the establishment of the territory itself and its associated governance structures. It is an agreement about which many Inuit are rightly proud, but the NLCA was a conscious and strategic compromise, one that has facilitated the accumulation of capital in the North as much as it has supported Inuit interests and values. And though many Nunavummiut actively support the development of industrial mineral economies, it would be a mistake to read that support as a wholehearted endorsement of the racialized notion that Inuit must break with tradition and adopt a modern form of relation with the resources of the land. In the dialogue above, Aupilaarjuk contextualizes this for us. Inuit do not give offerings to the land in precisely the same ways as some First Nations do, he notes, but northern Indigenous peoples share a broader relational framework within which their responsibilities to the land are clear. In conversation with Tamalik, Aupilaarjuk recalls his father’s teaching that if one happens upon a piece of copper and wishes to take it, then it is important to pay for it with a dog’s fur. This is not payment in a capitalist sense, of course; the verb stem *aki-* signifies fair offering and exchange. The offering acknowledges the relations that sustain life on the land, and it points to the importance of copper in making life possible for Inuit. “Our whole focus,” Aupilaarjuk observes, “was on having a good life and looking after the land well.”

It seems to me that, for most Nunavummiut, engaging with contemporary mineral economies is not grounded in an ideological or abstract interest in opening the North to capital so much as a deeply ambivalent, hopeful effort to support life in the territory. It is about tracing very different

copper stories, stories that deepen relations with money, whether in the form of royalties, wages, taxes, or commodity markets, in the hope that money and waged work might resolve some of the suffering that marks people's lives, support access to the land, and build a sense of purpose and pride for young people. This represents a qualitative shift from the relations with money that Aupilaarjuk describes. Inuit don't reject relations with money, he suggests, but such relations have always been subordinate to relations with one another and with the land, in service of a "good life."<sup>43</sup> Jackie Price traces similar continuities and ruptures in contemporary campaigns to promote industrial resource development: "Inuit have always understood the land to be resourceful, this new campaign understands Nunavut's resourcefulness in a different way," one that "does not respect the Inuit principle of subsistence living."<sup>44</sup> Indeed, industrial mineral economies transform the resourcefulness of the land into commodities for sale elsewhere, and it is precisely by maximizing the resourcefulness of an industrial mining corridor that subsistence relations with the land are threatened. There will be no tufts of dog fur placed for every piece of copper mined at the High Lake mine, should it open, as proposed, in the next several years. But to make such observations is not to hearken to a romantic or distant past. It is not to "go back." It is, instead, to call attention to what lives on in struggles to make sense of and engage with mining today, what mining promises and what it will mean for the people, the wildlife, and the land: a struggle and a yearning to sustain life.

Indeed, the fact that the Bloody Falls massacre is associated with copper in Kugluktuk but is not told as a copper story elsewhere reveals both the persistence of Qablunaaq denial about what drives our interests in the North, and the keen awareness among Inuit about how outsiders understand the value of their lives and lands. Though much academic, government, and corporate effort has gone into sustaining a narrative of progression from tradition to modernity, in which the opening of Nunavut to industrial resource extraction represents a natural and a necessary "development," the copper stories assembled here both trouble such a narrative and point toward the interests and relations it sustains. Inuit relations with industrial mineral economies are much more complex and long-standing than such a narrative implies, and their relations with copper belie any racialized containment to the "traditional past." The copper stories told by Qitsualik, Qoerhuk, Aupilaarjuk, and by those Inuit who gather to comment on proposed developments on their lands are fundamentally about *life*; they are about how life is made and sustained through the relations and practices we foster, and those we undermine. These

relations are continually invoked at the community meetings and hearings of the Nunavut Impact Review Board, even if they fail to register as such in the bureaucratic accounting of “impacts” and “benefits.” Relations with the land have sustained life for untold generations, even as these relations have been targeted by governments, missionaries, academics, and corporations through multiple interventions into the lives of Nunavummiut.

It seems to me, then, that the question being asked of mineral development in Nunavut today is not so much whether it should be wholeheartedly celebrated because Inuit are running the corporations and institutions that endorse it, or rejected because it represents the intensification of capitalist relations in the North, but rather whether the relations that Inuit might forge with copper or other metals through the development of mines will, indeed, support and sustain life, and if so, what kind of life, for whom, and on whose terms? I think this is the question that hangs in the air when an elder speaks at length about all that worries her about the mines (the threats to caribou and fish, the pollution of waterways, the increase in alcohol consumption and suicide, the strain of rotational work and the degrading jobs available to Inuit, the decline in hunting and land skills, and the pain of diminished sharing and social cohesion) before ultimately, reluctantly, hopefully observing that jobs might provide young people with some of what they need to continue living. It is a hope and a yearning that mining corporations actively target in their campaigns and that is continually exploited in the promise of jobs. Copper has always been central to living and dying in the North; as Qoerhuk recounted to Métayer, the relations between copper, snow, ice, and Inuit were at one time integral to survival. The point is not to revive the use of copper snow knives; Inuit survive differently today. It is, instead, to ask whether the copper stories promised in contemporary mineral development will be good stories, stories that will foster life and, if so, *whose* life, and where? It is to insist, in other words, on tracing the broader relations through which life is made in and through the North today. Regardless of whether mining enables Nunavummiut to sustain “good lives” and to continue caring for their lands, connecting Arctic copper to global markets will surely sustain the lives of Qablunaat. It will buoy our stock exchanges, grow our pensions, power our homes, transmit our e-mail. We do not emphasize these relations, but they are there to be found in our most iconic northern stories.