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**“We’re Studying You”:
Dilemmas in, and Approaches to Social Studies Curriculum
About “Other” Cultures**

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Contents

• Abstract	2
• Teaching Experiences	3
• Formalizing the Questions	13
• Defining and Studying Culture	14
• Subjectivity	22
• Reflexivity	32
• Reifying Culture	38
• Constructing Self and Other	44
• Back to the Questions	59
• Summary of Questions and Answers	70
• Recommended Resources for Teachers	71
• Bibliography	75

Abstract

Studies of “other” cultures are a major part of many elementary school programs. This paper applies some of the recent thinking in anthropology to my own praxis as a teacher. From this standpoint, I ask a number of questions about the theory and practice of “studying” groups of people. How are representations of people created and framed for children? How do children read and interpret these representations? What are different ways that social studies materials construct versions of people? What kind of representations do I want to use in my teaching and how do I want to use them?

I attempt to provide a theoretical rationale for social studies curriculum that includes source material in which the subjects of study represent themselves, and/or those in which the subjectivity of the author is made clear. I attempt to provide a theoretical rationale for teaching practices that include a frequent reflection on the part of the students on their own culture and cultural standpoint, and ask them to consider the subjectivity of source materials.

Teaching Experiences

I teach 4th grade at an independent, progressive elementary school. This school aims to build most of its curriculum around a core of social studies. This means that students work in research, reading, writing, and sometimes science and math are all related to a social studies topic that lies in the center of the curriculum. Over the years, for a variety of reasons, particular topics have become entrenched in the curricular routine.

The 4th grade social studies curriculum is traditionally a study of some “other” or long ago and/or far away culture. The Inuit, Maasai, Mbuti, and ancient Egyptians have often been the subjects of the fourth grade curriculum.

As a teacher, the theories and practices of studying another culture have presented me with a number of questions about the purpose and function of such curriculum. I have continually asked myself what types of materials and practices would create a study that fostered genuine understanding of human differences, and also asked deeper questions about why and how we should be studying other people. These questions were first brought up to me as an anthropology student in college.

Since then, particularly last year as my class and I learned about Inuit culture(s), I have been continually preoccupied by some of the questions and ideas that were brought up by my professors in college: Why do we want to learn about other people? What power dynamics are embedded in the representations and frames of difference that we use? What representations are “fair” and what representations are damaging? As a teacher, these have turned into concrete questions: Is making a model of an Inuit sealing camp objectifying and simplifying, or is it a valuable educational activity? Could it be

both? What do I think kids should understand about people who live differently from them? Who should be telling this story? What are the kids supposed to be getting out of all this? Would I feel proud or ashamed to show our work as a class to an Inuk person? I'd like to highlight some of the experiences that I've had as a teacher that brought these questions up.

Last year, we were learning about the Inuit. Many of the materials that we were using came from the curriculum, *Man: A Course of Study*. A major part of this course in its original format was a series of ethnographic films about the Netsilik Inuit of Pelly Bay, Canada, and these films played a big part in our class time. Between 1093 and 1965, University of Montreal anthropologist Asen Balikci made three separate trips to the arctic to film. Hours and hours of raw footage were later edited to come up with a total of eleven hour-long segments to be used for the course. In their edited version, these films portray a year in the life of a Netsilik Inuit family as they would have lived earlier in the century.

Though the course materials would have students and even teachers believe that what they are seeing is the real-time document of a single year of a "traditional" family's life, the reality "behind the scenes" is more complex. The films are, in fact "reconstructions" of what life was like forty or fifty years earlier. The people who appear as the "traditional" Netsilik in the films in fact lived in settlements, and their day-to-day lives included plenty of details that are familiar to us here in New York: guns for hunting, church, permanent homes.

Elder members of the settlement community at Pelly Bay remembered how to build the old tools for hunting, and were able to aid in the reconstruction of traditional

life for the films. Each half-hour segment depicts a different aspect of Inuit life. For example, a series of three films document a few days of caribou hunting, another set documents the building of a stone weir for fishing. The films are entirely without music, narration, or subtitles. The people speak only Inuktitut. They have conversations, play games, sleep, wake-up, hunt, eat, generally go about their daily lives. The films move at a slow pace relative to today's fast-cut editing, long shots of the tundra alternate with detailed shots of people working with their hands. The creators of the curriculum hoped that a student watching the film "should feel as if he or she was actually present, observing natural sequences of behavior much as an ethnographer would" (Dow, 1991, 61).

As I watched the films, I was unaware of the fact that they were reconstructions. I did, of course know that the people being filmed were aware of a camera being there, despite their acting otherwise, but I assumed that Balicki was simply "along for the ride" with a family who normally did what they were doing in the film. There were a number of things that I liked about the films. I liked to see what life was like for a traditional Inuit family. It interested me.

I did feel that for the students' sake, the films portrayed people in a familiar, human light as they go about various aspects of their daily lives, offering alternatives to the stereotype images like the happy squinting Eskimo in his ruffed hood on a big block of ice. These kinds of images are swiftly broken apart when students see people walking across the brown and grassy tundra, slapping mosquitoes. The complexity of the things that people do to survive and to have fun are also depicted in detail, from the way a seal

is caught, cut up, and shared, to the way a big common igloo is built for everyone to get together to play games.

Though I appreciated these aspects of the films, I wasn't sure what effect I wanted them to have on the students, or what I was looking for in them myself. I wondered whether the people in the films appeared to the students as real people or if they appeared as impossibly far-away, strange, and unreal? I couldn't understand what the people in the films were saying, and I wasn't sure what the point of that was. What would be wrong with a translation?

I had questions about the way the film positions its viewers as supposedly unseen observers, and the way we as teachers are supposed to position students in relation to the people in the film. The people in the film don't address the camera at all, and students are supposed to observe carefully and theorize about what is going on. I wondered if there was a good reason why we were not supposed to hear an explanation directly from the people on the screen? Even if they don't explain what is happening, how could subtitles hurt our learning? Looking back, I have to ask if in placing the students in this role, we were asking them to pretend that they were exploring some strange alien world? If so, is that the narrative or frame we want to impose on their learning about other people? Rather than "exploring a strange new planet" where we can't communicate or even let ourselves be seen, why can't we just be "visiting people that are new to us?" in this role we might be able to have a conversation to the extent that the film medium allows.

One day, disorganized, pressed for time and lacking a reading to send home for homework, I photocopied a page of the film notes out of the MACOS teacher's guide.

We had just watched the film about caribou hunting, and these notes were meant to explain to the teacher what we were seeing in the films. Here are some excerpts:

“The next day, the visitors watch for caribou on the other side of the lake from the camp. The honking of geese overhead attracts the attention of one, and he turns to see several birds settle on a pond nearby. Suddenly he sees a young caribou on a distant hillside....

The four men sit in a semicircle near the tent discussing the day’s hunt until Kinguk brings out the stewed meat on a flat stone platter. Whatever food is available is always shared with guests, so each man takes a piece for himself and the feast is begun. In the warm afternoon sunlight, this is a time for jokes and happy conversation (MACOS: The Netsilik Eskimos at the Inland Camps, 54-55).

I felt that this text came from a stance that I didn’t like. The perspective brought to mind the image of a western scientist, watching the “natives” from above, explaining their behavior as if they were scientific specimens, themselves blissfully unaware that they are being observed. It occurred to me that if we had been able to read subtitles, or if the subjects had been asked to explain what they were doing, or say something to their audience, maybe we wouldn’t need the outside voice explaining everything to us? On the other hand, I thought, “maybe I am just being too academic and over-analyzing this, and there is nothing wrong with the representation?” Against my gut feeling, I sent it home for students to read.

In the stairwell the next morning, a particularly astute student (who I will call Kevin) came up next to me and said, “Joey, I didn’t really think that article was like...it kind of stereotyped the Inuit...it didn’t really seem like an Inuit person would have written it.” I was delighted to have my suspicions validated, and I asked him to bring up this idea in our upcoming social studies meeting.

Kevin explained his thoughts to the class in jumbled terms, repeating what he had said to me in the stairwell. In saying that the text “stereotyped” the Inuit, my interpretation was that Kevin was pointing out the idea that the text *reduced* and *simplified* the people in the film to types, or objects. His comment that it didn’t seem like an “Inuit person” wrote the piece, points to the distance and air of superiority that I had sensed in the text.

I was blessed to have a class that loved to debate, and I shouldn’t have been surprised when hands shot up in the air to argue against Kevin’s point. One student tried to sum up their counter-argument: Yes, Kevin is right that the representation was limited, that it talked about the people on “babyish” terms, and that it didn’t show what the caribou hunt meant on other terms. But that was not the point of the film or the notes, and they knew it. “We’re not dumb,” they argued, “we know that Inuit have feelings and everything else like us.” The point of *this* representation, they understood, was to simply show physically how the Netsilik hunt caribou.

It’s interesting to note that a month or so earlier, the class had been unanimous in their assessment of a picture book called *Iglook’s Seal*, (Weisman, 1977), as “stereotyping,” “kind of prejudiced,” and generally misrepresenting the Inuit. The students pointed out a number of features in the representation to substantiate these points: “The Eskimos are always smiling.” “Their eyes are just these lines, they don’t really look like that.” “Everyone is always happy.” “An Eskimo kid probably wouldn’t have a seal as a pet. It was a big deal to catch one and if you catch one then you eat it.” Students differed on whether or not the simple drawings, in which igloos appeared almost

plastic looking, indicated that the book “made it look too simple,” or just “written for little kids.”

So I was surprised that they didn’t jump on the bandwagon with Kevin and me when it came to the film notes. While they had objected to representations that contained concrete untruths such as slanted lines for eyes and pet seals, they seemed to be fine with the partial truth that existed in the film and film notes. I had to complement them on their ability to think carefully about the source material. However, I still wondered about the value and power of the text, and others like it.

On a second occasion, a student brought up a question which on the surface was simple, but that I thought asked whether or not there is an implicit conflict or power dynamic when one person aims to study another. A teacher friend of mine had forwarded me a postcard from a student in Alaska who was asking for pen pals. I guessed that the student (who I’ll call Jane) must have been Native Alaskan because she told the recipient that it they were coming up on whaling season, and as far as I knew, only native people have whaling rights in Alaska. In addition, her last name sounded to me to be native.

I read the postcard to the class, and we agreed to compose a big response letter together to Jane. Students began with the usual greetings, explaining who we were, and how we got her postcard. After this, a student raised her hand and suggested the line, “Can you tell us about hunting and stuff because we’re studying you.” A student (who I’ll call Alex) raised his hand and said, “I don’t think we should just say, ‘Hi, we’re studying you,’ I mean that’s like, kind of rude.” I was again astounded and delighted, and I asked him to explain more. All he could come up with was a lot of expressive hand

gestures and something like, “Well, it just seems kind of impolite or like, I don’t know ‘hi, we’re studying you’ it just doesn’t sound right.”

My interpretation here was that the student was pointing to the idea that in school, we study objects or animals, and to study a person in the same way seems “rude” to put them all in the same category. Or, it might be “rude” to position ourselves this way, to put us, the non-Inuit, in one category, the people-who-study, and put the Inuit in another category, people-who-are-studied. I don’t think that any of them had this kind of abstraction in mind, but I do think many of them had a negative gut reaction to the sentence, “We’re studying you.” I felt there was a good reason behind it, and I had the same feeling. Enough students seemed to agree that it just “wasn’t polite”, and we decided to simply respond to some of the things in her post card, some of which were included our curriculum:

“Your story about seeing a polar bear reminded us of when we saw a polar bear at the zoo. Also, part of our class saw a peregrine falcon outside our window, which is rare for New York.”

At this point, I found myself with some of the questions I mentioned above: What exactly is it that can be condescending or “wrong” about studying other people? I asked myself if I would be bothered if I got a letter from a school teacher in Arkansas, telling me that their class was “studying the Jews of New York”? What conditions, or what set of factors would make this sound palatable to me?

The scholars who framed the MACOS curriculum did, in fact, intend to engage students in a “study” of other people, for specific reasons and with apparently deeply felt convictions about the value of doing so. It will be useful, before I offer ways that I would

frame learning about other people differently from MACOS, it will be useful to look at what the intentions behind the course were.

“MACOS” was published in 1970. It was developed by a team of prominent anthropologists and social psychologists. The curriculum began in 1963 as an effort by teachers and academics to produce a stimulating, in depth social studies curriculum for elementary school students. The developers of the course were excited by the notion of “helping children learn more about the meaning of human behavior and culture” (Dow, 1970, 3). Another goal was that to some degree, the course would mirror the sophistication of university social science, giving children access to ideas and materials that were similar to those that were “at that time exciting the interest of behavioral scientists in many universities”(Dow, 1970, 3).

One basic goal of the course was consistent with the basic tenants of “progressive” education: that students would make their own meaning and sense out of their experience. In this case they would take a detailed, “in-depth” look at a culture that was “different from our own,” and make sense out of it. A second goal was that students’ methods would be “analogous to the methods used by scholars in the field.” This would be done by having them watch un-narrated ethnographic films of a “simple” culture (the Netsilik Inuit), and at the same time read a variety of “ethnographic journals” and other sources in order to “construct and authentic context” for what they would see in the films (Dow, 4).

The framers of MACOS aimed to marry a spirit of respect for all people’s humanity and a “scientific” approach to understanding human behavior and the ways that it is similar and different to the behavior of animals. As Dow explains, “We want

children to begin to know and care about the humanity of man. To understand man's humanness we look beyond man to other animals, particularly animals whose lives illuminate special features of our own" (Dow, 1970, 5). Through this "in depth" study, they would construct abstract understandings of humanity and culture:

"By comparing man to other animals and by studying man in a cultural setting different from our own, they may reflect upon the deep structure of human experience, the common impulses and ways of coping with life which unite man as a species beneath the surface diversity of culture, and the biological ties that unite man with other living creatures" (Dow, 1970, 6).

The writers of the curriculum also aimed to build in an understanding of the idea that as humans, our judgements of one another are bound up in our subjectivity as members of one culture or another. Dow writes, "...children must learn how their judgement, and the judgements of all men, are shaped by the culture in which they live..." (Dow, 1970, 6). Following this, students would be able to use their "understanding of another way of life" to "gain a new perspective on themselves" (7).

MACOS, has in fact come up with goals very similar to my own, but there are still questions, at this point that linger. What exactly is wrong with positioning students as "ethnographers" who can't understand, talk to, or interact with their "subjects" Do they need to have subjects to study at all? How else could the same ideas be driven at through curriculum? How else could students develop a sense of cultural relativity and subjectivity, how else could they learn to see human universals alongside surface diversity, al along retaining respect for humanity as a whole? How could they develop sophisticated understandings of culture, and at preserve the opportunity to write letters back and forth with a girl named Jane?

Formalizing the Questions

Though these questions are a starting point for this project, they do not precede it in my own development as a teacher. It was through the process of thinking about why I wanted to ask certain questions of my students and myself, use certain books, assign particular activities, that I was able to articulate them. These questions come before, during, and after the process of writing and teaching curriculum, and I expect to constantly return to them as I learn and teach.

- What *specific* concrete and abstract understandings of “culture” do I think are valuable for students to learn, especially in a multicultural society?
- What pedagogical practices and source materials are included in such a curriculum?

Defining and Studying Culture

The thoughts and questions above grew out of my learning experiences as a major in anthropology. To my initial surprise and resistance, most of the readings and discussions in my classes were not about the ways and beliefs of various “tribal” groups around the globe, but critiques of the notion and practice of anthropology itself. Over the last few decades anthropology has been grappling with questions about the theory, practice, and politics of studying other people; or how and why we do so. I will explore the ways these questions that have been relevant to me as I have reflected on and designed social studies curriculum.

The first question that teachers and anthropologists alike have to deal with is: “What do we mean when we say we are studying people?” If I say my class is studying the Maasai, am I saying that they are studying their bone structure? Most people would agree that in social studies we would be studying the Maasai “culture.” We immediately run into the question: “what s culture?”

I vividly remember my first day of Cultural Anthropology 103. The professor began the class period by announcing: “There’s no such thing as culture.” Immediately, we all raised our voices in protest, listing off the various human behaviors, beliefs, and products that are commonly understood as examples of “culture”: music, art, myths, religion, manners, clothes, language... After we had listed a blackboard full, the professor argued that if all of these things were “culture,” then it was a useless category, since it apparently encompassed anything that human beings did, said, made, or felt. This first lesson challenged us to consistently ask ourselves exactly what we were talking

about when we used the word “culture.” We employ the word so often; it’s useful to consider what we do or do not mean when we use it.

As in any field, there is a wide array of opinions within anthropology as to how this question of what culture is should be answered, or if it can be answered at all. In the introduction to their book, *Talking About People*, (1993), Haviland & Gordon define “culture” as “The values and standards of a people that enable them to make sense of the world and to shape every aspect of their behavior” (298). In this case, “culture” is the abstraction that shapes the real world: what people do, feel, think, and make. In his book, (1996), *Culture and Change*, Larry Naylor writes, “Culture is a set of problem-solving solutions generated in response to the pressures of the environment” (Naylor, x). Naylor’s definition adds the ideas that culture is related directly to the environment, and has its origins in our strategies for survival. Naylor explains that humans have to adapt to both the natural and human-made physical environments, as well as the social environment created by humans. (Naylor, x).

Thinking about curriculum for fourth or fifth graders, I have come to think about culture in a similar way: as the glue that links together our feelings, beliefs, behavior, and things we create. We can see the real-world things that we feel, create, or do as arrows that point to our cultures. For example, one Jewish tradition is to place a rock on top of the gravestone of a loved one as a symbol of remembrance. A rock just sitting on the ground is not culture. When a person places that rock on top of a gravestone, it becomes a cultural object, expressing the traditions, beliefs, and feelings of the person who put it there, as well as that person’s connections to other individuals who treat the rock with the same symbolic value.

The word culture is often used in singular terms. We often say things like, “In my culture it’s polite to put your napkin in your collar when eating a messy meal.” Instead, it can be useful to think of individuals as belonging to any number of cultures simultaneously. For example, here in New York it would be hard to find an individual who we couldn’t say was not a member of at least two cultures. Whatever the countries of origin of their families, anyone who lives here is likely to possess a certain set of specialized understandings of the city: It’s easier to get uptown and downtown on the subway than it is to go cross-town. Put your hand out if you want a cab to stop for you. Though two people may have different religions, speak and read different languages, and wear different clothes, they share a certain New York culture. As Naylor writes, “Culture represents the primary guide or blueprint used by people to get through each day...”(28).

This version of culture brings many aspects of human experience into light as possible topics in the curriculum. Of course, things like holidays, rituals, festivals, music, and art are topics of study, but so are some human behaviors that are less commonly called “culture.” For example, the meanings we give to time, place, ownership, kinship, knowledge, the role and status that people take on at certain ages, the way we get our food, the way we get from place to place, the meaning we attach to different objects and behaviors.

Indeed, when I have asked students to talk and write about the question of “what is culture?” I have found the same results that we got in our first day of college. In discussions students have listed everything from music, to religion, to food, to “how we get our food” as what “culture” is. Students have also pointed out the idea that culture is a kind of abstraction, something we can’t really see or touch, that it can be traced to both

concrete reasons, as Naylor's idea implies, and that it is also something that people "get" from one another. When I asked the class to try to find an answer to the questions, "Where does culture come from?" and/or "How do you get your culture?" I got an incredible range of answers. Many students took copious notes, and the following is a quote from one student's notebook:

"Where does culture come from?" ...many generations...what you do...what you eat...where you live...from your Hebrew school, or any school...different things that change...the way we live...How do you get your culture?"...Anita got her culture from her aunts...Steven got his culture from his Yiddish school and his parents...Diane got her culture from her religion...Julie got her culture from her older sister and her sister's friends...Jane got her culture from where she travels and from her parents...Jared's culture comes from ideas and Diane agrees with him."

What interested me is that many students associated culture with "an idea" and had a sense that it is a flexible and dynamic, that you can "get it" from both the people you live with and the physical environment that you live in. Some students even explained how the things we do today are connected to the things people did for infinite generations before. One student said "culture comes from your ancestors," and another student said, "culture comes from the first people on earth." One student combined these ideas in her notes, creating a great synthesis for the day's work. She wrote, "culture can come from many generations of things changing and also staying the same."

The students were able to see this, but also pointed out, to my satisfaction that culture firstly escapes quick definition, and secondly that it is dynamic, that people influence one another and make culture change over time. The idea that "culture" is an concept that we should let escape a singular definition can be found in Haviland & Gordon's introduction, in which they concede that there is nothing we can really claim as the definitive subject matter of anthropology:

“...many introductory texts bear the title or subtitle “The Study of Mankind, or Humanity.” In retrospect, such claims are specious and indeed pretentious. If there is one thing we have learned in our practice of anthropology, it is humility and discretion about what anthropology can claim to do...This is why Lucy Mair, a pioneering British social anthropologist, would modestly define her discipline in her lectures as simply “talking about people” (Haviland & Gordon, 1).

Their advocacy for an anthropology that stresses “humility” and emphasizes the informal, human mode of “talking about” over the scientific mode of “study of” seems to resonate with my classes resolution of the question about the letter to Jane. Once they decided that they felt it was “rude” to say “we’re studying you” they elected to just talk with her as they would with anyone else. The things they had to talk about did in fact reflect some of the things they might learn from her experience living in a different environment and culture. Perhaps if the conversation had been allowed to continue off the paper, they might have ended up “talking about people.” I’m sure my students would have liked to find out about whaling, and I would bet that Jane would have some questions about life in New York City. On the other hand, if we had just asked her questions, then secretly assigned her answers to categories of our own design, our connection as people would have been sacrificed, and it might even be, as the students put it, “rude,” and as Haviland and Gordon put it, “pretentious.”

So when we “talk about people” we leave open the possibility for dialogue, communication, and understanding. If we reduce our learning about others to a scientific inquiry, in which questions are posed, answered, and quickly dropped into prefabricated concepts, then our potential for real understanding is lost. For example, when we refer to an encyclopedia and read that the Inuit are “a nomadic hunter-gatherer people” and take that for our “fact,” we have immediately narrowed the scope of our inquiry and subsequent experience of any representation of Inuit. While the statement that Inuit were

and are people who sometimes hunt their food is not in itself incorrect, it is limited in the degree to which it gives us the sense of Inuit as human beings.

A concept like “hunter-gatherer” can work for anthropologists or fourth-graders as a way to describe something concrete we have learned about another group of people, or individual, but shouldn’t be used as a starting point. Regardless of the ideological implications, it’s equally important to remember that 9 and 10 year-old children are not naturally adept at using abstract generalizations to understand the experiences of other people. As any progressive educator will tell you, if you tell your students that, “It can be hard to depend on the variables of nature to survive,” only some kids will have had enough experience or read enough to make any real sense of it. However if you give them the experience of having to somehow find food or shelter within the limitations that nature allows, their ability to retain the concept greatly improves.

This idea that “experience” is what children use to build their understanding of the world is at the heart of progressive education, and more specifically at the heart of Dewey’s (1938) book, *Experience in Education*. One of the major ideas is that children need to engage in the world in order to make sense of it. More than learn facts from a page, they need to have a series of experiences through which they continually build their understanding of the world. Dewey theorizes that as experience is key to education, the task for teachers is to organize those experiences in order to get information or ideas across (Dewey, 20). So the question becomes: how does this specifically apply to the study of culture? How do we help students have experiences that expand their understanding of what it means to be a human and have culture?

In my experience, children's ability to create and retain social studies concepts improves if I read them a story, this is not the best example of an experience, because it is a vicarious experience, but I do think the theory can be applied here. In order to teach that food can be hard to come by in the winter, rather than explain that sometimes nature does not consistently make as much food available, and that people often make sure to show gratitude to the animals that they do kill for survival, I might read them a passage from Simon Tookoome's (1999) book, *Shaman's Nephew*, in which Simon tells of the painful starvation that he experienced one winter, and the experience of finally catching a caribou, and then melting snow in his mouth to give the caribou a drink to show thanks (Tookoome, 48). In this case, most students would be able to remember that story, and derive the concept from it if asked to do so.

The stories of the experiences of individual people carry information in an accessible, relevant way. There are more details to learn about Inuit culture than any student could learn in a year. Information about culture is really information about what it is like to be a person living within a certain culture, in a particular environment. What, for example, is there to know about moving from autumn caribou hunting camps to winter seal hunting camps? There is information about where to find the caribou herd, how to hunt them down, how to skin them, how to get the oil for heating, how and where to store the meat. This is all important information. But there is also, equally important, the *particular* experiences that a *particular* person had. In the (1999) book *Saqiyuq*, Appia Agalakti Awa recalls memories of when she was young:

“On our way back to camp from caribou hunting, we would build an igloo and use the caribou fat as qulliq oil. We would walk into the tents and they would be so warm and smelly. Seal and caribou fat, they smell different. Caribou smells so much better than seal! ... We would come back to the shore with all the caribou furs, and people

would like our smell, the way we smelled. We smelled like caribou. When we reached the camp, the people in the camp would have been using seal blubber as oil for the qulliq. To me, after coming from inland, it was a different smell in the tents. It didn't smell very good to me." (Wachowich, 33-34).

Unlike the encyclopedia article, or the film notes that Kevin and I objected to, a person with preferences and feelings emerges from the text, rather than a general concept about "culture." From this perspective students do learn details of Inuit culture, but they also see that Inuit culture, like their own, is something that is made up of, and experienced by individuals. We could make the cultural statement, "New Yorkers ride the subway," but that doesn't mean there is one definitive experience of riding the subway. Some people hate the subway; some people love it.

The point is that we are not talking with students primarily about concepts, but primarily, as Haviland and Gordon contend, "about people." I want my students to see people before they see concepts. Rather than trying to locate some actual people in our study of concepts, we should try to locate some concepts as we learn about the experiences of individuals who live in different cultures.

Subjectivity

One distinction between the encyclopedic text and the text from *Saquiuyuq* is that one is a generalized overview, while the other is a specific memory. Another distinction is that the encyclopedia article appears to be *objective*. As readers, we understand that it's a reference book, telling us facts about people. On nearby pages it will tell us facts about "invertebrates" and "invention." The *Saquiuyuq* text is *subjective*. It tells us how one person prefers the smell of burning caribou fat to burning seal fat. It's possible that someone else might recall liking the smell of seal blubber more than the smell of caribou fat.

The distinction that Haviland & Gordon make between the anthropology that attempts to be "the study of mankind" and anthropology that attempts to be "talking about people" mirrors this second distinction, and points to a larger development in the field. While the old school claimed to be able to objectively explain, contain, and define the ways and beliefs of mankind using a scientific terminology and methodology, the new anthropology rejects this ideology. Among other points, the new anthropologists make a point of recognizing their own subjectivity as researchers, and the effects this has on their experience in the field and on their subsequent representations of those experiences.

As one example of this, the editors included the article by anthropologist Marion Benedict, (1985) entitled, "Fact Versus Fiction: An Ethnographic Paradox Set in the Seychelles." Her article touches on the various aspects of this issue of subjectivity in very concrete terms. Benedict traces her own experience of writing the ethnography for her field work in the Seychelles. She tracks the process by which a succession of small

decisions that she made in her work eventually added up to a final piece that felt to her to be more fiction than fact.

She explains how the act of taking the experience of hearing someone talk, and trying to translate it into text caused her to impose her own organizational scheme on the experience:

“...I invented another language to convey the rhythm and structure of my informants’ diction. Their logic was roundabout; they told the middle first, then left me scabbling for the subject and the message...there was a freshness in her choice of words and a slyness in her digressions which alerted me to the calculated art that lay behind her kind of organization. But in order to convey a sense of this to my reader, I had to impose my own kind of organization as well as employ free translation”(Benedict, 8).

Benedict became aware of the fact that, given the data, her readers might not come to the same understanding of witchcraft that she aimed to convey. She wanted to put together a concept that “western” readers could understand. In an effort to allow them to put the evidence together in a process parallel to her own, she began making small, seemingly innocent adjustments in reality. The comments of one informant were attributed to another, four fortune-tellers were compounded into two people. Then she found herself omitting details of people’s lives, ignoring facts about families because they did not fit the picture she was trying to make. She eventually found herself inventing a reality to fit the ideas she was trying to get across about witchcraft.

“In order to show, rather than tell, I invented scenes of transition and this imposed an order upon my narration that was never present in the field...All this was done in the name of telling the truth and it resulted in a fiction. I had written a continuous narrative with suspense, a plot, fictional characters, a climax, and a point—that is a *novella*. ” (Benedict, 9).

Benedict’s reflection points to two important ideas. First, she highlights the pitfalls of translating the experience of a dialogue to a representation on paper, or otherwise. When we try to represent an experience, our representation is limited and

shaped by the underlying structure of the document, and the subjectivity of the person recording the experience, and creating the documentation. Even so-called film “documentaries” have to do this. The camera is not always on. Not everything is within the frame of view. The person behind the camera chooses to film for one reason or another. Later the film is edited and rearranged. Music and narration are added.

Secondly, she points to an idea that is already well-established in the so-called hard sciences, but has fresh significance when it comes to learning about people: that it is bad practice to begin with a concept, and then look for evidence to substantiate that concept. Benedict had an idea of what she wanted witchcraft to mean to her “western” readers, and in order to create that concept she had to rearrange reality.

There are two different sets of factors that we can take into account when we are “talking about people.” There are the factors involved in the people doing the learning, and the factors involved in the people being learned about. Anything that we “know” about others we know through our own perceptions, and subsequent organization of those perceptions. This doesn’t mean that what we know is meaningless or false, but it is important to acknowledge that our understanding is limited and subjective in this way.

As Benedict reflects on her own learning process:

“There were also epistemological difficulties in knowing others. I had wanted an understanding distinct from self—but what could I know about others except what I could perceive through my own eyes and interpret through my own mental grid? The very cognitive process itself involved an “I” to observe and to know. How could I know anything that was “not me” when my very method of knowing was all me?” (Benedict, 9).

This does not mean that we should throw out all ethnographies, documentaries, or books of field notes. Benedict makes it clear that there is value in her work, even though it is not *Truth*. “...nevertheless, some objective knowledge resides in my fictional

novella.” What Benedict is pointing out about her own work as an anthropologist is that her representation of other people is also a product of a particular self—her own. Rather than taking the stance of the omniscient narrator from the documentary, she is affirming the fact that if another anthropologist visited the Seychelles, they might represent the people there differently.

In my teaching, I have tried to find ways to embrace the subjectivity of the source material that I have used. *Shaman's Nephew* has been particularly useful. Tookoome tells the reader about his experiences growing up, and explains how these experiences relate to his current artwork. He is represented not as “your average Eskimo” but as an individual who lived his life in a particular cultural and physical environment, and as an artist reflecting on the process and significance of his work. Inuit cultural details have been significant factors in all of his experiences, but he ends up defined as a human, not as a representative of an abstraction like a hunting and gathering people.

Tookoome recounts his experience of years of little food in 1957. He explains the terror and pain that he endured, and how he eventually came to deal with it through artwork:

“All the animals were scarce. We were left waiting and many of the people died of hunger. There were five camps I know of with perhaps one thousand people all together. They all starved to death...For many years I was troubled by the memory of the Starvations. I had this recurring dream. Sometimes a dream will follow a person all day long until the person pays attention to it. This is the way it was for me with this dream. I felt it had to be made into a story or a picture” (Tookoome, 49).

Reading Tookoome we get the sense that like anything else, there is no singular experience of the harshness of the environment. Different people experience it in different ways. There is no one story to tell about being Inuit.

The book also acknowledges the subjectivity and limitations of the format, and the way that it was put together. *Shaman's Nephew* was narrated to Sheldon Oberman, a white, Jewish, Canadian writer. In his introduction, Oberman, like Benedict, makes his own subjectivity apparent to the reader. He informs the reader of the process that went into creating the book, and lets us know that he “hopes” he has represented Tookoome’s words and voice, but there are inevitably, ways that he may not have. His own reflection on the process resonates with Benedict’s reflections:

“I deliberately used many translators. Sometimes a new translation brought out new information, but, just as importantly, each translator told the stories differently. A social worker, a laborer, a teacher, a medical translator, relatives, and family members – each translated from a particular perspective. My task was to interview, research, select, and shape but it was also to merge the different translations into a common voice, Tookoome’s voice. I have hunted hard for it. I hope I have found it.(Oberman, 9).

Oberman and Benedict both allow their readers to see the process through which they build their representations of other people. In order to highlight these ideas for students, I had them each take a particular painting of Tookoome’s and respond to it as a piece of artwork. We began by talking about form and content in art. I asked students to consider the ways that line, texture, and color can connote different ideas or feelings. After this exercise they responded to individual paintings by Tookoome. I asked them to look for “facts” that they might recognize and to also look for feelings that they might recognize.

One student wrote about a picture of Tookoome’s that depicted a time when he was going hungry:

“I think that the picture shows three people and two dogs are looking around for food. The painting tells the story of people trying to find food and they are really frustrated. The shapes and lines tell you –like on the face—they tell you how they feel (the people). I feel sad for the people because it’s really hard to do everything yourself. I

also feel bad for the dogs because the people work them way too hard. I mean if I were the dogs I would be pooped.”

Another wrote about a scene that contrasted greatly with the previous:

“This painting is called summer camp people. I think it shows people and animals around a lake enjoying nice weather. I noticed the lines of the painting are very gentle. The shapes are also gentle and kind of round. It uses nice colors that splash out at you like red, orange, and blue. I also noticed that the people are just lying there. I think that they are enjoying the nature, weather, and the land. I think it shows that in Tookoome’s culture, people like to enjoy summer camp. The people lying around the lake remind me of going to the beach in the summer...”

Each student interpreted a painting of Tookoome’s. I asked them to comment on the forms of the piece, explain as much as they could of the content, and then explain how it made them feel. I felt that taken as whole, the activity allowed students to see the variety of emotions and experiences that Tookoome had, and the variety of ways that this could be coded into artwork, then reinterpreted. I felt that using artwork and personal reflection gave students the sense of the specific emotions and meanings that Tookoome connected with his experiences within his own culture.

Students are also able to talk about subjectivity in terms of “point of view.” As part of our beginning to learn about the Maasai, an intern that I worked with this year chose to do a unit on point of view. We had been thinking about how to get students to look at representations critically. She read the students Jon Szczeska’s (1995) *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs*. In this book, the Big Bad Wolf retells the famous story from his perspective. He admits to having eaten the pigs, but he challenges the usual paradigm of wolf-as-the-bad-guy. He insists that he has been unfairly characterized by a biased press, He even challenges the likely bias of the average reader by asking, them if they would pass up a cheeseburger.

I was amazed at what the students did with this. Like Benedict, they talked about the ways that the pigs, and the newspapers in the book had constructed a version of the infamous events so that they would fit their preconceived notion of “The Big Bad Wolf.” One student explained that the people who wrote the story “were judging the wolf, calling him *big, bad* wolf.” Students were able to see that the labels that we so often take for granted are themselves subjective products of another persons “judgement” or interpretation.

At this point in the year, we were in the middle of a study of the Civil Rights Movement. The teacher asked the students to make a connection between the book and our current study. She asked them, “Why are we reading this in social studies?” One student answered, “If anything happens—well people (in the class) would assume that there’s not just *one* way to see something like the Civil Rights Movement.” Another student added, “We’re looking at the perspective of other people.” A third student connected it more specifically to racial politics, “They’re judging the wolf by his cover.”

Students can continue this conversation about perspective and representation as they track their experiences of cultural differences. When I showed the first of the Netsilik films students shouted “Eew!” at the sight of a caribou being skinned. My first reaction was to quell their outburst, and then reassure them with something like, “It’s just nature,” “Or, that’s just the way it looks inside.” This didn’t have any effect because they kept squealing as the film continued. Most of them sincerely felt it was “gross” just like we all sincerely felt that the Big Wolf is also “bad” until we looked at the story from another angle.

What I eventually found was that if I allowed them to bring these reactions to the surface, and accept them as *valid, but subjective viewpoints* it produced a number of educational benefits. Once students felt that their experience of certain details of the film as “gross” were valid in one way, they could then move on and explore them as one of many possible “captions” or “stories” about a singular image. In turn, this allowed them to discover other possible interpretations on their own, which is of course far more valuable than my telling them, “That’s just the way it looks inside the caribou.” Their own subjectivity was their entry point into a genuine exploration of the cultural details.

The turning point came in a discussion of one of the films in which a mom cuts the eyeball out of a recently caught fish and gives it to her young son, who promptly eats it. As before, there had been squeals and “yuck” heard from the crowd. Despite how provocative the film at been, the discussion was lagging until I asked what they thought it meant when they said “gross” to the kid eating the eyeball.

The conversation livened right up. The students began by explaining that they simply found the practice unfamiliar: “We’re not used to eating things like that so we automatically think it’s disgusting.” “It doesn’t look good because we’re not used to it.” Then they offered rationales for the people in the film eating it: “They have to eat it to survive and they like it.” At this point one student made an important distinction between the actual event, in this case the eating of the eyeball, and the ideas that surround it: “It’s just the *thought* of eating the eyeball is like eating someone’s eyeball. It’s not the taste, it’s the idea.” The next student to speak acknowledged that there were in fact things about eating an eyeball that were familiar: “We eat fish too. We eat sushi. They could be similar to what we do in America.” (This reminds me of the Wolf asking us to consider

what we would do if we saw a cheeseburger just sitting there). Another student built on this idea, explaining that our preferences for certain foods have, in part, their origins in our cultures: “We grow up on baby food. It’s like that, because that baby grew up on eyeballs,” and that an Inuk might have an equally subjective view of our food: “They might think that mashed up food is disgusting.” Students then returned to the concept that there are ideas that we make up around the experiences we have. They explained that these are based on our individual selves and cultures, and can actually shape our sensations: “When people try different food --if they don’t know what it is-- they like it. But when they find out it’s dog they spit it out.” Another student agreed: “Dogs are *pets* to us, so it’s gross to eat them.”

I was really happy when my students wrote and performed their end of the year play because I felt that it told the story of how they went through this process over the course of the study. In the story they devised, two rich American kids (from a ship and era that resembled *The Titanic*) are shipwrecked in the Arctic, and end up having to live with Inuit people. At first they are upset and grossed out by their lifestyle, and they let us know. When the girl steps out of the kayak that rescued her she immediately asks, “Where can I get a manicure around here?” When the boy is offered some fish to eat, he rudely rejects the offer and moans, “Haaamburger.” It would be easy to look at this as a parody. But I felt that it was a great document of their own learning experience over the course of the year. As the play goes on the kids get used to life in the arctic. They learn to catch fish and seals despite initial failures, they learn to make parkas despite arguments over the skins, and of course they learn to enjoy the food. They find that life with an Inuit family is apparently not that different from their own families. There is a bratty

little sister, and a dad that always wants to teach them things. There are conflicts and resolutions. By the time the rescue plane arrives, they refuse to go home.

So it was through a process of seeing differences from various subjective viewpoints, including initial disgust, that the shipwrecked kids and the real-life students and teachers could gain a full understanding of the familiarity that they found within those very real differences. Like Benedict and Oberman, through the metaphor of the play, they revealed the role of their own subjective selves in their learning and representation of it.

Reflexivity

In their play, the students brought their initial personal feelings about some aspects of traditional Inuit life to light. Raw fish sounds disgusting. Hunting seal looks frustrating. Though the lost boy and girl were caricatures, I believe they represent a larger cultural self as much as they do the particular personalities of the kids. Like Benedict, the students acknowledge their culturally influenced selves as well as their personal preferences (as they long for hamburgers and manicures), as they find their own understanding of the different ways.

Among the new anthropologists, there have been those that have criticized both the classics and some of their contemporaries for having failed to acknowledge either of these selves in their ethnographies, and they have offered reasons why this is faulted practice.

Judith Okely's (1996) book, *Own or Other Culture* is a compilation of essays that Okely has written over the course of about twenty years. In one section, Okely writes about the famous anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski, and his work with the Trobriand Islanders. Malinowski kept two distinct sets of notes. One set were his field notes, the "scientific" data he would use for his published work. He also kept a journal that contained his private thoughts and feelings, which he did not count as part of his legitimate data. These writings were eventually published and proved to some be fascinating in the way they filled out the picture painted by the original ethnography. Okely argues that these non-objective writings are in fact essential pieces for getting a better picture the cultural space that Malinowski spent his time in.

In this diary, Malinowski admits to being frustrated by the presence of other white men. He felt that the traders and missionaries that he and the Trobriand Islanders met up with on a regular basis were disturbing and coloring his work. It seems that he felt attached, like many “old” anthropologists were, to the fantasy of studying a group of people in a “pure,” or undisturbed state. These white people were in fact, very sparse in his ethnography as compared to their presence in his diary. As a result, Okely writes, Malinowski’s “science” suffered: “The Torbirand society was over-represented as a functional whole, with economic and political self-sufficiency” (Okely, 1996, 38). She then makes reference to the old anthropology’s fantasy of the “pure,” untouched society, and Malinowski’s inevitable failure to find it: “The ideal model of the isolated, simple society didn’t exist, even at the outset of intensive anthropological fieldwork” (Okely, 1996, 38).

Okely goes on to criticize those anthropologists that she feels have made an explicit acknowledgement of the subjectivity of their practice, yet do not include in their work any honest reflection of the way their personality, or own cultural background have affected their experience and subsequent representation. She takes Colin Turnbull to task (Incidentally, a worn copy of one of his books was waiting for me in my classroom when I first took my teaching job) quite sarcastically:

“Turnbull considers it right that ‘any description of another people...is bound to be subjective.’ Since he had no access to previous accounts of the Ik, he believes that he started with ‘a clean slate,’ without preconceived notion, ‘just clinical observation.’ He omits to mention his preconceived notions about all human societies which he brought in his own head and Land Rover” (Okely, 1996, 39).

Okely’s criticism comes in the context of a larger defense of the inclusion of subjects in “the West” as topics within the scope of anthropology. In the past, most

anthropologists would not agree that it was necessary to either study Western people or to include the personal or cultural self in one's ethnography. Okely chronicles part of her struggle against this principles within the field. She begins the book by discussing the fact that when she first started, there was a great deal of resistance to the idea that anthropologists might conduct their fieldwork in "the West." It was somehow deemed "not worth it" to study the West since it was "already known" (Okely, 1996, ix).

Implicit in this principle are a number of ideological stances. One is that humanity was divided into two basic categories (that I believe Alex was rejecting): the people who were "to-be-studied," and people who did the studying. Anthropology grew out of the colonial ideology that contrasted the civilized with the savage, and coupled it with the modern ideology that science could describe the natural world. Non-western people were counted as part of this "natural world." It was believed that "primitive" people were in a more natural state of being, and could thus be good people to study as we attempted to find the "true nature" of human beings (thus the presence of anthropology in institutions such as the American Museum of Natural History). While white Europeans, through science, had been able to step out of their natural state and view it objectively from above.

By contrast, those anthropologists that intentionally included themselves as subjects within their study, and acknowledged that their standpoint was not from above but from within another culture, did so with both political and academic reasons. By giving up the authority of the objective voice, they aim to separate from the colonial ideology that defined and valued the civilized by differentiating it from the savage. By

giving up the ideal of the “objective” representation they give a more full, truthful representation of the people they are studying.

As teachers we can make the same effort for the same reasons. This year, as we studied the Maasai, I wanted my students to learn reflexively, to look at themselves through the same lenses through which they viewed the Maasai. Instead of having them simply learn facts about the Maasai in isolation, I decided that as much as possible, they would have to think of facts about their own cultures to use as context. For a long time we had a bulletin board up called “The Mirror of Erutluc.” (I had just seen the *Harry Potter* movie and I thought the backwards spelling of culture was as good a gimmick as any.) Students recorded facts on small sheets of paper that were divided into two columns, one labeled “information about Maasai culture” and the other labeled “Information about our culture(s)” The information could be related because of either a similarity or a contrast that it brought to the surface.

The class produced nearly fifty or so of these mirrors for various facts that they learned. For example, one student read that when a Maasai baby is born, it is washed in milk. His mirror had this fact on one side, and on the other side was a baby being wrapped in a blanket. I thought it was interesting that the connection was made between the caring action in both, since he could have easily said we wash our babies with water. Another mirror was derived from a quote from a reading, which said that Maasai boys learn to herd by playing games and watching older boys. One side of this mirror depicted a Maasai kid looking up at an older kid, mimicking the motions he was making with a stick. On the other side of the mirror, a little kid was looking up at a bigger kid, and a thought balloon said “Cool!” The student had read that Maasai boys learn to herd from

the older boys, and made the connection that kids in our society often look up at and mimic the behavior of teenagers. Either way, I felt that it gave emotional meaning to the idea of learning from, looking up to older kids.

Since the culture mirror had worked out so well, I decided to have the students make big, group-made culture mirrors as their final projects. I told them we would work in groups, and we would make five or six big, painted culture mirrors, and that the subject of the mirrors was up to them. I was struck again by what they came up with. They ranged from abstract to concrete, from general to specific. One mirror was called “Haircuts.” On one side was someone getting their hair cut at a beauty salon. They were looking in a mirror, and the hairdresser had big earrings. On the other side, a mother was shaving all the hair from her son’s head. Their caption explained that in our culture, people usually just get their haircut for one reason or another, but basically because they want their hair to look different. In Maasai culture, they explained, a haircut means something specific. In this case it marks a warrior’s transition into full adulthood. I felt that this mirror showed the way behaviors can take on so many different meanings, and the way that there is often symbolic value to things people do that are not known to an outsider unless someone tells them.

The mirrors that I felt best showed a reflexive understanding of culture were those that located *similarities within differences, rather than similarities despite differences*. One mirror depicted two weddings, one Maasai, and one “New Yorker.” The Maasai bride wore special jewelry, the “New Yorker” bride wore a white dress and a necklace. The students pointed out that while the clothes are different, in each culture people “try to

look better than they usually look” when they get married. Regardless of how it’s expressed, in both cultures we mark the significance of a wedding with special clothes.

My hope in doing the culture mirrors was that students would not be looking at the world as the old anthropology did, as a humanity divided into those who study and those who are studied, but rather that they see all people’s ways as equally worthy of understanding and reflection. I think that by trying to come up with a “mirror image” the students have to create a conceptual framework for the facts they have learned. The abstract concepts are not the way “we understand them” but the ideas that tie the two sides of the culture mirror together. A baby in a blanket and a baby washed in milk come together in the concept of “caring for children.” Apartment buildings and mud houses come together under the concept of “building shelter.”

Reifying Culture

We have seen how there can be a tendency to divide humanity into categories of people who study and people who are studied, and ways to help students position themselves differently. It is useful now to consider in more detail one of the persistent components in of this ideology. This is the idea that those “others” who fall under the category of “to-be-studied” have cultures that are ideally static, and unchanging, and that if they are different now they are therefore less valuable, less authentic, or less of a treasure to those who study. On more concrete terms, an Indian who drives a truck is not a “real” Indian. This is the ideology that drastically limits our understanding of other people. It does not allow us to see a connection that we all share: that in this country we are all living, to vastly differing degrees, between family culture(s) and a larger mass culture, and this is a source of conflict for almost all of us. As one student of mine once wrote, “I have to be careful around my sister because my mom wants me to teach my sister our culture.”

A look at the development of the representation of Indian culture within the museum world provides us with a clear example of ways that this ideology has been broadcast to students, and ways that it is currently being broken down and replaced. For centuries museums have served as a place for “western” people (the people who study) to learn about “other” people (those that are studied). Since museums are regarded most often as dependable sources of information, and are the sites of countless field trips, it makes sense to explore how museums construct representations of people and culture.

In the (2000)book, *The Changing Presentation of the American Indian: Museums and Native Cultures*, a number of scholars, native and non—native explore this theme of

Indians as “frozen” in the past, and as a result, the existence of native people today is in effect denied. They also explain how various institutions—many of them native-run—are working to create displays to counteract this ideology.

In his article, “*Our*” *Indians: The Unidimensional Indian in the Disembodied Local Past*, James D. Nason writes,

“Few exhibitions about Native Americans have anything to do with the contemporary world. Indians are virtually always presented as elements from the communities past—elements that no longer have any importance or bearing on current life in the community. Indian culture is seen as a relic of the past. This disassociation between the community’s past and present essentially “disembodies” the reality of a continuing Indian presence by the simple expedient of denying it” (Nason, 37).

In the introduction, W. Richard West explains that the common modes of representation themselves contribute to this “frozen” ideology.

“most exhibitions of Native American art and culture continue to rely on past models—such as the use of dioramas—for presenting materials, thereby influencing visitors to view Native Americans as “frozen in the past” (West, 8)

What effect does this kind of representation have on the viewer? How might our students understand “who” Indians are when they see these representations? Nason answers this question in a number of ways. Firstly, as mentioned above, this representation relegates native people’s existence to the past. The static, anonymous object sitting behind the glass is devoid of life and significance besides that which the museum attributes to it. Secondly, Nason argues, the fact that objects in museum displays are often anonymous prevents us as viewers from connecting with the objects on a human level. If we don’t get the idea that an individual person made and/or used this object, how can we see it as a human object? As he puts it:

“The disassociation display materials from real people serves to further distance those people from the visitor. This is not just a distance in time or possible relational aspects, but a distancing of reality, for the lack of palpable human association with what

we see on display makes all that we see truly anonymous. Display pieces become not the works of the hands and hearts of real men and women, but simply what “they” did. “They” are the faceless unknowns...the exotics who were here once and who, like strange voyagers from another world, simply passed through and out of sight”(Nason, 38).

Secondly, this kind of representation contributes to the faulted ideology that tells us that native people who we see walking down the street in familiar clothing, or read about in the newspaper are not “real” Indians. The “real” Indians are disappeared.

The movement for change in the ways that native people are represented is best expressed by the Smithsonian’s Museum of the American Indian in New York. This museum was established with the intention of being explicitly different from any other major museum in the way native people are represented, and the way objects are interpreted, and the form that exhibitions take. As the museum’s director, W. Richard West writes,

“From the start, our Museum has been dedicated to a fresh and, some would say, radically different approach to museum exhibitions. To put it in the most basic way, we insist that the authentic native voice and perspective guide all our policies, including, of course, our exhibition philosophy” (West, 7).

The exhibitions differ from the Museum of Natural History in a number of ways. They have far fewer artifacts, and each is displayed alongside videos of people talking about the artifacts, their meanings and interpretations. If teachers visit with classes, the museum provides a native interpreter to take your class around. When I visited with a second grade class the interpreter talked about a number of things from a personal perspective. Before we went into the exhibit halls she displayed the flag of her nation, the Metis, and explained the significance of its symbolism. This provides a clear contrast to the experiences available to them at the Museum of Natural History, where they (albeit creatively) examined labeled objects behind glass. Secondly the museum displays

current artwork by American Indians on many different themes. Contemporary art by native artists is framed as equally “Indian” as traditional art from the past.

The display also asks viewers to see the subjectivity inherent in its own representation, and asks viewers to take a reflexive stance. The objects on display at the museum are individually interpreted by particular people. Each interpreter shares what they think of the object, and how they came to that understanding. All of the people are themselves Native. In this model, the “life” that the objects take on has to do with their relationship to the present in its human form, not just to a theoretical, abstract life of the past. As an observer, you are asked to consider what the existence of the object means to you, and to find out what it means to another person who is native.

I am suggesting that when we consider what it is we are “studying” with students we not have an excessive attachment to, or restrict ourselves to only the “old” ways that are the obvious markers of cultural difference. This would be falling into the same snare that Malinowski found himself in. The academic and public world wanted to see “real natives” who were “unspoiled” so he left the westerners out. But this reduced, simplified, objectified, and fictionalized the people he was trying to represent. When we transmit this understanding to students, we deny them the understanding that native culture exists today, and reinforce the idea that the only “real” native culture is “in the past.”

In his (1992) book, *For An Amerindian Autohistory*, Georges Sioui addresses this issue directly. He contextualizes and quotes a conversation he had with Onandaga leader Oren Lyons:

“In the words of... (Lyons)...being Indian in America has, fundamentally, nothing to do with the suppressed material or physical characteristics of the “Indians” of

old: ‘We have lost our old ways, but the principles that we go by are not old: peace is not old, justice is not old, equity is not old, it’s what everybody aspires to. Those (things) are ours...We’re contemporary people. I don’t apologize for standing in these clothes today, for that’s what I wear. This is me, this is the Hudenosaunee right now, right here...we don’t expect to see (former US President Ronald) Reagan with a white wig” (Sioui, 32).

Secondly, we don’t have to represent other cultures to students as unanimous, everyone-thinks-this-way entities. One aspect of being human is our individuality within our own culture(s). Not all Ashkenazic Jewish people like the taste of gefilte fish. Some people call themselves “Black,” some people call themselves “African-American.” As we learn about people who belong to cultures that we are not familiar with, there can be a tendency to want to construct them as homogeneous. People can be represented like animals who display behavior, but do not themselves understand it, or possess the ability to see it from the outside. As a result we can over interpret a monolithic culture into a individual person’s self-expression. We don’t always want everything we do to be associated with our culture.

Lucie Idlout a Canadian, Inuit singer song-writer expresses this in an interview:

“...I also try not to allow people to highlight the fact that I’m Inuit, because I’m a singer/songwriter/ I’m a musician, and that’s what I am. I’m Lucie Idlout, yes, first and foremost. I don’t deny the fact that I’m Inuit. I love the fact that I’m Inuit—I’m proud of my people. I can’t deny that it’s a part of who I am...But if you have a Spanish person, or an African-American person, or whoever out there doing their art, they’re not necessarily doing that to represent their culture...” (Idlout interview).

Last year my class and I worked with an excellent book, Diane Hoyt-Goldsmith’s *Arctic Hunter*, which I believe deals with all of the issues above. The book is kind of a photojournalistic piece about a real boy, and his family. Reggie is ten years old. He lives in a community in northern Alaska. The book is about his first successful seal hunt. Just like the book, *Clambake*, *Arctic Hunter* represents Reggie as an individual within a

culture that is meaningful to him, and as an individual in our particular country, where many of us live in a mix of traditional and mass cultures. On one page Reggie explains that part of the tradition at fishing camp is to play games. He talks about the value of the traditional games:

“We play all sorts of outdoor games. Many of these were invented by our Inupiaq ancestors and have been played for centuries. They are fun, but they also help us to develop our strength, endurance and coordination (Hoyt-Goldsmith, 24).

The accompanying photos show the boys playing the high kick game, as well as playing an electronic game that one of them has brought along. On one page his family sits down to eat Pizza, and his mother cuts the slices with an *ulo*, a traditional woman’s tool.

These cultural changes are not represented as a necessary contrast to Reggie’s Inupiaq identity, contrast to his native-ness, but part of it. At the end of the book, it reads:

“Even though more changes will come, I will continue to live as my parents have taught me—the Inupiaq way.” (Hoyt-Goldsmith, 30).

So, Reggie’s being Inupiat is fully in the present. He uses glass, not walrus stomach for the window in the sod house, but this does not mean he is not native. In fact, the house and its window are parts of, rather than an exceptions to his culture. At the same time, his being Inupiat is it is not all there is to know about him.

Constructing Self and Other

If we say, “we are studying the Inuit this year,” what we are most likely studying are not actual people, but objects made by people and/or *representations of people*, such as photographs, illustrations, texts, recorded sound, and moving images. As I have discussed above, these representations are products of another person’s perceptions, recording, and organization of some experience of another person or group of people, and are shaped by the mediums used to record and reproduce an experience. Benedict, for example, acknowledged the fact that her final piece was a “fiction” with a great deal of truth in it. In this way she *constructed a version* of the people that she studied that was not the same as the people themselves.

Critics have explored the questions of why and how --through representations in history, anthropology, literature, television, movies, and other media --the West has created ideas about various groups of people over the centuries. What do these constructions mean? What political, cultural and economic hegemonies do they perpetuate and/or emerge from? Some critics have applied the theory and terminology of psychoanalysis to the study of these representations, looking for ways that one group collectively “projects” their own fears, desires, and ideals onto others, and asked what representations of other people might tell us about the identities of their authors?

I’d like explore ways that these questions have both clarified and complicated my own social studies teaching practice, especially when it concerns the study of American Indians or Inuit. What texts, articles, images, movies, web-sites will I use to represent real people? What’s the difference between one image and another? What is going on behind different images and texts? How will I frame these representations for the

students? What do I want my students to know and/or ask about a representation when they see it? How do I want them to make their own representations?

An exhibit at the National Museum of the American Indian, “Spirit Capture” brings up many questions of representation, as this excerpt from the brochure explains:

“What does an Indian look like? This exhibition of images ... explores the ways in which photography has shaped and reflected popular impressions of Native peoples. It also invites four contemporary Native photographers, inheritors of this legacy of image-making, to offer their responses to these photographs and the ideas they represent” (Spirit Capture Exhibit Text).

While many people recognize stereotypes in drawn images, we more often tend to assume that photographs and films are equivalents of reality. This exhibit continually reminds the viewer that “no photograph is neutral, “ and that “there are three parties to every photograph—photographer, subject, and viewer.” Each plays a significant role in the construction of meaning from the image. The image itself is only a collection of colors on paper or on a screen. The meaning that the image takes on depends on how we read it.

The exhibit begins with an exhibition and critique of the photography of Edward Curtis. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Curtis traveled the central plains and the west, photographing Indians on and off the newly formed reservations. In many ways, Curtis created and canonized the images of American Indians that are now so recognizable to us: the chief with the large feather headdress, arms folded, tomahawk in hand. The exhibit explains how these images were, like Benedict’s book about witchcraft, fictional products of Curtis’ ideas about Indians, and what he perceived the viewing/buying public wanted to see in Indians. In order to fashion his images, Curtis

asked his subjects to strike particular poses, or to hold tomahawks which he supplied, and to wear headdresses.

Curtis' work was effective. More than making people think that Indians always wore headdresses or pointed stone-faced at eagles in the sky, Curtis' work helped create an alluring, mystical aura of the exotic around the idea of Indians. For example, the exhibit includes the account of R. Richard West, himself Native, of an experience he had with the photographs as a child:

“Once, as a child, I was sitting with a much older Indian man, the two of us leafing through a book of photographs of Edward R. Curtis. I was as mesmerized as a seven-year old could be by the handsome, often panoramic visions and their gentle sepia tones...

West's older companion, unlike much of Curtis' contemporary non-native audience, recognized the fiction Curtis had created:

“When I remarked how much I liked the pictures, my elderly companion dispatched my youthful and apparently indiscriminating admiration by gruffly noting, ‘It was nothing like that.’” (Spirit Capture Exhibit Text)

So what was it like? This conversation brings up a number of questions for teachers. Curtis' constructed Indians, and other similar ideals are indeed fascinating and we want our students to be interested and engaged in their learning. How will we choose to construct Indians in our classrooms?

I have come to part of an answer, and some more questions as I have tried to explore the idea of “stereotypes” with children. Most students from 7 to 11 years old that I have taught are familiar with the idea of the “stereotype.” They often understand that it is a simplified or untruthful idea, that says “all Indians frown,” or “all Black people are good athletes.” As a student teacher, I asked 7 and 8 year olds to pick out images of Indians that seemed like stereotypes, and the overwhelming majority chose images that

are derived from Curtis' imagery: a frowning chief, standing in a headdress with his arms crossed.

By today's standards of common knowledge about the diversity of American Indian cultures, Curtis' images are now bold stereotypes. Many people now know that symbols of Indian-ness such as feather headdresses and tomahawks are particular to certain groups of people and not to others, and that "it's not really like that." However, the patterns of production and interpretation of images have not changed. To consider how we can approach various representations with students, as well as abstract issues of representation it will be useful to consider how the exhibit re-framed Curtis' work.

The exhibit challenges the viewer of a photograph to consider various possibilities when it comes to how they will create meaning from it. Once the viewer understands that there are three parties involved in the creation of meaning, they have more to ask about the image. We are forced to ask ourselves: What has the photographer chosen to take a picture of? What is the subject doing? Is the subject aware that they are being photographed? As the viewer, what am I looking for? What am I expecting to see? Regardless of the source, once we actively consider our own role in the creation of meaning from an image, we begin to see the ways that meanings have been assigned to the image from outside sources –our own cultural environment, to name the most significant.

For example, the end of the exhibit includes a set of photographs of people who worked as "Indians" in the travelling "Wild-West Shows" of the early part of the century. One photograph shows a man, himself a Seminole from Florida, wearing a headdress and full plains-Indian attire. In the next photograph he is standing with his coworkers, in his

overalls and T-shirt. This juxtaposition forces us to separate the actual person from the cultural construct of the Indian. I remember having a similar experience as a teenager. I was at a Pow-Wow where many people were wearing traditional clothing. I heard one of them call out to his friend, “Hey can you get me a burger?” I remember feeling ashamed at my own surprise.

Like my teenage self, my 2nd grade students had an intellectual understanding that the “frowning chief” image was a stereotype, yet this image remained persistent as their minds as the Indian ideal. As part of our learning about native people of the Northeast, I read the students the book Clambake. The first page shows a kid in his room. There are posters, a computer, and a model airplane. I showed the picture and read the start of the book to the class, “Steven Peters is a Wampanoag Indian.” (cite page). Students of all colors gasped and said “huh?” I was struck at how persistent the ideal was in their mind, but happy that they seemed to quickly assimilate the new idea and listened intently to the rest of the book.

As we were learning about the Inuit as a co-teacher that I worked with devised a great activity for our class that also served to separate our sense of the “Eskimo” ideal from the real life people. It came in the context of our study of stereotypes. We had already read *Iglook's Seal*, and labeled the squinty eyes and constant smiles of the people as “stereotypes.” This time, the teacher found images that depicted the same events from two different sources, *Iglook's Seal*, and a contemporary photojournalist's images of an Inuit community in the arctic. She showed them in succession to the kids and asked them to explain their reactions. For example, first she showed the image of Iglook pulling a fish out of a hole in the ice, and smiling, like always as he held it up triumphantly. Next

she showed a photograph of a kid standing, smiling at the camera with a fish hanging on a line.

The students were able to explain the differences in the form of the images despite their similar content. They explained that the photograph looked “like real life,” while the image from *Iglook’s Seal* looked “too happy all the time.” When it came to pictures of an igloo, some students argued that the clean, simple lines of the igloos “bricks” made making an igloo look “too easy.” They cited the fact that the photo images showed how the snow was rough, and how constructing the Igloo was not as simple as the picture might imply. This juxtaposition of two different representations of the same ideas gave the students the ability to see the ways that differing images can infuse the same concept, like “ice fishing” or “igloo” with very different meanings. They were able to differentiate the pictures as one that tells us about a person, and one that tells us about constructed ideas about people.

Why are some ideas about Indians so persistent in our collective understandings? In his book (1998) *Playing Indian*, Phillip J. Deloria argues that constructs of “Indians” and “Indianness” have functioned in the formation of non-native American identities. He looks at how symbols of “Indianness” have been appropriated –particularly through “play”– by social groups and movements from American Revolutionaries, to sports teams, to summer camps, to counter-culture movements. His book is not so much an exploration of negative caricatures of American Indians but an exploration of how Americans have created various symbols for Indians, then assigned these symbols different meanings as they suit their own ideological needs. In the modern era, Deloria writes, we have used Indian play...

“...to encounter the authentic amidst the anxiety of urban industrial and postindustrial life...At the turn of the 20th century, the thoroughly modern children of angst-ridden upper and middle class parents wore feathers and slept in tipis and wigwams at camps with multi-syllabic Indian names...over the past 30 years, the counterculture, the men’s movement, and a host of other Indian performance options have given meaning to Americans lost in a (post)modern free-fall. In each of these historical moments, Americans have returned to the Indian, reinterpreting intuitive dilemmas surrounding Indianness to meet the circumstances of their times”(Deloria, 7).

Deloria explains that as our society became one that was increasingly dependent on the unpredictability and coldness of industry, many people felt a sense of longing for some simpler, more meaningful ideal, a way of life that was “close to nature.” Markers of an imagined Indian-ness were used as to validate various responses to the cultural and economic changes of modernity. Deloria cites a number of examples, and I would like to focus on those that struck me as relevant to our choices in social studies education. Of particular interest are those moments in history when adults have created ways for children to “play Indian” for explicitly, educational and/or recreational purposes, and implicitly, Deloria argues, for ideological purposes.

Deloria describes the historical moment at the turn of the 20th century as one in which many Americans were searching for a way to instill a “modern American character” in the next generation of boys, who many people thought were “imperiled by an effeminate, postfrontier urbanism” (Deloria, 96). In 1901, Ernest Thompson Seton, (one of the men who later co-founded the Boy Scouts of America) created a youth development organization which he called the “Woodcraft Indians.” Deloria quotes Seton’s later writings to provide a rationale:

“The Red Man is the apostle of outdoor life, his example and precept are what young America needs today above any other ethical teaching” (Deloria, 96).

As ideals that represented connection with nature and hearty wilderness survival skills, symbols of Indians played a vital role in Seton's "Indians." Seton organized his boys into a make-believe "tribe," the Sinaways, and they made themselves Indian costumes. In a photo taken in 1903 a group of white boys can be seen standing in front of a teepee, wearing feathers in their hair and pointing bows and arrows at the camera. (Deloria, 96-97).

If urban boys were seen as needing to regain their masculinity, urban girls were seen as needing to regain their domesticity, and an imagined Indianness was invoked in institutions that perpetuated this ideology as well. A group for girls that was closely linked to Seton's group was called the "Camp-Fire Girls." In this group, girls would dress up as Indians and learn various domestic skills. Like the modern Girl Scouts, they moved through a progression of honors and badges, from "woodgatherer," to "firemaker," to "torchbearer." Deloria argues that Indianness was constructed as a rationale for an economic endeavor. Training girls for domestic work was thought of as connecting them to a more "natural" female state of being (like Indian women supposedly were) rather than simply keeping them doing the work of homemaking and childcare without pay (Deloria, 113). The process was romanticized through the use of Indian imagery, and girls were compensated not by money, but by their upward movement through the various Indian identities.

In both cases, Indianness was constructed to resolve a conflicted sense of American identity. As Deloria writes, this involved creating certain symbols of Indianness, then assigning them value as *authentic*. The implicit statements then become: "Real boys should know how to work with wood, like Indians, who are in a more natural

state of being. Real women should be skilled at raising children and doing housework, like Indians who are in a more natural state of being.” It is useful now to consider a more abstracted version of “authenticity,” to see if we can formulate questions about our own constructed Others. As Deloria writes:

“The authentic, as numerous scholars have pointed out, is a culturally constructed category created in opposition to a perceived state of inauthenticity. The authentic serves as a way to imagine and idealize the real, the traditional, and the organic in opposition to the less satisfying qualities of everyday life...Because those seeking authenticity have already defined their own state as inauthentic, they easily locate authenticity in the figure of an Other. This Other can be coded in terms of time (nostalgia or archaism), place (the small town), or culture (Indianness). The quest for such an authentic Other is a characteristically modern phenomenon, one that has often been played out in the contradictions surrounding America’s long and ambivalent engagement with Indianness” (Deloria, 101).

Deloria argues that for Indians to be constructed as this authentic Other, they had to be constructed in a location that was *both in the past and the present at the same time*. These Indians existed within our nation’s borders, yet *in another world* (Deloria, 103). Deloria argues that much of the work done to create this Indian was done by the “old” anthropology which I have referenced above: “The salvaging of disappearing native cultures required imagining them in a precontact “ethnographic present” always temporally outside of modernity” (Deloria, 105-106). It is important to note that this present was thought of as “in the past” in the sense that Indians not only lived as they did in past years, but that they were behind white people in a natural evolution of society from “simple” to “complex.”

Children are certainly exposed to similar politics of representation in the dominant media. For example, the popular television show, *Survivor*, adopts particular caricatures of “native” culture as markers of the “exotic” and/or “dangerous.” Contestants are organized into “tribes,” and have meetings of a “tribal council.” The word “tribe,”

and set pieces such as torches, straw huts, and masks with glowing eyes are all signifiers of an unspecified "primitive" culture. Finished with a meeting, the participants say, "The tribe has spoken," echoing the broken, formalized English that has come to signify the noble savage. Like the boys in Seton's camp, by acting "savage" the participants participate in the fantasy that they are travelling back in time to a more authentic human self.

On a more explicit and concrete level, markers of the more specific Indian other are still used to stand for reasons to feel fear and/or fascination. The painted faces, feathers in hair, and hand-made weapons that are the symbols for sports teams. These symbols, also caricatures of more specific cultural differences are meant to make us feel afraid of the fierceness of the team that they stand for.

All of this strikes me as relevant to the choices we make in our approach to learning about native people in our schools. It forces us to ask more explicit and specific questions about what content we choose, what representations we use to disseminate that content, and what frames we build around it in the form of questions and assignments. To be more specific, I have had to ask myself questions like these: "Is writing a play about Inuit people 'playing Indian' in Deloria's sense?" "Are there ideals that we have projected onto the Others that we study?" What appears important to me for kids to know about the Inuit or the Maasai, and why? When my students handle objects like fish-skin mittens, what do I want them to think about?

Over the last few years I have felt deeply conflicted about some of the learning activities that have become entrenched in the progressive educational world. For example, I have seen the way my class was able to use the process of making large

models to synthesize information about the arctic environment, and how people have made their living using that environment. But, throughout, I had mixed feelings about the entire thing. It didn't really fit in with the ideas I had been exposed to in college. I asked myself and my colleagues, "How would I feel if some kids were making a model of a "Jewish Home"?"

A number of factors have come into play as I try to figure out my answer.

Travelling in eastern Europe in fact, I have noticed various ways in which Jews and Jewishness have been idealized and objectified in the ways I have looked at Indianness. In Prague for example, soon after tourism hit big, the Jewish quarter was crowded with tourists and kiosks selling memorabilia, such as little yarmulkes that read "Praha" in Hebrew letters. One could don this yarmulke and "play Jewish." I visited a museum in Birobidzhan, a region in the Russian far east that was specifically set aside (by Stalin) for Jewish resettlement. The museum displayed Jewish culture in the same way that many museums here display native culture: photos of people at the dinner table, and labeled: "a Jewish family at Sabbath dinner," Ritual objects like a *menorah*, and *teffilin* were behind glass and labeled with captions that explained their use. On one hand, I felt kind of intrigued to be framed as exotic, interesting enough to put on display. On the other hand, I sensed that some meaning was being attributed to the Otherness of Jewish objects, a meaning that I did not participate in the creation of.

In his book, *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*, Mordecai Richler explores a similar situation. Duddy is a working-class Jewish adolescent in pre-war Montreal, looking to pull himself up by his bootstraps. A gentile, down-and-out, and failed avant-garde filmmaker agrees to collaborate with Duddy to make a film for his cousin's Bar

Mitzvah, which will earn them both some cash. The family wanted a nice photo-album kind of thing. The filmmaker, on the other hand, took the opportunity to indulge in the “intellectual” work that he had failed at previously. As a result, the Bar Mitzvah movie became a (hilarious) over representation of the “primitive” and “ancient” aspects of the ritual that appealed to the artsy non-Jewish filmmaker’s eye for the exotic Other. This happened in exactly the same way as Curtis created an exotic Indian by framing his subjects in certain colors, poses, and contexts. The images of people then become representations of cultural ideals in the minds of the re-presenter more than they are representations of people.

Returning to my question as a teacher. How can we give students access to representations of people, not ideals? How can we make ourselves aware of the effect that our choices of frame make? A beginning to the answer lies, I believe, in actively trying to break out of modes of representation that imagine the subjects of our study in “the ethnographic present,” that *other world, separate from our own* where the subjects live. Rather than enticing students with the narrative that positions them as time-travelling ethnographer protagonists, we can ask them to explore the various facets of our human present through the experiences of that present that we have in common with people who live in various places and cultures. In *Arctic Hunter*, we learn that the meaning of Reggie’s hunting his first seal is rooted in his cultural present and his connection to his cultural past. The fact that he hunts with a rifle shouldn’t detract from this meaning, and we shouldn’t feel that it is less worthy of knowing about because he uses a rifle and not a harpoon made of bone and sinew.

In no way does this translate into leaving “traditional ways” out of the curriculum. Instead it frames tradition as *relevant to the present, a present which is mutual to students and the people they are learning about*, or “us” and “them.” In 1999, a group of Inuit students at Nunavut Arctic College conducted a series of interviews with local elders. In their preface to the interview transcripts, Kublu, Laugrand, and Oosten explain the relevance of the cultural past to the cultural present. Their framing of traditional Inuit culture swiftly breaks it out of the mold of the “ethnographic present” and into the real present:

“The elders were not only instructing the young students about practices and customs which existed when they were young, but also connected their descriptions of these customs and practices to their own views of modern society and current practices and values. We have to assume this is “traditional” practice...Traditional knowledge is not something abstract and separated from the context in which it is produced, but it is always related to the present” (Kublu et al, 8).

Framed this way, students do not learn about traditional knowledge because it explains someone’s strange behavior, or because it provides them with insight into “that Other culture,” but because it is knowledge that is valuable for the present day. For example, in my class we had been discussing the issues around drilling for oil in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Questions about the justifications for killing and using animals, balancing human needs with animal needs, and the idea of “respecting” animals had all come up. I thought it would be interesting for students to read some excerpts from one of the *Inuit Elders* interviews, and see how they were relevant to our discussions about what the government should do legally about drilling for oil in the arctic. In the preface to chapter one, the editors write:

Mariano Aupilaarjuk introduces the notions of *tirigusuusit*, things that have to be avoided, *maligait*, things that have to be followed, and *piqujait*, things that have to be done, by comparing them to modern law...” they then quote Aupilaarjuk, who says, ‘I

would like to look at the Inuit *maligait* that we had in the past and compare them with the laws we have today, so we could develop better laws for the future” (Kublu et. al, 13).

In this representation, Inuit represent themselves within our mutual present, like us, they live within our legal system and perhaps question it by comparing it with their own traditional values, just as we do. Within this frame, students read and responded to an interview with another elder, Emile Imaruittuq, who said,

“There is no *piqujaq* about over-harvesting wildlife. We are told not to mistreat or abuse wildlife or it can become depleted. For example, there were two lakes that were know to be good for ice fishing. There was a man who grumbled and said bad things about wildlife. Because of what he said, one lake was rapidly depleted of fish and today it is a very bad fishing place even though it is a large lake which should have fish” (Kublu, et. al, 45).

Whether or not students believe that there is a cause and effect relationship between the man’s “grumbling” and the declining fish population, they can certainly apply the same value system to their own consideration of the ANWR issue. As we can see, our lack of “respect” for nature’s resources, --implicit in the rate at which we deplete them-- has caused us to use them up too fast, and as a result we are low on energy and sustainable food sources.

As we have seen, the ideology of “authenticity” relegates “tradition” or any marker of native culture to an “untouched” space and time that is removed from our own. So hand in hand with this goes a depreciation of cultural change as “inauthentic.” In his article, “The Art of Inuit Storytelling,” The filmmaker Zacharias Kunuk explains the connection between his modern filmmaking and his own community’s cultural continuity. Filmmaking, in his eyes, is not a marker of “inauthentic” Inuit culture, but a genuine continuation of the storytelling tradition that kept Inuit culture alive for millennia:

“When I began to see myself as an aboriginal person and a filmmaker I learned there are different ways to tell the same story. People in Igloolik learned through storytelling who we were and where we came from for 4000 years without a written language...I noticed when my father and his friends came back from hunting they would always sit down with tea and tell the story of their hunt. And I thought it would be great to film hunting trips so you wouldn't have to tell it, just show it. In 1981 I sold some carvings and bought a video camera. When I watched my videos I noticed kids gathered outside my window looking in to see the TV. That was how special it was at the beginning. (Kunuk).

In each of the above instances native and non-native cultures are framed not as separate entities, but as intertwined. When students see concrete examples of the ways that our lives and cultures affect one another they are able to retain respect for the differences, as well as for their mutual significance. This brings me back to the idea of “dialogue” rather than “study.” With an understanding that they live in the same present-day world, students might be compelled to ask Jane what she thinks about drilling for oil in the arctic wildlife refuge and the ethics of whaling, rather than asking her one way questions about what life is like on *her* planet.

Back to the Questions

I have discussed a number of issues in anthropology as they pertain to social studies curriculum. I'd like to now return to the teaching experiences that I began with, and try to synthesize and concretize what I have covered.

I began with a number of anecdotes from my teaching experience that brought up questions for me. Alex called it "rude," to tell a potential pen-pal: "we're studying you." Kevin felt that the MACOS film notes "stereotyped the Inuit," while much of the class felt that the text was harmless, though a book like *Iglook's Seal*, with visual stereotypes, was not. I felt that the films themselves imposed an exploring-an-alien world narrative on the students, and I questioned the value of their lack of subtitles. I theorized that each of these anecdotes pointed toward a dynamic that reduced and simplified the human subjects of the study to types, and put us at a distance from them.

In fact, MACOS was not created to create a sense of distance, or to simplify. In fact, it sets out to achieve very similar goals to my own. The authors of MACOS wanted students to know that as different as people appear, we all share a humanity that runs deeper than what is immediately apparent. They wanted students to be able to see ways that their own behavior "mirrors" those of people from another culture; and to develop an understanding that each person is an individual within their own culture. They also wanted students to know that as we look at others we look through lenses tinted by our own culture(s). (Dow, 4-9, 11).

Despite these, the structure of MACOS asks students to take a stance toward their subject of study that I believe puts them in a position which is unnecessarily distant, and implicitly superior. The stance they are to take as they watch the films is akin to the

stance of adults watching children play through one-way glass, or like bird-watchers concealed in a viewing box. The students are positioned in one place, where they can see the subject but cannot be seen by the subject. Both student and subject are supposed to pretend that there is no camera there. The learners are supposed to have a set of perceptive and cognitive tools that allows them observe and then explain the behavior of the subject, yet the subject appears unaware that they are exhibiting one behavior or another.

If we want to figure out why a bear walks from point A to point B, we have no choice but to observe the bear, read about the bear, and then make some educated guesses to explain his behavior. We hope that the bear will not see us, because then the bear would be doing something he might not otherwise do, and we won't know what a bear's "natural" reason for going from A to B is. In his reflection on the creation of MACOS, Peter Dow states explicitly that this is the learning dynamic they were aiming for in MACOS, as kids adopted (one particular version of) the role of the "ethnographer in the field":

"Like laboratory studies in the natural sciences, ethnographic films allowed students to subject behavior to repeated observations and analysis. Instead of telling students how people in other cultures behave and why, the films permitted children to figure things out for themselves through direct observation" (Dow, 1991, 95).

In order to preserve this distance from which students can "observe," MACOS has to keep its audience in a state of suspended disbelief. We have to believe in the story that they have created of a Netsilik family travelling through the seasons, yet we have to believe what is happening is real enough that giving it "repeated observations" is going to improve our understanding of humanity.

Unlike the experience of watching a bear go from Point A to Point B, the films are indeed man-made narratives that are constructed to evoke particular ideas, despite MACOS' contention that children will "figure things out for themselves." In fact, what they will "figure out" is partially dictated by the subjectivity of the filmmaking process: what the filmmakers have chosen to shoot, what images they have kept, what images they have discarded, what sounds they have added or subtracted, how they have sequenced the images, what the actors have chosen to do on the screen.

When Benedict came to the realization that her "ethnography" was turning into more of a novella, she chose to make the subjectivity of her process transparent. MACOS does not make the construction of its certain fictional world transparent to students or teachers. However, a small window into the process that went into constructing the MACOS representations can be found in Peter Dow's (1991) book, *Schoolhouse Politics*, which retells the story of the creation of MACOS.

Dow retells the story of a set of planning sessions, proposals, letters, and dialogues that took place between the scholars who were steering MACOS in its early stages, and the University of Montreal anthropologist Asen Balicki. Balicki had recently completed his fieldwork in Pelly Bay, and had agreed to collaborate with the new curriculum project and make films about the Netsilik. Harvard anthropologist Douglas Oliver, who was part of the MACOS steering committee corresponded with Balicki as the films were begun shot and edited.

Firstly, Dow explains that the films were envisioned as "reconstructions" of Netsilik life as it was decades earlier:

"Oliver explained to Balicki that he wanted to create an ethnographic film record of Inuit culture that would illustrate how Eskimos lived at the time Knud Rasmussen

first encountered them during his Arctic trek of 1923, when they subsided entirely as hunter-gatherers using traditional stone and bone tools” (Dow, 1991, 60-61).

Since everything had to be as it was decades earlier, there were some early “technical problems...such as occasional anachronisms (underpants, band-aids, nails, and so forth)” (Dow, 1991, 62).

Secondly, the films were narratives that were constructed to evoke particular anthropological understandings of Netsilik culture:

“Balicki planned his films to show culture arising from a dynamic interaction between human beings and their environment, where the behavior of the actors reflects social and spiritual as well as subsistence requirements...He wanted to show each camp as an integrated whole the reflected the interrelationship between sustenance activities, technology, social life, child-rearing, recreation, ritual, and religion” (Dow, 1991, 62).

Finally, the whole thing was meant to appear “real” in the sense that the actors would not appear to know they were being filmed. Dow quotes an early letter to Balicki from Oliver, who was pleased with the footage: “We particularly liked your chief characters. I could see no evidence of any self-consciousness on their part” (Dow, 1991, 62).

Above, we saw that Dow envisioned the students’ viewing of the films to operate like “laboratory studies in the natural sciences.” He advocates the idea of students “figuring things out for themselves” through “repeated observations and analysis” as a superior alternative to their being simply given explanations of human behavior. No progressive educator could disagree. However, it appears that according to Dow, the only alternative to the “observation” method is the “telling” voice of an academic authority, explaining the action from. The alternative that I am trying to keep central to curriculum is to have the voices of the subjects themselves doing the telling and explaining. This self-representational, interpretive voice is the same voice that the

Museum of the American Indian asserts so clearly. This is the subjective, individual voice that comes through so clearly in *Arctic Memories, Saqiuyuq, or Shaman's Nephew*, and in my classes visit to the Museum of the American Indian.

Unlike bears, who we have to just “observe” people have the capacity to reflect on our own experiences, and share these reflections with one another through art, music, and language. We don't need to study one another as if we are bears, we can actually *talk* to one another! Rather than attempting to piece together ideas about “man” as a whole by watching them pile rocks, we can have a conversation, and compare our experiences with one another.

The contrast between the two approaches is well illustrated by considering two ways to get across the same idea. For example, in order to help students understand the idea that all people are individuals within their own cultures, MACOS would have students figure observe and theorize. As Hans Guggenheim writes in the teacher's guide:

"An individual's personality can be understood in part through his decisions for actions. By observing one individual, the Netsilik hunter Itimangnark in our films, we can note that he will pile up rocks in a certain way, take a particular stance over a hole in the ice for many hours and beat a special kind of drum in a particular way. (Guggenheim, 53).

Educationally and politically speaking, I much prefer to have my students come to the same conceptual understanding through reading the personal account of Apphia Agalakti Awa, mentioned earlier. She herself explains her own preference for the smell of caribou fat over seal fat. In this passage all of the above concepts are contained in a genuine, human voice that is talking to us directly. The concept has a real concrete foundation, and we can easily relate the experience of preference of two cultural details to one of our own, like the taste of hamburgers over hot-dogs.

It is essential now to affirm that there is nothing wrong with the idea of people going out to make movies that depict particular ways of life, or to attempt to “reconstruct” a particular time and place for educational purposes. Reconstructions of past eras are popular formats for museums like the various “colonial villages” that attract tourists and schools in the northeast. The recent film, *Atanarjuat*, was written, directed, and produced by an Inuit-run company, and though the story is based on a “fictional” tale, the filmmakers intended to represent Inuit life as it was before Inuit contacted people of European descent with as much realism as possible.

My problem with MACOS is not that it attempts to reconstruct Inuit life of the past, but that it does not allow teachers or students to “see through” the reconstruction. It insists that we ask our students to view the films not as human constructions, but as reality. It would not be completely fair to say that MACOS completely obscures the “truth” behind the films. In the original design of the course, students were meant, at the very end, to watch Balicki’s films about “The Netsilik Today,” and consider “acculturation” (Dow, 1991, 126). However, this does not change the way the students are meant to relate to the bulk of the films. The framers of MACOS chose to construct a Netsilik world of the past because they believed that a “simple” society would provide students with a good way to study the universal traits of humankind (Dow, 1968, 3-11).

My argument is that we can learn just as much about human universals, and do so more easily and truthfully, and without belittling our subjects, when we do so by making connections with real people in our present reality. We live in a complex world. Why do we need to make up a “simple” one for students to study? These “connections” can be real, as they were when we visited the Museum of the American Indian, or when we

wrote to Jane. But they are often virtual in the sense that they are made through our exposure to people through books, videos, art, music, and internet media.

As mentioned earlier, students can develop an appreciation and understanding the meaning and value of tradition through the reality of the present day. As Siuoi, Kunuk and Kublu have pointed out to us, the significance and meaning of a cultural past lies in the present. We can come to these understandings through knowing individual, subjective humans beings, through their of cultural practices on both sides of the culture mirror, and especially through our mutual experience of the conflict we all experience as we live “between” cultures.

Texts like *Arctic Hunter* and *Clambake* make these concepts concrete and readily available to students. In *Arcitic Hunter*, Reggie explains how traditional Inupiat ways are an important part of his present, and how they coexist with new ways.

The design of our sod house is centuries old. First there is an outer storage room, where we keep our tools, rifles, and supplies. Next comes an inner storage room where we can hang up our wet clothes to dry. Then comes the largest room, where we all sleep.

This large room has two windows facing the sea. Today the windows are made of glass, but long ago the Inupiat used the stretched and dried stomach of a walrus to keep out the rain and let in the light” (Hoyt-Goldsmith, 11).

He also explains how cultural changes have affected his community in negative ways:

“When my parents were children, there were no schools in their town, so they were sent away from home to attend boarding school in another part of Alaska. With all their classes taught in English, they soon forgot how to speak Inupiaq, their native language....(Hoyt-Goldsmith, 18).

Yet he also explains how the community has actively responded, and worked to maintain tradition within the present:

“But now we are trying to change that. I go to a school near my home where classes are taught in both English and Inupiaq. We even have textbooks, dictionaries and workbooks written in our own language...I know many of the old ways have been good for our people. The values and traditions of the past have given us the strength and skills necessary to survive in this land. They have made our communities strong and kept our people together (Hoyt-Goldsmith, 28).

Like *Arctic Hunter*, *Clambake* keeps cultural details of the past and present in constant juxtaposition, all the while showing the importance of each to the people involved, keeping individuals' personal connection to culture within full view. In *Clambake*, people represent themselves as individuals within their own culture, not as exotics, or ideals, but as people doing things that are important to them, participating in their own cultural lives, and “talking about” them with an audience that is inclusive of both Wampanoag people and non-Wampanoag people. As Michael Dorris writes in the preface:

“If we are ourselves Wampanoag, we will probably nod often while reading these pages, affirming the familiar, approving that this tribal family keeps alive and passes on the traditional way to host an *appanaug*, or clambake. If we belong to another tribe, we will follow this special journey of initiation and education with interest, gaining respect for a way of doing things that's rich and rewarding...” (Dorris writing in Peters, 8).

It's through this dialogue-like encounter, in which we are not looking down and describing, but asking questions, learning and reflecting that we discover that our differences are interesting not as exotic or bizarre, but because they point to our commonalities as people:

“This is a book about people who are neither exotic nor unusual. If you encountered them at a shopping mall or at a movie theater they might seem at first glance like anyone else, a grandfather proud of his grandson, American as apple pie. *Clambake* does not dispute this picture, but it does expand it” (Dorris writing in Peters, 8).

The confluence of cultures within a larger whole is a theme that I looked at through the Inuit sources in previous sections. In this model, each of us is allowed to

“have our cake and eat it too.” We can identify and define ourselves through cultural differences, but these differences do not need to stand for ideals, rather they are differing lenses into, and experiences within our common situation in this time and place.

Arctic Hunter and *Clambake* show us some of the ways that we share, as Americans, a particular cultural dilemma. We are all, in some senses, having to negotiate our own, often new path between the mass culture that we are exposed to each day through the media and through our interactions, and the home cultures that our families carry from wherever they originally came from. We struggle to find ways to identify with both. Reading *Arctic Hunter*, I found Reggie’s communities active work at retaining and rebuilding traditions and language inspiring for my own life, as I struggle to reconcile my own Jewish heritage and my secular lifestyle.

It is important to affirm that the politics of cultural change for American Indians cannot be equated with those for European groups. The systematic depreciation and and destruction that American Indian cultures faced cannot be equated with the tides of change that faced European immigrant groups in many cases. In fact, our experiences of these dynamics, at whatever point along a spectrum they fall, can help us study the politics of cultural change.

Ten year-olds are certainly capable of doing this. I was amazed at the way, for example, as we finished reading *Julie of the Wolves*, my students were able to put Julie’s struggle with her father in the context of her larger struggle to reconcile her native heritage and her desire for certain aspects of *gussack* culture, and even connect that to her having two names for herself: Julie and Miyax. This year, we read *Pharaoh’s Daughter*, in which the inner conflict that Moses might have felt being born Hebrew but

raised Egyptian is explored specifically. Students were fully able to understand this. One student in fact, compared Moses' broken Hebrew to her own Spanish: "When my mom speaks fast, I can't understand her."

Any classroom will have students with cultural differences. Any book about some "other place" will provide enough material for students to begin to explore the diversity of ways that people live on the planet. As we become increasingly interconnected, it will be more and more important for people to be able to read cultural differences as real, but bridgeable. People should be able to assume that there are depths of meaning behind confusing exterior differences, and that when we follow the various branches down, we find that they end up at the same trunk.

We live in a society that is made up of groups and individuals from an unprecedented number of cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Because of this, we have almost constant exposure to markers of cultural difference. We are constantly exposed to the sights and sounds of languages we do not recognize, clothes we have never worn, foods we do not know the name for, gestures we cannot translate. Social and economic divisions also define our society as one made up of continually shifting, overlapping, and changing social components.

School curriculum then, should be aimed at demystifying cultural differences, while acknowledging their reality. As students read through source material in which individuals from various cultures represent themselves, when they are exposed to images and texts that show people who are different being human along the terms that we think of begin human every day; having feelings, dealing with friends and family, negotiating our social universe, and when they see and express the way their own lives are reflected

in what they see in the lives others, they can then begin to find the abstract categories like "family" "religion" "kinship" or "survival" or "conflict" as concepts that arise from the things that we all have in common, rather than from a taxonomy, or conceptual breaking-apart of a single cultural construct. I believe that this can give students the tools they need to reflect on how culture will play into their daily lives in our diverse country, and to build understanding and community across cultural lines.

Amidst all the theorizing and comparing sources and frames of reference, it can be easy to lose track of the most basic feature of culture, that is that it is often deeply important to people. Outside of any abstraction, we all have emotional connections to some aspects of our culture. Some people treasure music, others language, others recipes, others games. We all value tradition because it connects us to people who lived before us and will live after us. As one student noticed it was important to transmit culture within her own family, she wrote, "I have to be careful around my sister because my mom wants me to teach my sister our culture." Keeping this in mind, we should be able to approach curriculum and other people with respectful curiosity.

Considering all this, Alex's feeling that "we're studying you" was "rude" makes sense in a new way. Perhaps Alex sensed that to put Jane under scrutiny as a subject of study would be "rude" because it simply doesn't help us connect, person to person, it doesn't sound like a good way to strike up a conversation. In saying that the MACOS film notes "stereotyped" the Inuit, perhaps Kevin sensed that text was more about a constructed cultural ideal (a stereotype is a form of ideal) than it was about actual people. Despite the physical accuracy of caribou hunting scene, he sensed, like R. Richard West's older companion, that "it was nothing like that."

Summary of Questions and Answers

I have asked the questions on the left, and come to the answers on the right.

- What *specific* concrete and abstract understandings of “culture” do I think are valuable for students to learn, especially in a multicultural society?
 - All people have culture(s).
 - People value their cultures. People often feel a deep emotional connection to their beliefs and ways. Culture gives people the experience of connection to one another.
 - Markers of cultural difference are also most often markers of some common human trait(s).
 - An individual may view the way or belief of another with a negative value judgement without sacrificing their overreaching understanding of the universality of culture.
 - The experiences of cultural conflict, cultural confluence, and cultural change are common to nearly everyone in our society today. Culture is flexible, not stagnant.
 - There is most often “more than meets the eye” behind markers of cultural difference. What appears simple is often complex.

- What pedagogical practices and source materials are included in a curriculum that aims to teach the above understandings?
 - Students study the concepts of culture and identity, and reflect on the personal meaning of those concepts
 - Students learn about culture(s) through the use of *self-representational* sources. In such sources, the individuals and groups being “studied” speak for themselves. Interpretations are made by students, not by a third party. As much as possible, teachers foster students having “dialogue” with the people they are learning about, whether it is real dialogue, or “virtual” dialogue.
 - Students are asked to consider the subjectivity, point-of-view, and limitations of the modes of representation of the sources that they use.
 - Reflection on ones own cultural experiences and their relation to the new cultural information and practices are a constant for both students and teachers for the duration of the study.
 - Emotional and intellectual reactions to cultural differences are brought to the surface and processed.

Recommended Teaching Resources about People in the Arctic

Books:

- Craighead George, Jean. Julie of the Wolves. Harper Trophy. New York. 1972

George is not herself native, and this would be an important fact to ask students to consider. There is a lot to discuss in this book. I was particularly interested in the way George explores the conflicts Julie/Miyax feels as she connects with the culture of her father, and as she negotiates the appeal and problems of the gussack culture, as well as her mixed feelings about people from both

- Ekoomiak, Normee. Arctic Memories. Henry Holt and Company. New York. 1988

Normee Ekoomiak writes short explanations to go with reprints of his artwork. His work depicts many different aspects of Inuit life in the past and in the present. He writes affectionately of times in his childhood, his community today, and of times before he was born. He also depicts and explains the religious beliefs of many contemporary Inuit, which combine Christian and Inuit traditions and symbolism. The text is printed in English as well as in Inuktitut syllabics.

- Hoyt-Goldsmith, Diane. Arctic Hunter. Holiday House. New York. 1992.

This book is written from the perspective of Reggie, an Inupiat boy from Alaska. It details his experience of his first seal hunt. Reggie explains many ways that his present day life is similar to those of kids in the continental US, and ways that it is different. He explains the ways that Inupiat culture has changed and adapted with the times, and the ways that his community actively works to continue cultural traditions. The book also gives kids a lot to work with as they consider the reasons why people hunt animals.

- Klengenberg, Elsie Anaginak. Uvajuq: The Origin of Death. Kitikmeot Heritage Society. Cambridge Bay, Nunavut, Canada. 1999.

This is a folk-story retold in both Inuktitut and English, with illustrations by Klengenberg. The book also has sections that explain the history of the community of Cambridge Bay, Nunavut. There are photos and profiles of various elder members of the community, and an explanation of Klengenberg's artistic process. There is also a section that discusses the relationship between the knowledge of the communities elders, the story of Uvajuq, and recent archaeological work in the area.

- Tookoome, Simon & Oberman, Sheldon. The Shaman's Nephew: A Life in the Far North. Stoddart Kids. Toronto. 1999.

Painter Simon Tookoome collaborated with Sheldon Oberman, a Canadian journalist to write this memoir, which tells episodes from his life “on the land” years ago. Each episode is illustrated by one of Tookoome’s paintings, which he often explains the meanings and origins of. The book is a great way for students to learn how an individual lived within traditional Inuit culture, and how he has expressed his memories and feelings about it through art.

- Wachowich, Nancy. Saquiuyuq: Stories from the lives of three Inuit Women. McGill-Queen’s University Press. Montreal. 1999.

This book is incredibly detailed and told from the intimate personal perspectives of three Inuit women from three generations.. Their life stories show the details of life in three overlapping, yet distinct eras in the last century of life in an Arctic community.

Websites:

- Nunavut.com
A gateway to an enormous amount of information and resources, including an Adobe PDF version of the book Interviewing Inuit Elders.
- Cultureglobe.com
This is a fun an interesting site about culture around the world. I found some interesting discussion questions here concerning Lucie Idlout’s interview referenced above.
- International Art Exchange at www.ccpn.com/arcticart
This website posts artwork from kids around the world. It features many drawings by kids from Nunavut that describe the lives of Inuit today and in the past. It would be great to use this site to get students to draw and possibly post their own cultural lives.
- Leo Ussack School
Kids at this school in Nunavut put together a fantastic web-site about their school, their larger community, and the territory of Nunavut. The site includes both fun stuff like games, puzzles, and animations by students, as well as informational text and short Quick-time movies. My students loved this site, especially the introductions different students have written of themselves. It would be a great way to set up “e-pals.”
- Joamie School at www.nunanet.com/~joamie/index.html
Students and teachers teamed up to create a site about their school, located in Iqaluit, the capital of Nunavut. There are sections that include school projects, class pages, information about the school’s community, and links for educators, parents, and students. The site aims to educate its readers about their school, and Nunavut.

Films:

- Films and Videos by Iglooklik/Isuma Productions.
The following excerpt was downloaded from the world-wide-web on 7/17/02 from: http://www.isuma.ca/about_us/index.html
“Iglooklik Isuma Productions Inc. was incorporated in January 1990 as Canada's first Inuit independent production company...Isuma's mission is to produce independent community-based media - video, audio, TV and now Internet - to preserve and enhance Inuit culture and language...” The company has produced a large number of documentary short films and videos. Isuma's first feature film, Atanarjuat: The Fast Runner was recently released in theaters. It is a fantastic film, though some parts of it wouldn't be appropriate for elementary school use.

Music:

- Susan Aglukark
This Canadian Inuit singer has written songs on a variety of topics, including her Inuit cultural heritage. She sings in both Inuktitut and English. Aglukark is also involved with projects to work with Canadian Aboriginal Youth.
- Lucie Idlout
Idlout's music is powerful and from the heart. A lot of it would need a lot of context to work in an elementary classroom, and some of it would not be appropriate for the age. Idlout writes about a variety of topics, some of which are specifically about life as an Inuk, others not. One issue that Idlout takes on that would be great for classroom discussion is the issue of “animal rights” vs. “animal use.” I think that Idlout's perspective is important for kids to hear. Read her interview at [cultureglobe](http://cultureglobe.com) for more. Also look at Lucieidlout.com. It would take more careful work for a teacher, but Idlout has also written about government mistreatment and abuse of Aboriginal people.

The fact that I have included her in this list requires that I also include this excerpt from a recent interview with Idlout: (Downloaded from www.cultureglobe.com/intro/lucie.htm on 7/22/02) “Most of my songs are about life in the Arctic, but they are not in my first language, Inuktitut. I'm a singer/songwriter who sings about life experiences and the experience of my community. But I don't see myself as an ambassador of the Inuit people, teaching the rest of the world what the Inuit lifestyle is about. I want to speak to the global community as Lucie Idlout, not as an Inuit singer/songwriter first –not with that label.”

Her comment gets at the heart of what I was trying to articulate. I want curriculum to allow kids to see people as just people, and not “cultural representatives.”

- Tudjaat
Tudjaat are Inuit throat singers. This is a traditional singing form that goes back thousands of years.

Museums:

- The Smithsonian National Museum of The American Indian.
Located in New York, and soon moving to a larger space in Washington D.C. The museum provides native interpreters for school groups.

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