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Utirumajunga

(I Want to Return):

A Look at Situations of Homelessness Among Inuit Women in Montreal

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ABSTRACT

ᐅᑎᕈᒪᔪᖓ Utirumajunga (I Want to Return): A look at situations of homelessness among Inuit women in Montreal

Lydia Nicole Fanelli

Homelessness among Inuit in urban settings is a topic that has, until recently, largely been ignored. Academic research strictly focused on Inuit women who leave their northern home communities due to a lack of critical resources and move to southern cities despite not having permanent housing there has yet to be written. The purpose of this research is twofold. First, it seeks to answer the question of how Inuit women navigate situations of homelessness in Montreal, Quebec. Further, it explores whether their decision to relocate to Montreal is directly related to the challenges Inuit women experience in Inuit regions. This thesis draws on three interviews with Inuit women living without permanent housing in Montreal. Two overarching categories with five respective sub-themes were identified through a thematic analysis of the qualitative data. These themes account for the similarities regarding the women's experiences with homelessness in Montreal and their living conditions within Inuit Nunangat. Finally, the transition back and forth from their northern communities to Montreal, and the conditions that prompt this phenomenon, are explored. Taken together, these results provide an account of homelessness among Inuit women in Montreal and the northern circumstances that led them to their current situation.

Key Words: Inuit, Women, Homelessness, Inuit Nunangat, Urban relocation

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To Gabriel, you turn 6 months old today. Thank you for reminding me how important it is to finish what I start, and for allowing me delicious moments of reprieve in the most stressful moments of the last months, It has been those times where I've been able to soak in your radiant smile, breathe you in during our countless cuddle sessions and lose myself in your giggles that have given me the strength to push forward. It is finally time to turn the page and move toward new adventures. Onward and upward.

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Identity of the Researcher

A long time ago, prior to my academic endeavours, I experienced several years of homelessness on the streets of Montreal. As a young woman in what was then my late-teens to early-20s I would spend days wandering aimlessly and nights looking for a safe space to lay my head. When I was lucky, I could find a friend's couch or floor to sleep on for a few days; most often, however, I would have no choice but to rest in empty urban spaces. I refused to stay in shelters as I feared I would be attacked, that my meagre bag of possessions would be stolen or that I might get bed bugs. During summers, I would sleep behind a church on Bishop street in an area unnoticeable to passersby. When it would rain, I would take up on a bench in a bus shelter. During the colder months I would either ride the metro until it closed or drink at a bar until last call; then I would ride the night bus circuit until morning.

I made sure to wash up every day in the public bathroom at Place Alexis Nihon food court. The last stall on the left held an accessible toilet with a sink where I could wash my hair and body while avoiding the disgusted looks from other women using the facilities. I would eat scraps from trays of fast food left behind by customers in food courts, grateful for the many individuals who did not bother to discard them. I would count on others to buy me alcohol or share their cigarettes with me. I had difficulty asking people for money and avoided panhandling and squeegeeing as much as my situation would allow. For the most part, people were not aware that I was homeless, but the Inuit women around Atwater would always give me a knowing look or a wink.

I would spend time with many of these women, especially when my friends were safely at home in their beds. Some of the Inuit women were homeless, others were just visiting, but they were always very kind to me. They would call me over and ask me to sit with them. They never hesitated to share their alcohol and stories with me. Sometimes they would teach me a few words

in Inuktuk. Once an Inuk woman took me in her lap (I was much smaller then) and told me how I reminded her of her daughter who was placed into foster care by child protection services. She told me about her family's history of residential school as she stroked my hair and cried. It was the first I had ever heard of residential schools. That conversation later became the motivation behind my honours thesis. These Inuit women shared many of their first-hand experiences with me and taught me things about colonization in their own words that I could never learn in history class. They gave me comfort when I felt imperiled, scared and alone. While surrounded by their laughter, captivated by their stories, and warmed by their embrace, I felt safe. Those moments were the closest I felt to home while homeless. I will forever be indebted to the kindness they showed me when I was most vulnerable. This project is intended to be an expression of my deep gratitude toward those Inuit women who may have been without a home but continued to be full of love.

I eventually found my way off the streets. I secured steady employment, got an apartment, went back to school, got married and adopted two dogs. I still see many Inuit women down by Atwater, laughing, drinking and asking for change. Sometimes I will sit with them for a while and ask them how they are holding up, but it isn't the same as it was. They no longer ask me to stay for hours or play with my hair. Even though I will always remember where I came from, we no longer share the present experience of homelessness[1]. This shift prompted me to reflect on the privilege I have as a white, bilingual, educated individual. These characteristics presented me with several opportunities to move from being a street-engaged youth to what is considered a contributing member of society. I am in no way more deserving than Inuit women to have gotten

[1] For the sake of transparency, it should be noted that in the years following the field work conducted for this research, I have been employed by and maintain active contact with several community organizations who serve Inuit women. Specifically, I have occupied the following roles: facilitating leadership workshops for Inuit with Nunavik Youth Houses Association, a counsellor for Frontier College, an intervention worker and then later the Inuit Housing First caseworker at The Open Door; I am currently employed as the Inuit Assistance Program caseworker at Chez Doris.

back on my feet; certainly not by virtue of the colour of my skin and the opportunities afforded me based on the region in which I was born.

This critical reflection served as the catalyst to my research. My initial question, then, was what it means to not only be female and homeless in Montreal, but also Inuk. When we look at what has happened in Canadian society over the last 70 years, it is easy to see why there are so many Inuit women in situations of homelessness. Following this, as I recalled the anecdotes many Inuit women shared with me about life in their northern communities, I ask how their northern challenges motivate their decision to move to Montreal. This research is meant to pay credence to the multi-scalar experiences of Inuit women who had the temerity to leave difficult situations in their home communities, who smile despite the adversity they face while homeless in Montreal, and who continue to dream of an optimistic future for themselves

INTRODUCTION

Inuit, including their predecessors, have lived in the Arctic and Subarctic regions of what we now call Canada for over 4000 years (Parnasimautik 2014). According to the 2016 census data, there are approximately 65,000 Inuit in Canada. Of the total population, 73% of Inuit currently reside in the four Inuit regions, known collectively as Inuit Nunangat. These regions comprise the territory of Nunavut, Nunavik (Northern Quebec), Nunatsiavut (Northern Labrador) and Inuvialuit (Northwest Territories). There are 52 recognized communities within Inuit Nunangat, mostly located along the coasts (Statistics Canada 2016).

Inuit belong to one of three recognized Indigenous groups within our nation, as per Section 35 under the Canadian Constitution Act (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada 2011; Bonesteel 2008). Inuit differ from other Indigenous groups linguistically, culturally and historically (Morris 2014; Urban Aboriginal Study 2017). Rather than treaties, each Inuit region has settled land claims agreements: The James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement (1975), the Inuvialuit Final Agreement (1984), the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement (1993), and the Labrador Inuit Land Claims Agreement (2005). There are political organizations within each region responsible for implementing each of these specific and comprehensive land claims. This includes Makivik Corporation for Nunavik, Inuvialuit Regional Corporation (IRC) for Inuvialuit, Labrador Inuit Development Corporation (LIDC) for Nunatsiavut and Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated (NTI) for Nunavut (AANDC 2011; Bonesteel 2008).

Approximately 1 in 4 (27%) Inuit live outside Inuit Nunangat in large urban centres across southern Canada, including Ottawa, Montreal, Winnipeg and Edmonton (Morris 2016; Pauktuutit 2017; Statistics Canada 2016). Community organizations, like Tungasuvvingat Inuit in Ottawa,

report that the urban migration of Inuit to southern locations is a recent yet upward trend and surmise that the numbers are much higher than reported (Morris 2016; Tungasuvvingat Inuit 2005, 2014). While these statistics do not account for Inuit in situations of homelessness, nor for underreporting or the circular mobility of many who travel back and forth from inside Inuit Nunangat to Montreal, they do indicate that Montreal is home to one of the highest concentrations of Inuit in any Canadian metropolis according to the 2011 National Household Survey (Makivik 2015; Parnasimautik 2014; Statistics Canada 2016; Tungasuvvingat Inuit 2005). Data shows that of the total number of Inuit living in Montreal, the majority are women. Despite this, however, Inuit women in urban centres have been underrepresented in current research studies (Pauktuutit 2017).

While there are some resources available that explore the living conditions of Inuit women in Northern communities (Bopp et al. 2007a, 2007b; Cameron 2011; Knotsch and Kinnon 2011; Kral et al. 2011; Laneuville 2015; Minich et al 2011; Parnasimautik 2014; Pauktutiit 1995; Roos 2013; Statistics Canada 2008; Tait 2008), the academic literature around Inuit women experiencing situations of homelessness in Montreal is limited (Folger 2006; Kishigami 1999, 2002, 2006, 2008, 2014; Makivk 2014, 2015; Savoie and Cornez 2014). To date, research has yet to make a definitive link between the northern circumstances that prompt Inuit women to move to Montreal, and the homelessness many of them experience once they do. However, there is evidence, primarily from community reports and news articles, that many Inuit women who are homeless in Montreal have left their northern communities due to the difficulties they had been facing there (Belanger, Weasel Head and Awosoga 2012; Budak 2010; CBC 2008; Curran 2009; Curtis 2017; George 2012; Hamilton 2010; Janoff 1987; Kuitenbrouwer 1991; Makivik 2012, 2015; McShane et al 2006; Morris 2016; Rogers 2014a; Rogers 2014b; Rogers 2014c; Ross 2017). As stated by Jobie

Tukkiapik, the president of Makivik in 2012, "the causes of Inuit homelessness are rooted in northern regions, including Nunavik" (30). Indeed, the reasons for leaving northern communities and relocating to urban centres is different for Inuit men compared to Inuit women (Kishigami 2014; Norris and Clatworthy 2003; Pauktuutit 2017). Even more, given the option to return North, many of these women choose to remain in Montreal despite not having housing within the city (Belanger et al 2012; Budak 2010; Rogers 2014b).

Given the paucity of research in this field, the purpose of this study is to contribute to the knowledge around Inuit women and their experiences of homelessness. Specifically, this study addresses the lacuna in the existing academic literature regarding the experiences of Inuit women living in situations of homelessness in Montreal by drawing a direct link to the living conditions they endure in their home communities. These considerations are expressed within the context of a thematic analysis of three semi-structured interviews with Inuit women who identify as homeless while living in Montreal.

Chapter 1 provides an overview of the literature related to this topic. Three themes are presented. First, the concept of homelessness is addressed. Specifically, definitions of homelessness are considered, with attention to hidden homelessness. Further, hidden homelessness as it concerns Inuit women is discussed. Second, the circumstances of Inuit living in Nunangat is highlighted, including a brief history of Inuit prior to colonization, the current housing crisis in northern Inuit communities, potential difficulties in these communities that may prompt a relocation, and the circumstances of Inuit living in Montreal. Third, an overview of the challenges experienced by Inuit living in the city of Montreal is presented. Specifically, situations around Inuit experiencing culture shock, language barriers, employment, challenges with accessing health

care, homelessness, the use of shelters and sex work are explored. This section ends by identifying several gaps in the existing academic literature.

Chapter 2 expounds on the methodology used for this research. Qualitative methods employed in this study are used to answer our research questions. Specifically, the interview process and subsequent thematic analysis are discussed.

Chapter 3 is dedicated to the presentation of qualitative results. The interviews with three Inuit women in situations of homelessness in Montreal are each conveyed in story-form. Here we are introduced to the accounts of the daily lives of these Inuit women as they navigate the streets of Montreal and discuss the lives they left behind in their home communities. This storied-approach allows the reader to gain an appreciation for the nuances specific to each woman's experience.

Chapter 4 provides a discussion and analysis of our results. Divided by categories derived from a thematic analysis of interview data, this section considers the qualitative developments. Five categories expand upon the data regarding Inuit life among women in northern communities. These relate to family, housing, employment, migration and difficulties as they pertain to the North. Next, themes around where to sleep, street safety, making money, struggles with addiction and access to services regarding Inuit women's experiences without permanent housing in Montreal are outlined. Additionally, a brief theoretical application of spiritual homelessness is included to explain the circular mobility of Inuit women who frequently decide to move between living in situations of homelessness in Montreal and within their northern communities. This chapter provides responses to our research questions.

Finally, the conclusion considers the contributions of this research and acknowledges its limitations. It ends with several recommendations for future research relevant to homelessness among Inuit women in Montreal prompted by the conditions they experience in their home communities.

Chapter 1: Review of the Literature

In recent years there has been a proliferation of writing on homelessness (Bard 1987; Banerjee 2004; Beavis et al. 1997; Begin, Casavant and Chenier 1999; Canadian Observatory on Homelessness 2012; Curran 2009; Echenberg and Jensen 2008; Hulchanski 2009a, 2009b; Hulchanski et al. 2009; Knotsch and Kinnon; Layton 2008; Liebow 1993; Nepton 2013; Novac, Brown and Bourbonnais 1996; Ouellette 1989; Patrick 2014; Ross 1982). Indeed, as of the 1980s, several researchers, media correspondents, politicians, social workers, care providers, journalists and policy-makers have focused their attention on urban homelessness as a glaring social problem. In the following pages I will critically examine the literature that is directly relevant to the aspects of homelessness that are at the centre of this proposed study; that is, related to urban Inuit women (Belanger, Weasel head and Awosoga 2012; CBC News 2008; Curtis 2017; Folger 2006; George 2012; Janoff 1987; Kishigami 1999, 2002, 2006, 2008, 2014; Kuitenbrouwer 1991; Lowi 2005; Makivik 2008, 2011, 2012, 2014, 2015; Norris and Clatworthy 2003; Pauktuutit 2010; Rogers 2014a, 2014b, 2014c; Ross 2017; Savoie 2011, 2012; Savoie and Cornez 2014). Given that the existing literature in this field lacks intersectional analysis[2], this representation aims to bring together and examine the dominant and recurrent themes relating to gender, culture, urban homelessness and available support resources. Further, this review is meant to reflect how these inter-relationships are understood and discussed regarding homelessness within the literature.

Of note is that in addition to books as well as peer reviewed journal articles, community and government reports, news media was consulted as part of the corpus of source material on this topic. The existing literature around homelessness among Inuit women in Montreal is sparse. Thus,

[2] An approach that considers contextual factors such as gender, race, class and sexuality as interrelated in understanding lived-experiences (see Choo and Ferree 2010).

these news articles, appearing over a span of 30 years, are meant to provide critical insight into an area of research that is otherwise obscure. Such representations shed light on an historical account of the local condition of this phenomenon and help fill the otherwise obvious and large lacunae that exist in the scholarly research on this subject.

To shape a scholarly understanding of this phenomenon, I have divided this review into three broad categories: first, a definition of homelessness is outlined with consideration to the varying types; second, a gendered interpretation of urban homelessness is presented; and third, the literature focused on urban Indigeneity is examined with attention to cases related to Inuit women experiencing homelessness in Montreal. To reflect the multi-dimensional nature of the circumstances pertaining to homeless Inuit women in Montreal, each of these themes is briefly considered below.

1.1 Homelessness

For this research, it is important to highlight aspects around homelessness that relate directly to Inuit women in Montreal. This section examines four sub-themes. First it presents the range of housing circumstances that are included under the term homelessness. Next this review will focus on hidden homelessness, a phenomenon often experienced by Inuit women. Third it will explore the gendered dynamic of homelessness, with attention to the experience of women in general and Inuit women specifically. Finally, it will present the challenges around accurately accounting for the number of individuals living in situations of homelessness, given the prevalence of those in hidden situations.

1.1.1 Defining Homelessness

In the most basic sense, homelessness describes the situation of an individual who lacks housing. While there are certainly a range of living situations, types of shelter, and circumstances surrounding housing, the definition of what it is to be homeless has shifted over time. A broadly recognized perspective on what constitutes homelessness began to take shape in the late 1980s as a result of United Nations reports that frame the issue as one directly related to human rights (Layton 2008; Echenberg and Jensen 2008; United Nations 1982; Hulchanski et al. 2009). In 1987, the year recognized by the UN as the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless (IYSH), resolutions were set forth which suggested that homelessness should be understood as falling into one of two categories; that is, either absolute or relative homelessness (UN 1982; Hulchanski et al. 2009). Briefly, absolute homelessness refers to those individuals who lack any physical shelter of their own, whereas relative homelessness pertains to the situations of individuals using spaces as shelter that fall below recognized standards of living (Layton 2008; Echenberg and Jensen 2008).

This aforementioned analysis has continued to influence Canadian writers, researchers and advocates decades later and in turn necessarily informs national and provincial policies regarding homelessness. While Canada still lacks an official definition, over the last few decades a move toward situating an understanding of homelessness on a continuum has taken place. This frame of reference includes differing factors contributing to homelessness, namely the duration and frequency of these episodes as well as specific housing situations (Echenberg and Jensen 2008). As an example, *Taking Responsibility for Homelessness,* a final report released in 1999 by the Toronto Mayor's Homelessness Action Task Force made a concerted effort to widen the definition of homelessness to include not only individuals who are 'at risk' but to recognize those less visible

in precarious living situations who are considered to belong to the 'hidden homeless' population (Layton 2008). Similarly, an inquiry into homelessness in Toronto in 2000 defined the concept to include any individual who either sleeps on the streets, frequents shelters, stays in overcrowded housing, spends the majority of their income on rent or is considered at critical risk of falling in to one of these situations (ibid).

Despite efforts to be more inclusive in the description of homelessness and account for the varied experiences of inadequate shelter, it is important to consider the need to arrive at a shared definition if we aim to effectively address homelessness. To be sure, accounting for the varying positions on a spectrum of homelessness is both important and useful and should be included in an agreed upon definition. Based on a hierarchy of need related to housing, definitions have been developed ranging from situational or transitional homelessness, to episodic, cyclical or chronic homelessness (Echenberg and Jensen 2008). These significant strides in defining homelessness are crucial to our general understanding of this social issue. However, as I will describe in the following pages, the concept of hidden homelessness is of particular importance to this research.

1.1.2 Hidden Homelessness

According to the literature, as a typology, hidden homelessness is situated in the middle of the aforementioned continuum, falling anywhere between absolute and relative homelessness (Echenberg and Jensen 2008). Often referred to as 'unsheltered', the hidden homeless population consists of individuals who are less likely to access overnight shelters and are thus less visible than those who make up other segments of homelessness (Layton 2008). In the same way, hidden homelessness often describes individuals who do not have access to permanent accommodations

and often either move from household to household among family, friends or acquaintances, or create makeshift shelters (Bard 1987; Layton 2008; COH 2012).

The Canadian Observatory on Homelessness (COH), a working group made up of leaders in areas of research, policy and practice, published a 2012 report titled *Canadian Definition of Homelessness.* This document describes hidden homelessness as a situation that is typically temporary. Thus, the underlining assumption throughout the research is that the living situations of the hidden homeless population will not become permanent. However, an article appearing in the *Montreal Gazette* on January 9, 1987, shares the experience of Julie, an Inuk woman from Northern Quebec, who had been living in a situation of hidden homelessness in Montreal for four years (Janoff 1987). That same year, Marjorie Bard published a report on homelessness regarding urban women and describes how she "catalogued 163 cases of women who have successfully survived for varying lengths of time in cars, vans or campers" (1987:18). It thus becomes apparent that the impermanence of hidden homelessness referred to in the working group definition rather suggests the instability of a living situation, and not the span of time in which homelessness persists.

Jack Layton, the former leader of the New Democratic Party of Canada, provides a portrayal of the hidden homeless population in his book *Homelessness: How to End the National Crisis* (2008). Both Bard (1987) and Layton (2008) paint a picture of this population as consisting of individuals who often sleep in cars, tents, boxes, caves and camp grounds. Indeed, Layton (2008) explains how according to research studies and experts in the areas of housing and homelessness, the number of individuals who are part of the hidden homeless population far exceeds the many who frequent shelters. A national study of formerly homeless individuals reveals that almost 60% of participants had most commonly lived in their vehicles (ibid).

It is no surprise then that Bard (1987) argues that people in situations of homelessness often lack privacy and personal space. Layton's research shares the same evaluation of the homeless experience calling it a "public existence [where] there is no privacy" (2008:54). It is perhaps due to this that individuals experiencing hidden homelessness often make a concerted effort to keep up their physical appearance. Layton (2008) admits that many may not dress or act in ways that are typically signifiers of homelessness. According to Bard, for women this phenomenon may be by design as "the ability to appear presentable in terms of hygiene and attire contributes to women's ability to hide their homeless situation" (1987:18) and avoid stigma.

1.1.3 Hidden Homelessness as a Gendered Phenomenon

Available research suggests that hidden homelessness is more common among women than men (Hulchanski et al. 2009). This gendered dynamic may be inextricably linked to women's increased likelihood to experience violence by their partners, as well as other unique challenges related but not limited to, lower income levels and employment biases (ibid). As depicted in Bard's (1987) research, for example, one woman was forced from her home by her abusive husband and joined the hidden homeless population by living in her car. In *The Lost and the Lonely* (1982), one of the earliest accounts exploring the homeless situation among women in Canada, sociology professor Aileen D. Ross also explained how this phenomenon is particular among the female population. Although her research extends beyond the hidden homeless as a study of women who visited shelters in Montreal in 1977 and 1978, she remarked that women are better than males at keeping their homeless status undetected. She explains:

> The women are never as far down as the men. They always retain some spark. When they're not drunk, they wash their hands and faces. They're better at survival; they look almost normal to people who don't know them. Men fall down in the street, wet their pants, and don't give a shit. Women would be deeply humiliated if that happened to them (Ross 1982:2-3).

This ability to retain a physical sense of 'normalcy' is a strategy known to many Inuit women living on the streets of Montreal. Tina Pisuktie, current executive director of the Southern Quebec Inuit Association (SQIA) founded in 2017, and former outreach worker at Montreal's Chez Doris day shelter, points out that many of the Inuit women she worked with refused to disclose that they were homeless to avoid exacerbating their already vulnerable situation. In a *Nunatsiaq Online News* article appearing in April 2014, Pisuktie explained that "many are clean, well-dressed and educated, so you wouldn't know [that they are homeless]" (Rogers 2014a: April 23). She agrees that this dynamic makes it especially difficult to account for the number of Inuit women who belong to the hidden homeless population (ibid). According to a 2015 report by Makivik, "[Inuit] newcomers arriving in Montreal will often stay at a friend or family member, and wanders from one person's place to another" (10). It is in this way that Ross' 1982 research suggested that no one can even guess at how many homeless women live in Montreal as there is no way to know how many did not make use of the available shelters. Ross explained that while workers in soup kitchens can surmise an approximate count of the male homeless population given the number they serve over the years, this deduction is not possible with the female population as they are less likely to use such services (1982). Consequently, the veritable number of homeless women living in Montreal remains unknown (Hulchanski et al. 2009; Layton 2008; Makivik 2005; Ross 1982). Without the resources to research them, there is no way to know how many women make up the number of hidden homeless in Canada. At present we find that women are likely to hide their homelessness to avoid potential violence due to their vulnerability (Conseils des Montréalaises 2017). Indeed, given that women's homelessness is often less present in the public sphere, with many engaging in sex work or couch surfing, according to Conseils des Montréalaises,

"homelessness among women seems more difficult to delimit and measure" (2017:10). Difficult indeed, when we consider that many women experiencing homelessness try to remain hidden.

1.1.4 Total Homeless Population Unknown

Jack Layton's criticism of the nation's housing programs and policies often places hidden homelessness at the crux of where research and strategies most commonly fall short (2008). Given how concealed homelessness takes many forms and ultimately lacks visibility, it becomes challenging to account for even approximate statistics on the number of people living in these situations (Layton 2008; Echenberg and Jensen 2008). Arguing that the hidden homeless population accounts for the largest group of homeless people in Canada, Layton denounces municipal officials who insist on neglecting this dimension of homelessness in their queries. In this way he calls into question a seeming trend to deliberately exclude hidden homeless populations from official surveys around this social issue. For example, Toronto's 2006 street assessment and first-ever count of their homeless situation was ultimately flawed in a myriad of ways. Not only were collecting strategies deficient by excluding the hidden population through assumptions made regarding an individual's living-status but even more by relying on volunteers to come forward as participants in the study (Layton 2008). Montreal has recently launched a similar project in both 2015 and 2018 titled I Count Mtl. While they attempt to acknowledge at least some of the hidden homeless population and claim to include new methodology to target those individuals within their mandate (ICountMtl 2015), such strategies have not been disclosed and remain to be seen.

Layton (2008) suggests this segment of the population is very difficult to find and therefore hard to account for. As this group of people stay in areas that are challenging for researchers to

access, such as personal vehicles or within the homes of family and friends, counts frequently miss large numbers of people who are homeless. Certainly, the challenge of locating individuals as well as accurately identifying each and keeping track of their migrations present a problem (Layton 2008). Echenberg and Jensen (2008) concur that the statistics of hidden homelessness are difficult to calculate given the fluctuating nature of housing situations. According to their background paper *Defining and Enumerating Homelessness in Canada* submitted to the Library of Parliament, "no attempt to enumerate this group can be complete" (Echenberg and Jensen 2008:4). Given that accurate information on the "magnitude" of the problem is lacking, we can assume that there are many more individuals experiencing homelessness than is reported in official counts (Layton 2008). This is true not only of urban environments, but northern communities alike.

1.2 Circumstances in Inuit Nunangat

As of the 1950s many Inuit had been permanently and temporarily relocated to southern cities through government initiatives such as residential schooling, tuberculosis treatments in sanitariums and the 'Sixties Scoop'[3] (Makivik 2012, 2015; Morris 2016; Watson 2017). In addition to the challenges that a remote geographic location presents, processes of colonialism of Canada's Arctic and Subarctic accounts for much of the deliberate relocation of Inuit to urban areas. Within the last 30 years a more recent surge of Inuit has been deliberately leaving their communities to relocate to urban centres (Bonesteel 2008; Pauktuutit 2010; TI 2005), however this relocation to cities can be traced back to as early as the 1940s (Watson 2017). As of 2006 it was calculated that 20 per cent of the 50,000 people making up Canada's Inuit population had left their northern

[3] The Sixties Scoop was a government-endorsed objective of the mass removal of Aboriginal children from their biological families into child welfare, often without consent.

communities to relocate to large metropolitan areas (Makivik 2012). Indeed, results of the 2011 census indicate that at present, one in every four Inuit relocates to urban centres such as Vancouver, Edmonton, Winnipeg, Toronto, Montreal and Ottawa (Statistics Canada 2011). Inuit experiencing high levels of poverty, abuse and limited housing often move south in search of social resources not otherwise available to them in the North (Budak 2010; Makivik 2012; Minich et al 2011; Pauktuutit 2010; TI 2005). As such, approximately 1,500 Inuit are now living in Montreal, with the majority originally from the Nunavik region of northern Quebec (Kishigami 2014; Makivik 2012; Pauktuutit 2010; TI 2005). In the pages that follow, notions of urban Indigeneity drawn from the existing literature, with an emphasis on Inuit will be examined. Five sub-themes will be presented outlining historical considerations and the varied factors that draw this population to Montreal will be explored. The challenges of living in communities across Nunangat, including the current northern housing crisis, difficulty accessing medical care, and an increase in incarceration rates will be discussed with a focus on Inuit women.

1.2.1 Pre-Contact: The Way it Was

Prior to any sustained contact with Europeans, Inuit were semi-nomadic, with the majority residing in seasonal camps (Rigby, MacDonald and Otak 2000; Makivik 2015). Their year-round survival in Arctic and Subarctic regions of Canada relied entirely on a self-sufficient lifestyle (RCAP 1996). Their social and political organization revolved heavily around kinship as well as subsistence strategies. Inter-related extended families shared tents made of animal skins or igloos within mobile hunting camps that followed the migration of game (Rigby et al. 2000; Kral, Idlout, Minore, Dyck and Kirmayer 2011).

Throughout the 1800s, an increase in European presence in Canada's North led to the introduction of the fur trade through the Hudson's Bay Company as well as the arrival of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (McGregor 2010; Krall et al. 2011; Qikiqtani Truth Commission 2014). Shortly thereafter, an unanticipated trifecta of unfortunate events drastically impacted the northern inhabitants. Dwindling resources due to the overhunting of available game in the northern regions, the impact of the economic crash on fur prices and an increase in exposure to foreign diseases given the sudden influx of non-Inuit settlers ultimately contributed to several life-threatening challenges for Inuit. They consequently became ill, poverty-stricken, and suddenly unequipped to survive the harsh conditions of their infiltrated environment (Vick-Westgate 2002). This colonization of Inuit and their territory, especially given their deteriorating health, prompted a national initiative to resettle the population in makeshift communities across the North. Established by the government in areas that were accessible by sea, these were selected without consulting Inuit and as such often failed to provide favourable access to hunting and harvesting areas (Qikiqtani Truth Commission 2014). By 1975, most Inuit had been relocated to these forced-settlements by federal government agents. This was done in an attempt to provide Inuit with social services such as formal education, medical treatment, welfare and pensions (Stern 2010; Qikiqtani Truth Commission 2014). Such initiatives were developed to provide Inuit with the same living standards as the rest of Canadians (Bonesteel 2008) given that the government no longer viewed them as a "marginal social group" but rather as ordinary citizens requiring aid (Watson 2017:4). While some families moved to these settlements voluntarily, persuaded by assurances from the Canadian government that they would have access to a better life, by all accounts this new lifestyle for Inuit became much more difficult (Qikiqtani Truth Commission 2014).

1.2.2 The Housing Crisis of the North

In the 1950s, the Canadian government supplied northern communities with prefabricated frame housing units (Bonesteel 2008; Tester 2009; Stern 2010) which continue to serve the population today. A report developed by the Royal Commission of Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) in 1996 lists that 33% of Inuit deemed these structures as ill-equipped to combat the bitter climate. Most of the social housing available in the North is deemed inadequate (Makivik 2014; Minich et al 2011); in other words, these houses require major repair (Bopp et al. 2007a; Tester 2009; Knotsch and Kinnon 2011). Moreover, given the remote location of these communities, only accessible by plane, the construction costs and maintenance of houses are especially high and thus unaffordable for the majority of the Inuit population (UN-Habitat 2005). As highlighted in a report on Inuit women's homelessness in Nunavut, "decent housing for all women is a basic human right. However, social housing units cannot be properly maintained and repaired unless governments are willing to make this a priority and expend adequate funds" (Bopp et al. 2007a:30). Unfortunately, many women reported being fearful of requesting repairs from their landlords as they have witnessed evictions for making such complaints (Bopp et al. 2007a).

According to the most recent Canadian census, the growth rate of the Inuit population from 2006 to 2016 was at 29% (Statistics Canada 2016). Given this rapid growth, especially among youth, the housing shortage is increasing exponentially (Knotsch and Kinnon 2011). Nunavik is currently the region with the worst housing crisis in Canada, where it is estimated that more than one thousand houses are needed (Tester 2009; Makivik 2012; Network 2013; Minich et al 2011; UAS 2017). Private housing is rare; Nunavimmiut thus often rely on social housing managed by the Kativik Housing Management Bureau (KHMB) under the authority of Makivik Corporation (Laneuville 2015; Minich et al 2011). Similarly, federal housing assistance in communities in the

territory of Nunavut, managed by the Nunavut Housing Corporation (NHC), is most often offered to rural areas in the form of subsidies geared toward home ownership (UN-Habitat 2005; Tester 2009). According to RCAP (1996), despite Inuit comprising 30% of the Canadian population in need of housing, for every one-hundred subsidy only one of these has been allocated to a family of Inuit-origin.

These programs are unsupportive of the large number of unemployed Inuit or families without children. Single women are currently at the lowest priority to receive public housing (Bopp 2007a). In a 2015 qualitative study conducted for Saturviit Inuit Women's Association of Nunavik, an Inuk woman surmised that many Inuit women get pregnant primarily to expedite the waiting process (Laneuville 2015; Saturviit 2015). Inuit families on the list for housing can wait upwards of seven years before they are allocated a house (Laneuville 2015). In the meantime, current northern rent costs hover at approximately 25% of the average Inuit income (UN-Habitat 2005). Still, as part of a rent-to-own program, Inuit families are required to pay three or four times this amount to own their own home (Tester 2009; Laneuville 2015). As of 2010, the KHMB began evicting families living in Nunavik who were unable to pay rent in an effort to decrease the rate of non-payment, which accounts for 19% of all rented properties (ibid). As a result, "the evicted families, who usually have several children, find themselves homeless and have to move from one living room to another" (Laneuville 2015:13). In their research of housing in Nunangat, Minich et al. list hidden homelessness as an increasing concern in northern communities (2011: 521). In fact, the International Polar Year regarding Inuit Health reports that of the approximately 2000 Inuit households they surveyed within 36 northern communities, there was at least one person who was homeless in one in every five households (Minich et al. 2011). Thus, the lack of affordable and

available housing not only contributes to the elevated number of Inuit who do not have stable or permanent housing, but to overcrowding within existing homes as well.

Nunavik's rate of overcrowding is currently at 68%, where many houses fabricated to house a single family often shelter two or three Inuit families (Makivik 2012). Needs assessment reports on northern housing conditions state that single unit dwellings often house 12 to 15 people spanning up to four generations (Bopp 2007a; Laneuville 2015; Morris 2016). Such pre-fabricated houses, designed by southern architects unfamiliar with Inuit ways of living, thus failed to account for and accommodate Inuit family structures which extend beyond the nuclear unit (Stern 2010). According to a 2001 survey conducted by the YWCA, 20% of Inuit households across Canada were overcrowded, compared with 10% among First Nations and 2% among the non-Indigenous Canadian population (Bopp 2007a). In other words, Inuit in Northern Canada live with the highest rates of overcrowding in the country (Tester 2009; Knotsch and Kinnon 2011; Makivik 2012; QTC 2014; Laneuville 2015). The full extent of this phenomenon is generally difficult to track given that much of the population are individuals experiencing hidden homelessness and may contribute to the overcrowding. This is especially true in the winter, when temperatures can drop below 60 degrees Celsius. During these months Inuit women tend to try to find public spaces in the North, such as coffee shops, where they can keep warm and try to make a cup of coffee span the entire day. Many also gather at the homes of willing friends and family, where situations are likely to already be overcrowded (Bopp et al. 2007a; Bopp et al. 2007b). According to a territorial report generated by the Qulliit Nunavut Status of Women Council regarding women's homelessness in the North, despite the harsh climate, absolute homelessness, that is living on the street or in a shelter, does exist (Bopp et al. 2007b).

There is a broad consensus across the literature that inappropriate housing and overcrowding of dwellings is directly linked to other social issues, such as addiction, violence, sexual assault, suicide, familial abuse and decreased education levels (Bopp 2007a; Bonesteel 2008; Tester 2009; Makivik 2012; Laneuville 2015). Makivik Corporation, the legal representatives of Quebec Inuit under the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement (JBNQA), published a report regarding the Popular Commission on housing Rights that confirms a causal relationship between overcrowded housing in northern communities and the high rates of sexual and physical abuse toward Inuit women and children (Makivik 2012). Living in such close quarters creates a situation where women and children become increasingly vulnerable to sexual and domestic violence. These living arrangements, while sometimes temporary, account for one hundred to three hundred homeless Inuit women in Nunavut's capital of Iqaluit (ibid); this accounts for 0.15% of approximately 4000 females living in Iqaluit (Statistics Canada 2016).

1.2.3 Reasons Prompting a Move to the City

The living conditions in northern communities unfortunately continue to decline. Lack of affordable housing, poorly maintained and overcrowded homes, food insecurity, family disintegration, drug and alcohol abuse, soaring unemployment rates, and a high incidence of physical and sexual assault are all common trends of contemporary northern life (Novac et al. 1996; Makivik 2012; Qikiqtani Truth Commission 2014, Pauktuutit 2010). Many Inuit leave to escape the exorbitant cost of living as they are no longer able to make ends meet; while still others leave because they can no longer contend with food insecurity in the North. According to Jobie Tukkiapik:

> Inuit have experienced drastic changes in the last 60 years which had and are having major impacts on our people: nomadic life to permanent communities; high levels of suicide, high school dropout, major violence and poverty. Inuit are dealing with

> an historical trauma, the cumulative massive social change forced on the Inuit over a very short period of time (Makivik 2012: 30).

This has meant that large numbers of Inuit move South to escape these unfavourable circumstances (Bonesteel 2008; Kral et al. 2011; Laneuville 2015; Lowi 2005; Makivik 2012). As such, the more recent steady stream of Inuit moving to urban centres is inextricably linked to the general assumption that a better life awaits them in the South.

1.2.4 Seeking Medical Care

The lack of medical care and health facilities in Arctic and Subarctic communities often means that Inuit must travel elsewhere for treatment (Makivik 2012; McShane et al. 2006; Pauktuutit 2010). The number of individuals who require hospitalization or medical assistance is aggravated by substandard living conditions. For example, Inuit residents of northern communities often contract respiratory infections due to high risk living situations such as frequent tobacco use, over-crowded housing and exposure to toxic building materials (Tait 2006; Alaghehbandan et al. 2007; Bopp et al.2007b; Kishigami 2008; Tester 2009; Laneuville 2015). Indeed, Inuit seeking or requiring hospital care is one of the main motivations for travel to major cities. Despite the health provisions of the James Bay Northern Quebec Agreement (JBNQA) securing access to care for Nunavik Inuit, most community nursing stations are ill-equipped to handle serious medical cases. According to Emilie Cameron's 2011 report on Inuit Public Health, "advanced medical care requires transfer to southern Canadian cities, a recurring problem in the provision of health services in the North" (10). In fact, the 2006 Aboriginal Peoples Survey states that in the year prior to its publication, at least 5% of Inuit adults from northern communities reported having been "away from their home for one month or more due to illness" (Tait 2008:13). Those Inuit who are

proactive in treating their health-related issues despite the inconvenience of their community's location must travel south, often leaving for extended periods of time.

Inuit often accompany their sick family members to their medical appointments and remain in the host city afterward (Budak 2010; Cameron 2011; TI 2005). A 2014 news report in *Nunatsiaq News* explained how Annie, a young woman from Kuujjuaq, Quebec had escorted her sister to doctor appointments in Montreal over four years ago and at the time of the article's publication had remained in the city ever since (Rogers 2014b). In the decade prior to Annie's account, a similar article was published in the *Montreal Gazette* that informed its readers about how Inuit come to the city with a friend of family member for a medical procedure and never leave (Banerjee 2004). Still another *Montreal Gazette* news report, this one in 1987 claimed that some women "came for abortions or other medical reasons and stayed in the city, living one day at a time" (Janoff 1987:January 9). Julie was an Inuk woman who had initially come to Montreal to seek treatment for her infant son who was seriously ill. Once here, Julie was drawn to the independence she was afforded in a new city and decided to send her son back home once he recovered so she could stay in Montreal (Janoff 1987).

Together, these three news articles written over the span of twenty-five years demonstrate that this phenomenon has been one occurring in Montreal for some time. Carolyn Oblin, a social worker for the Northern Quebec Module (NQM), a health initiative linking Nunavik communities to health services in Montreal, explains that some patients refuse to return home post-treatment. Indeed, in a Montreal Inuit Community Strategic Plan presented by Makivik in 2015 states a marked increase of Inuit moving to Montreal for medical care (9). In an article from 1991 appearing in the *Montreal Gazette*, Oblin suggests that many of the female patients are escaping domestic abuse at home and therefore ignore their return ticket to start a new life by disappearing

into the city (Kuittenbrouwer 1991). In 2016 the Nunavik Health Board reported that they spent a total of $1,919,767 funding travel accommodation for patients and their escorts for treatment in Montreal, which was almost double their anticipated budget for the year (Beaudoin 2017).

A 2012 document released by Makivik Corporation, the political and economic executive body legally representing the interests of Quebec's Inuit population, provides an overview on homelessness in Montreal. This report reveals that at any given time there are approximately 150 to 200 Inuit accompanying a family member from Northern Quebec communities to Montreal for medical care (Makivik 2012). In 2016, 5127 patients and 2602 escorts traveled to Montreal from Nunavik for treatment, an increase of 17.5% from the year before (Beaudoin 2017). Ullivik, is NQM's newly opened patient house located next to the Montreal airport for Inuit awaiting treatment (Beaudoin 2017). Maggie Putulik, the director of the facility, expects this number to increase by 1000 patients per year due to the rapid population growth in Nunavik (Varga 2017). As an example, Ullivik was at capacity on the day it opened and is unable to accommodate all patients, especially as the number of arrivals increases each year (Vargas 2017). In 2016 Ullivik had to rent 15 to 20 rooms a night at a nearby hotel to accommodate the influx of patients (Beaudoin 2017).

The 2016-2017 annual report listed incidents around substance abuse, violence and missed departures as some of the challenges Ullivik continues to contend with concerning patients and escorts (Beaudoin 2017; Rogers 2017). From December 2016 to December 2017, Ullivik reported that a total of 90 escorts had missed their departure flight (Rogers 2017). While there is no indication that they remain in Montreal, it is probable that many escorts have yet to return to their home communities. Cultural anthropologist Nobuhiro Kishigami's research suggests that both men and women have been observed accompanying their family or partner for medical reasons to

Montreal. Kishigami's reports correspond to Oblin's statement that the decision to stay in Montreal post-treatment is especially prevalent among Inuit women who are often victims in their home communities (Kishigami 2014). The health board recommendation to avoid escorts using the program to stay in Montreal is to replace friend and family escorts with designated "patient navigators" based in Montreal (Beaudoin 2017; Rogers 2017).

One might suggest, then, that the total number of Inuit in this situation is significantly higher than that presented in the literature. While it can be assumed that the abovementioned statistics do not account for Inuit hailing from other northern communities within Inuit Nunangat, nor do they account for medical visits to other cities, the lack of access to financial resources and housing while accompanying a loved one or awaiting treatment in the city is a complication that often results in homelessness (Hanrahan 2002; Tait 2008). Nevertheless, whether Inuit women intend to use the trip as one way to access the city, or simply find themselves unable to return home after a medical visit, these individuals account for some of the urban Inuit population of Montreal, many of whom are homeless.

1.2.5 Prison Stays

While many women come to Montreal for medical visits or to escape sexual or physical abuse (Kishigami 2014), one of the reasons Inuit move to the city is less voluntary in nature. Forced relocation into a prison or detention centre in major Canadian cities remains one of the reasons for the influx of Inuit, predominantly male, to Montreal (Kishigami 2014; Makivik 2012). There is no correctional facility in Nunavik (Quebec Ombudsman 2016). Inuit men and women from Nunavik are brought to Montreal and its environs to serve their sentences. Not only are Inuit individuals sent to the city to complete penal terms in federal corrections or at Quebec detention centres, but

some are subsequently forbidden from returning to their homes; this either by order of the courts or because they are ultimately rejected by members of their community (Makivik 2012).

In 2015 the rate of incarceration of Inuit in a correctional facility had increased 64% in five years, with no sign of this rate decreasing (Quebec Ombudsman 2016:7). While Inuit make up 4% of the Canadian population, according to Statistics Canada, Inuit account for 5% of the total inmate population in Canada (Office of the Correctional Investigator Annual Report 2018). An important report presented to Makivik in 2012 shares statistics obtained through interviews conducted by Nobuhiro Kishigami that demonstrate the prevalence of Inuit who are either escorted to Montreal by police to serve a sentence or otherwise expelled from their villages for transgressions. Kishigami states that of approximately 50 Montreal Inuit in his research, three males and one female revealed that they had arrived in the city to serve a jail or prison sentence (Makivik 2012; Kishigami 2014). Christopher Curtis echoes this phenomenon in his report for the *Montreal Gazette* in April 2018. During his flight from a Nunavik community, the reporter noted several prisoners, hands shackled and escorted by an officer, being picked up in each of the communities along the Hudson Coast (Curtis 2018). Many of these prisoners were heading to a court house or prison for petty offences. According to a former police chief who worked in the North:

> These aren't unforgivable offences. You're seeing family fights, drinking and driving, mistakes that people make or crimes that are rooted in addiction, in childhood trauma, stuff that can't be solved by a few nights in jail (Curtis: April 14, 2018).

At least one of the prisoners in Curtis' article was female (2008). Despite Kishigami's research painting the picture of Inuit incarceration as a predominantly male issue, some sources suggest that Inuit women are also overrepresented in the prison system (Bopp et al. 2007a; Rogers 2014c; Laneuville 2015; Curtis 2018). According to a 2014 article in the Montreal French-language newspaper *La Presse*, of the almost 150 inmates at the Tanguay Detention Centre, 19 were Inuit women from Nunavik (Rogers 2014c). In a report prepared for Makivik Corporation it

was estimated that 85 Inuit from Nunavik were serving sentences of two years or more in 2014 (Savoie and Cornez 2014). The same study indicates that while a quarter of Inuit men interviewed say that they have spent time in a detention centre, the same was true for 1 of every 20 Inuit women. According to a Makivik report, "the number of Inuit inmates is also increasing and has an impact on the number of Inuit in southern parts of Quebec" (2015: 10).

Upon first glance, these findings may not seem to directly relate to the state of homeless Inuit in urban centres. Savoie and Cornez note that "20% of homeless Inuit interviewed have been in a detention centre. We can assume that Inuit released from detention centres are likely to become homeless" (Savoie and Cornez 2015:10). In a report concerning the lives of Inuit women from Nunavik, presented to Saturviit, this is a common occurrence:

> Some first come down South because they have been sentenced to prison, and then decide to stay because of their fear of facing their victims and/or their family members who live in the North. Once on the streets, alcohol abuse and conjugal violence become a return path to jail (Laneuville 2015:24).

Aileen D. Ross speaks to this in her 1982 research on women's shelters. When shelters are unable to accommodate homeless women, due to a lack of beds and resources, for example, prison often becomes their last hope for shelter and food (Ross 1982). More than 30 years later, committing crimes to get off the street remains an option for some, particularly during the winter months (CBC 2016). That is, in situations where an Inuk woman is rejected by all other social agencies, jail is an alternative option.

1.3 Inuit in Montreal

This final theme examines the many challenges[4] Inuit women encounter when they move from their home communities in Nunangat to Montreal. This will be explored through seven sub-themes: culture shock, language barriers, employment, experiences with public health care, homelessness, access to shelters and prostitution. The literature points to the interrelation of these aspects when attempting to better understand the experience of Inuit women living in the city of Montreal.

Nobuhiro Kishigami has published several papers pertaining to the Inuit population of Montreal based on the extensive research that he has conducted over the last twenty years. As one of very few recognized researchers in this localized field, Kishigami's reports have been critical in the academic understanding of the circumstances surrounding urban Inuit who now reside in Montreal. He brings to our attention that while a considerable amount of research has included First Nations and Métis individuals living in urban centres, there has been very little focus on Inuit specifically (Kishigami 2014). His academic contribution, then, is to begin to fill this gap regarding urban Inuit. In addition to the limited number of other sources of knowledge available, his publications help to uncover the variety of issues from language barriers, low levels of education, racism, discrimination and cultural disparities as only some of the challenges that prevent Inuit from adapting to their new environment.

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[4] While the purview of this research is to look at Inuit women in situations of homelessness in Montreal, some female Inuit newcomers to the city experience opportunities once here. This is particularly true of those who work for Inuit community and government organizations as well as private businesses, as mentioned by Kishigami (2008).

1.3.1 Culture Shock

Despite migrating to Montreal often to attempt to increase life chances, once here many Inuit find that they are faced with unexpected challenges that they are unequipped to handle (Makivik 2012). In her book on homeless women in Montreal titled *The Lost and the Lonely* (1982), professor of sociology Aileen D. Ross explains that many of the women who first leave home start out with high hopes and a strong sense of adventure and excitement. As Jasmine Budak states in her article around Inuit migration to the south, with particular attention to Ottawa:

> Previously, Inuit may have fallen into southern circumstances, either because they've followed family members, fled bad circumstances, or simply got stuck after coming down for medical treatment. But increasingly, people are drawn to urban centres for the promise of a better life, whether for jobs, cheaper housing or quality health care.

Unfortunately, however, Ross's research shows that many of these women arrive with little money and only very vague plans. They are thus unfit to deal with their new and strange environment (Ross 1982). Tina Pisuktie shares Ross' assessment in an article appearing in *Nunatsiaq News*. Published in April 2014, the piece discusses how Inuit moving to Montreal are considered at-risk. Pisuktie explains, "Montreal is hard to navigate coming from the North. There is definite culture shock" (Rogers 2014b:December 16). Accordingly, Ross suggests that women who migrate south often face similar difficulties to the ones experienced in their home communities; that is, housing concerns, difficulty gaining employment, and finding a mate (Ross 1982). Nakuset, the executive director of the Montreal Native Women's Shelter, explains in the *Montreal Gazette*, "[w]hen people leave their villages to come to Montreal, they expect something wonderful" (Curran 2009:March 1). Indeed, many Inuit come to Montreal in search of a better life (Pauktuutit 1995; Kishigami 1999). Unfortunately, in many regards, the city fails to deliver to its new Inuit residents.

1.3.2 Language barriers

Northern Inuit who are unilingual Inuktut speakers face severe language barriers in Montreal which is a city in the Canadian province of Quebec where French and English are most often spoken. Two news articles in the *Montreal Gazette*, published more than twenty years apart, state that unilingual Inuktut speakers are indeed at a severe disadvantage in the city (Janoff 1987; Curran 2009). The 1987 article reports on poverty and culture shock among Indigenous women; the second titled *Eking out a Life on the Margins*, is an article from March 2009 that contends that "Inuit are very strong on their language, so often their English is not great. And French? Forget about it" (Curran 2009:March 1). Kishigami's final report regarding the condition of Montreal Inuit further explains how this limited capacity in French or English, in addition to a lack of reading and writing skills, severely limits Inuit employability in Montreal (2014). These language barriers, which are prevalent among marginalized Inuit, critically impact their overall adaptation to a new urban lifestyle (Network 2013; Makivik 2012). One of the primary concerns listed by several Inuit women interviewed for the Saturviit Inuit Women's Association of Nunavik study was that the current curriculum in Northern schools does not adequately prepare them to effectively communicate in either English or French (Laneuville 2015). Without the skills to communicate in a language that is recognized and understood, Inuit newcomers are unable to find work.

1.3.3 Employment

Beyond language, Kishigami explains that many Inuit from the North lack formal education and thus often do not fulfill the minimum requirements listed in job postings (Kishigami 2008). At the time of Douglas Janoff's 1987 article, one-third of the Inuit population living in Montreal were considered functionally illiterate and lacked an elementary-level education (Janoff 1987).

According to the literature, the situation has not improved in over 25 years. One Inuk woman interviewed in Nunavik says of the education she received there:

> The education here is second education; it is not the same as the one you have as Southern students in Canada. We are not really taught what is important; the importance of getting a job, of understanding yourself and knowing who you are. It has a big effect on youth today. It has a lot to do with youth having a hard time finding a job. […] If you are given a second education here, you lose hope, you don't want to continue, you don't believe in yourself. […] It has a huge effect on the whole Nunavik, because 51% of the population of Nunavik is youth, and 85% of them drop out. (Laneuville 2015:28)

While the testimony above notes the general drop-out rate for Inuit living in Nunavik as 85%, research conducted among 73 Inuit women who are in situations of homelessness in Northern communities finds that 87% did not complete primary school and lacked literacy skills as a result (Bopp et al. 2007b). In 2016, only 45% of Inuit reported having a high school diploma, with the majority having completed school outside Nunangat (ITK 2018). While the current education level of Inuit living in Montreal is not directly mentioned within more recent literature, Kishigami does express that the Inuit who participated in his research lack the skills and training normally obtained through education programs and are thus unable to gain employment (Kishigami 2014). Unemployment, then, tends to be a common trend among migrant Inuit in Montreal, as they are often linguistically and academically ill-equipped to take advantage of available job opportunities (Curran 2009; Kishigami 2008, 2014).

Lowi (2005), Makivik (2012) and Kishigami (2014) agree that there are over 1000 Inuit living in Montreal with the majority hailing from Nunavik. In his 2005 report on urban Inuit published in the *Montreal Gazette*, Emmanuel Lowi claims that many northern Inuit were prompted to move south to urban centres to seek employment (2005). The 2012 Makivik report claims that this is particularly true in Montreal due to the existence of Inuit-specific organizations and institutions there. However, of the Inuit who Nobuhiro Kishigami interviewed in August 2012,

only one in seventy-five claimed they moved to Montreal for a job or due to the lack of employment in the North. In fact, according to his study, the desire for employment was listed as a common concern among non-homeless Inuit, whereas the homeless population is more likely to desire housing (Kishigami 2014). That said, Kishigami's research does assess that the Inuit who report having a job with a steady income were mostly employed by Inuit-centred institutions with offices in the city, such as Makivik, Air Inuit or the Kativik School Board (Kishigami 2014). Still, the research suggests that 55% of the sample population responded that they were not currently employed and found it extremely difficult to find a job (Rogers 2014b). Indeed, 18.3% of those interviewed listed the need for jobs as one of the primary problems faced by the Montreal Inuit population; of these 50 respondents, 14 were female (Kishigami 2014).

With regard to women, Ross (1982) and Liebow (1993) agree that this segment of the population experience increased difficulties finding a job. According to Ross, many of the women using shelters lacked any kind of experience or training as they had never been employed (1982). In *The Lost and the Lonely*, Ross says of women who frequented one of the two women-only homeless shelters located in downtown Montreal, histories of alcoholism, drug abuse or imprisonment seriously diminish the chances of finding employment in the city (Ross 1982). These, of course, are situations in which Inuit women often find themselves. Indeed, Elliott Liebow agrees that in terms of employment eligibility, "an arrest record can cause problems" (1993:54).

What is more, age discrimination also plays a role in the success of gaining employment. Ross indicates that many of the women she interviewed who were sometimes close to or over 40 years of age consequently discussed having difficulty finding a place that would hire them (1982). This is a factor likely to impact the population at the crux of my proposed research as, according

to Kishigami's study, the average age of the Inuit women he interviewed in Montreal was 39.41 years. This is approximately 1.5 years older than the sample of men (Kishigami 2014).

Finally, a crucial factor mentioned by both Ross (1982) and Liebow (1993) regards appearance. Ross claims that "a practised employer would have little difficulty in perceiving whether a person was near the poverty line – a fact which suggests incompetence or the necessary self-confidence to do a good job" (Ross 1982:43). In the same vein, in his 1993 book *Tell them Who I Am: The Lives of Homeless Women*, Liebow expresses that every job, regardless of type, requires at the very least "decent and unremarkable appearance – be clean, neat, and free of body odour" (Liebow 1993:54). Liebow also includes not having a telephone where one can be reached by a prospective employer as an obstacle many can encounter in their job searches when they are new to the city. This fact, he notes, is considered suspect by the employer who may then deem that a woman without a telephone of her own may be homeless and probably poses too large a risk for the company (Liebow 1993). These reasons are enough to discourage Inuit woman from engaging in an active job search as the experience can be demoralizing and unlikely to yield positive results. With these challenges in mind, Ivirtivik, a centre devoted to helping Inuit develop work skills and employment strategies, opened its doors in Montreal in 2010, with at least 20 Inuit registered in its employability program as of 2015 (Makivik 2015).

Without employment, newly arrived Inuit struggle to pay for food, clothing and housing. With a range of unforeseen circumstances that hinder their success within the city, many find themselves struggling to survive. As such, many Inuit, especially Inuit women, are without permanent housing.

1.3.4 Barriers to Health Care

As Rogers reports, low education, language and joblessness are not the only disadvantages Inuit contend with when they move to this city. Additionally, Inuit are particularly vulnerable to open discrimination in Montreal (Rogers 2014b). While much of the prejudice they face stems from non-Indigenous citizens, racism toward Inuit within mainstream services is also prevalent. Results of this racism have included, for example, abandoning the proposal to build a care residence for Inuit patients in town for medical treatment from Northern Quebec (Hamilton 2010; NRBHSS 2017; Vargas 2017). Specifically, in 2010 the Nunavik Regional Board of Health and Social Services (NRBHSS) made headway in a plan to open a patient facility with 143 beds for Inuit in the neighbourhood of Villeray. Unfortunately, many local residents openly contested the plan as they believed the incoming residents would engage in undesirable behaviours within the area (ibid). Similarly, a study evaluating the city's health services for the Montreal Urban Aboriginal Health Committee released in 2012 indicates that 87.1% of the sample of Indigenous peoples responded that they had received poor treatment given their First Nations, Metis or Inuit background (MUAHC 2012). Among the 89 Indigenous individuals interviewed for this study pertaining to illness, 19 were Inuit. Inuit were most likely to encounter difficulties in Montreal health care centres as they were least likely to carry identification (MUAHC 2012).

Inuit who have the capacity to access health care report numerous problems and concerns with the current system, most of which stem from cultural differences. Research indicates that Inuit women in Montreal are reported to have difficulties accessing much needed programs and services due to the language barrier, as this often prevents them from locating the correct facilities or exchanging information with the appropriate staff member (MUAHC 2012). The frustration and embarrassment that regularly follows failed attempts or negative interactions is often enough for

Inuit to avoid similar situations in the future. As such, in Maura C. Hanrahan's study published in the *Canadian Journal of Public Health* in 2002, many Indigenous patients in urban settings in both Newfoundland and Labrador mention feeling uncomfortable in medical establishments. Of the 143 Inuit and Innu patients surveyed in one study, over half expressed that they not only feel uneasy in a medical environment due to their inability to communicate effectively in a language other than their mother-tongue but also identified the need for interpretation services within these facilities (Hanrahan 2002). In the Montreal Urban Aboriginal Health Needs Assessment released in 2012, several Inuit and Indigenous respondents living in Montreal identify language as a common barrier in accessing public health resources (MUAHC 2012). These communication hurdles extend to "the practice of asking questions, and the difficulty of conveying concepts that exist in one culture but not in another (e.g. visiting hours)," (Hanrahan 2002:152).

Hanrahan's research assessing and identifying the needs of Inuit and Innu patients in urban health settings in Nunasiavut, indicates that this phenomenon is especially true when trying to understand or convey practices from an Inuit-perspective that promotes holism or more traditional methods (Hanrahan 2002). Barriers due to cultural discrepancies in meaningful eye contact, body language, and spoken language create further frustrations when attempting to communicate with health care staff (Hanrahan 2002). Although Hanrahan's (2002) research was conducted in other Canadian cities, this concern is one that is shared by respondents in the assessment conducted by the Montreal Urban Aboriginal Health Committee. A young woman who identifies as both Inuit and First Nations expresses her perspective regarding access to health facilities in Montreal:

> …patients have been victims of discrimination and stereotyping. I've had doctors who don't even look at me. I have receptionists who don't even look at me (MUAHC 2012:24).

Several Indigenous respondents purported to receive poor treatment when accessing mainstream health services due to their origins (MUAHC 2012). Similarly, social class and age discrimination were also listed as reasons for poor treatment. Inuit who are wary of experiencing such stress-inducing exchanges may limit their use or altogether opt to forgo pursuing health care services in an urban context (MUAHC 2012; Hanrahan 2002). According to McShane et al.:

> Regrettably, there is little evidence that changes have taken place in health organizations to better serve the changing population of Inuit, as there is a paucity of urban Inuit health initiatives among national stakeholders in Inuit health (2006: 298).

As a result, Inuit who avoid dealing with pressing health issues, even when this may be the primary reason they came to Montreal, are more likely to be at-risk for homelessness.

1.3.5 Montreal Homelessness

With regard to Montreal, Jack Layton's book on the dynamics of Canadian homelessness refers to one survey conducted in 1996 that estimates 12,660 homeless people live in the city with numbers rising to 28,000 only three years later. Additionally, some 15,000 others were considered at-risk and therefore relied on Montreal emergency services for people in distress (Layton 2008:132). By 2015 there were an estimated 3016 individuals living in situations of homelessness in Montreal, 10% of whom were Indigenous (iCount2015). Inuit accounted for 45% of the homeless Indigenous population in the city, A common trend in the Canadian context is the over-representation of Indigenous people among the local homeless population (Novac et al.1996). This overwhelming predominance can surely be linked back to the aforementioned issues consistently faced by Inuit, Metis and First Nations individuals, thus worsening their life chances. In this way, Inuit currently make up almost half of Indigenous homelessness in Montreal, despite only actually contributing to 10% of the city's Indigenous population (Kishigami 2006; Makivik 2012; Savoie and Cornez 2014).

According to Novac, Brown and Bourbonnais (1996), the literature on homelessness has typically been male-centred; indeed, the experience of urban homelessness has been widely regarded as a male experience. It is only more recently within the last thirty years, although sparingly, that research on homelessness has expanded to include women's experiences (ibid). Ida Williams, the executive director of the Native Friendship Centre of Montreal (NFCM) in 1987 notes an obvious increase in the number of Indigenous homeless women in Montreal compared with years of the past (Janoff 1987). More recently, Kishigami's research on the Inuit homeless situation in Montreal reveals that while there are a larger number of homeless men in the city, the proportion of at-risk women is greater (Kishigami 2014). His study suggests that even though the majority of the 75 respondents interviewed were women, this theme did not translate to the homeless dynamic. In other words, figures from his research reveal the trend that while there are perhaps a greater number of Inuit women living in Montreal, there are a larger number of Inuit males who are homeless than females (Kishigami 2014; Rogers 2014b). Nevertheless, Inuit women in Montreal tend to hold longer periods of homelessness, and are more likely to admit they are homeless when asked (Kishigami 2008; Conseils des Montrealais 2017). These numbers continued to increase steadily over the next thirty years.

1.3.6 Shelter Life

In a *Montreal Gazette* article published in the late 1980s, Ida Williams of the NFCM claimed that Montreal was seriously lacking with regard to social services and resources specific to Indigenous women compared with other Canadian cities like Ottawa, Winnipeg, Toronto and Halifax (Janoff 1987). While that may have been in the case over 30 years ago, in the 2012 Urban Aboriginal Peoples Survey, seven of ten Montreal Inuit reported using and relying on Indigenous-specific services and organizations available to them in the city (MUAHC 2012); this number indicates

that Inuit are approximately 20% more likely to use resources geared toward the Indigenous population than Métis and First Nations respondents. However, this is likely due to a lack of Inuit-specific services, which would more culturally appropriate, as "services that are shared with First Nations may be perceived as non-Inuit and less relevant" (McShane et al. 2006: 298). Indeed, a pan-aboriginal approach reportedly makes Inuit feel less comfortable than if they had the opportunity to access services specifically geared to them (TI 2005: 7). Nevertheless, due to the many difficulties they ultimately face in a new city, Inuit migrants often turn to Montreal homeless shelters for support. As Annie Pisuktie, animator for Ivirtivik and host of Nipivut, the first Inuit radio show in southern Canada, tells *The Montreal Gazette:*

> Inuit in the city are in pain. They ran away from their homes up north because of abuse. They arrive here and there are no resources for them. They need to touch base with their own people (Lowi: October 29, 2005).

Many Inuit women refuse to use non-Indigenous shelters due to anticipated language barriers and a lack of cultural sensitivity. Some non-Inuit workers and other homeless patrons mistreat many Inuit who attempt to access offered services. In Kishigami's 2008 study among homeless Inuit, many interviewees express that they had encountered discrimination in the form of disparaging remarks about Inuit, with comments about how they "smell," "are noisy," and "have fleas and lice" (Kishigami 2014). In this way, Inuit often feel uncomfortable using non-Indigenous shelters despite limited options (Network 2012; UAS 2017). Similarly, Inuit women look for centres that are more welcoming to them, where their needs as Inuit women are appreciated, and where they are able to experience a sense of familiarity (Kuitenbrouwer 1991). As the current executive director of Southern Quebec Inuit Association (SQIA), and former outreach worker at two community organizations available to Inuit women in the city, the Native Friendship Centre (NFCM) and Chez Doris, Tina Pisuktie is well-versed in the issues confronted by Inuit women in the city. While both centres aim to help Indigenous women, only Chez Doris has a program

specifically devoted to Inuit women which offers services that take into consideration Inuit values and culture (Rogers 2014b). The Projets Autochtones du Québec (PAQ) and the Native Women's Shelter of Montreal (NWSM) are two shelters available at night that are able to provide accommodation to Indigenous women for varying lengths of time (Laneuville 2015).

Unfortunately, each of these resources require that women subscribe to a zero-tolerance policy regarding drugs, alcohol and violence (Banerjee 2004). This criterion, in addition to sometimes requiring that each woman present a piece of identification to gain entry, excludes many Inuit women in Montreal from availing themselves of the resources offered by Montreal shelters. While not a space that is limited to Indigenous clients, The Open Door is a day shelter located in a church that offers similar services yet does not subscribe to the zero-tolerance policy on intoxication (Laneuville 2015; Curtis 2017). It is estimated that 40% of the individuals who frequent The Open Door are Inuit who sleep on the streets of Montreal (Donat and Cornez 2014). The use of alcohol or illegal substances is common among many homeless Inuit women who seek escape from the duress of everyday life (Bopp 2007; MUAHC 2012; Lanueville 2015). Indeed, in 1987, Donna Low, a psychiatric social worker for the Montreal General Hospital, claims that drug and alcohol abuse were the most serious issues among Indigenous women in Montreal. Leading the hospitals' addiction clinic at the time of the article, Low explains that treatment has very little success among Inuit women because "they don't identify with the other people there" (Janoff 1987:January 9). Further, many Inuit women abuse drugs and alcohol to avoid dealing with the deep-seated pain they have experienced in their lives. As one Inuk woman shares in a report for Saturviit:

> Alcohol abuse is only the tip of the iceberg: it is a widespread symptom of deep trauma and malaise related to the history of colonization. Consequently, we cannot just dwell on consumption itself (Laneuville 2015:78).

In Ross' study of women who attended two shelters in Montreal, one of them Chez Doris, 84 of the 448 women who visited between 1977 and 1978 were alcoholics who sometimes used drugs in addition to their alcohol consumption (Ross 1982). She notes that combining drugs and alcohol was common practice among the younger women who were often intoxicated when they arrived at the shelter (ibid). Women who were under the influence of drugs or alcohol became a problem for the shelter staff who attempted to maintain a safe environment for all their patrons (ibid). As Lowi reports, zero-tolerance policies at shelters are often unwelcoming to those homeless individuals who are intoxicated yet still in need of shelter (2005).

Additionally, capacity is limited within the available shelters and priority is sometimes given to women who have recently experienced domestic abuse as well as those with children (Banerjee 2004). Thus, Inuit women who are sober and not in an abusive relationship may have even more difficulty finding room in shelters. In 1987 the residence director of the YWCA admitted that 95% of the time they were unable to find a place for women to stay (Janoff 1987). In Ross' study 1075 women were admitted between 1977 and 1978 to the two women's shelters, however 935 women were refused entry. Of these 581 were turned away because there was a shortage of beds available; the remaining 354 women were denied entry because their behaviour was either deemed troublesome or potentially violent (Ross 1982). "It is not surprising that the women could not themselves find a bed for the night in a shelter when one considers that the day shelter staff often spent countless hours on the telephone trying to get a woman a bed," Ross remarks (1982:3). An article published in *Nunatsiaq News,* an online newspaper serving the Inuit regions of Nunavut and Nunavik, addresses the same problem more than 30 years later, wherein the number of people far exceeds the number of available beds in shelters (Rogers 2014b). The challenge of finding space for Inuit women looking for shelter in Montreal continues to increase

and is directly linked to the overrepresentation of homelessness among this population. The scarcity of available resources specific to Inuit women in Montreal necessarily contributes to the rising homeless statistics among this population. As such, vulnerable Inuit without contacts within the city must resort to sleeping outside in unfavourable and unsafe conditions.

Chez Doris, a Montreal women's shelter open every day from 8:30am to 3:00pm[5], was forced to temporarily close its doors on weekends in 2014 due to funding cuts (Rogers 2014d; Network 2013). This is directly contrary to the shelter's original mandate. According to Ross' research when the shelter first opened in 1977, Chez Doris claimed that:

> it was to be open to any and all women who needed help. No one would be turned away, no matter her appearance or behaviour – the door would never be closed (Ross 1982:90).

The shelter was in fact named to commemorate a young homeless woman named Doris who was murdered on the morning of November 3, 1974 (Ross 1982). According to Ross' study, Chez Doris' initial priority was to help those women who were considered hard-up and really had no other options (ibid). Of course, circumstances change with time. According to a 2014 *CBC News* article, the clients who typically used the shelter's services were recently left stranded with nowhere else to go on the weekends (MacLellan 2015). Tina Pisuktie reports that it is typical to see women stay up throughout the night and come to Chez Doris in the morning to finally get some sleep (Rogers 2014a). As one of the participants in Liebow's research affirms, one of the worst things about shelter living is trying to kill time out on the streets until the shelter opens (Liebow 1993). Reports claim that with the centre closed on weekends, many were now seen sleeping outside the Chez Doris building (MacLellan 2015). It goes without saying that the closure had a deep impact on the marginalized Inuit women of Montreal. Fortunately, the day-centre located in

[5] As of the writing of this updated version, Chez Doris has extended its hours of operation to 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

downtown Montreal was finally able to restore weekend services after an additional $180,000 in public and private funding was secured (MacLellan 2015). Additionally, in May of 2018 the shelter received the largest donation of their 41-year history (Obendrauf 2018). The 1 million dollars they received comes at an opportune time, immediately following critical renovations to the foundation of the building. This allows Chez Doris to remain open[6] and continue to provide services such as meals, feminine hygiene products, clothing, access to beds and showers, financial management, mental health and legal services to support the clients who make up the estimated 26,000 visits to the shelter per year (Laneuville 2015; Obendrauf 2018).

Ross remarks that it is not known how many women have been refused access or barred from Montreal shelters and little if anything is known about what happens to them once they are turned away (Ross 1982). "They disappeared," she says, "perhaps to become statistics on the list of Missing Persons" (Ross 1982:96). According to *CBC News*, two Inuit individuals died on the streets of Montreal in 2012 which spurred new services and programs in the city to address the needs of the homeless, such as additional food, socks, blankets and a street team of Doctors Without Borders (Nepton 2013). Social agencies who work with Inuit in Montreal are becoming alarmed at the increasing rates of homeless Inuit women who are dying on the streets. In 1991 a counsellor at Chez Doris reported in a news article, "we watch them fall apart and kill themselves. […] with no one to help them adapt to this city. I know one now who is on the edge of suicide" (Kuittenbrouwer 1991:February 9).

An article in *Nunatsiaq News* reports that five Inuit women died in Montreal in 2012 alone. "One died from liver disease. Another choked on her own vomit in a park while she was drunk.

[6] As of 2020, due in large part to the global pandemic and its repercussions on the female homeless population, Chez Doris opened an overnight shelter.

One was struck and killed by a passing car. Two others died of AIDS" (George 2012). One news report states that Inuit women living on the streets of Montreal are dying, often forgotten, ignored or unacknowledged by Canada's Inuit organizations (George 2012). According to the Native Women's Association of Canada, over 4000 Indigenous women have been murdered or gone missing in the country since 1980 (Ross 2017). Two homeless Inuit women[7], both 27 years of age, died within days of each other in Montreal in August 2017 (Curtis 2017; Ross 2017). Both women were regular clients at The Open Door, a day shelter that was previously located near Cabot Square[8] that is open to Montreal's homeless; the majority of their clients are Inuit. Friends and family suspect that at least one of the two deaths were the result of foul play, potentially linked to their relationship with men who prey on vulnerable Inuit women in Montreal (Ross 2017).

1.3.7 Sex Work

Difficulty gaining employment, securing housing or accessing shelter, are some of the critical reasons many homeless Inuit women engage in sex work as a means of survival in Montreal (Kuitenbrouwer 1991). Aileen D. Ross observes that men on the streets are more likely to engage in more manipulative acts such as theft to help them survive (1982). Her Montreal research in 1977 showed that on the other hand, women who are pushed into marginal economic positions are more apt to use their 'women's wiles' to get what they need; an advantage, she says, that woman have over their male counterparts (Ross 1982). One of Ross' study participants admitted that she could only bring herself to beg from males (1982). While prostitution represents unofficial employment for some, many Inuit women are simply looking for a warm place to sleep (Janoff 1987). Indeed,

[7] While the exact numbers are unknown, community workers suggest a dramatic increase in the number of Inuit women in situations of homelessness who have passed away since 2017.
[8] In December 2018, The Open Door relocated from its longstanding location near Cabot Square to 3535 Park Avenue, in Montreal's Plateau area.

Ross lists 'prostitution' as the most important means of survival among homeless women and observed that many who used the shelters had been socialized to use this technique well. This practice was especially prevalent, Ross explains, among women who were young and attractive (Ross 1982). Often these women will try to find a man at a bar who may be willing to provide them with a drink, drugs or if they are lucky enough, a hot meal and a warm place to sleep (Ross 1982). Novac, Brown and Bourbonnais (1996) agree that many of these women survive because they are able "to provide sexual and housekeeping services in exchange for money or a roof" (15) In the same way, it is common for such women to be on friendly terms with the bartenders, who sometimes let them "know if a man is looking for a girl to 'party' with" (Janoff 1987:January 9). One homeless Inuk women explains why women in her situation may offer sexual services:

> When you're desperate, you go with this man even though you don't want to. You don't love him, you don't like him, but he has a bed to sleep on. You have no choice but to follow him, because you need a place. You get kicked out when the bars close, so you go to sleep in an alcoholic's house. But, if you're not willing to have sex, you get kicked out of there too (Bopp et al. 2007a:17).

Indeed, for some women, visiting bars around the city is a business venture, above all else (Janoff 1987; Novac et al. 1996; Ross 2017).

A report on prostitution among Indigenous women in Montreal affirms that most of the women they observed tend to work inside west-end bars where money is unlikely to change hands (Janoff 1987). Increasingly, Inuit women who have been pushed to the fringes of Montreal society sell their services as a primary source of income but seldom consider themselves professional prostitutes. According to a news article, Tina Pisuktie says, "Women won't say that they are sex workers…but you'll hear 'I have sex with him in order to stay at his place'" (Rogers 2014a:April 23). Indeed, although some women may be part of prostitution rings, most are working for themselves. A survey conducted by the Native Friendship Centre and published in the mid-1980s

says only two women reported working with pimps (Janoff 1987). In a January 2014 report the chair of the Ottawa Coalition to End Human Trafficking compiled dozens of accounts of women who were sexually exploited or trafficked (Rogers 2014b; Public Safety Canada 2014). This document advised readers that the issue may be far-reaching among Inuit women, especially those from Nunavut. However, among Inuit women in Montreal most are from Nunavik, a region of northern Quebec. Accordingly, as of four years ago outreach workers assert that there is little evidence of this phenomenon in Montreal (ibid). This is confirmed in a recent news article that appeared in *Nunatsiaq News* that states that while some women do work with associates by choice, any control by a third party is considered conjugal violence. The report suggests that such relationships are quite rare, so we are cautioned to use the word 'trafficking' with care when referring to prostitution (Rogers 2014a).

Yet, more recent news reports following the deaths of several homeless Inuit women in Montreal contradict these statements. "Some women work with pimps who use crack to exert control over them" an article in the *Montreal Gazette* claims (Curtis 2017:December 19). Often known to the community centres around the city who cater to young Inuit women, some non-Inuit men, often homeless themselves, target these vulnerable women (Curtis 2017; Ross 2017). David Chapman, former director of The Open Door confirms this, explaining how men will approach these women and seem very kind at first, offering drugs and alcohol or a place to stay, and will eventually coerce them into sex work. He explains, "we know of crack houses in the area where Inuit women pay their debt by selling their body. That's just a known reality" (Ross 2017:October 16)

In this way, Inuit homeless women who do engage in sex work are less organized than professionals. Instead, they often only frequent bars when in need. A study of several homeless

communities in the 1980s suggests that homeless women are much more likely than homeless males to actively seek out potential lovers (Novac et al. 1996). As such, many are ultimately looking for a man to support them and will quickly stop working the streets when they move in with a boyfriend (Janoff 1987). Research by Novac, Brown and Bournbonnais (1996) claims that these women are looking for men to fill their urgent desire to feel protected due to their marginalized status (1996). Accordingly, Pisuktie argues that these arrangements are often necessary for survival and admits that the support homeless women are gaining from these men is more than a day shelter can provide them once its doors close for the day (Rogers 2014a).

Still, Inuit women who have been pushed to the fringes of Montreal society are selling sexual services as a primary source of income. A legal advisor for homeless Indigenous women in 1987 weighed in on the situation: "four years ago, prostitution was nearly unheard of. Nowadays, an Inuit (sic) girl ends up in jail [for prostitution] every weekend" (Janoff 1987:January 9). Some women have been known to stay in rooms with multiple men rather than sleep out on the street (Ross 1982). Even more, given that alcohol may be the only intoxicant they can afford, many of these women begin drinking as soon as the bars open. Reportedly, this group of homeless women are essentially the most difficult to interview as they often become too drunk and pass out within a matter of hours (Janoff 1987). Though sex work and alcohol often go hand in hand, an inebriated condition might increase the risk of an attack on a woman without housing. What is more, Inuit women are more likely to sleep directly on the street, which increases their exposure to potential violence (Conseil des Montréalaises 2017).

One of the major risks of sex work is the uncertainty a woman faces as to who she will pick up and how they will treat her. These homeless women are especially vulnerable to physical and sexual assault. Doris, the namesake of the Chez Doris day shelter, was only one of the many

women engaged in sex work who suffered from alcoholism and had little support. She had been brutally raped and beaten to death. Her body was later uncovered in a shed in a back alley (Ross 1982). It is because of stories like this one that Julie, a 24-year old Inuk from Kuujjuaq, took over two weeks to build up enough courage to get into a man's car (Janoff 1987). She says, "every time a customer pulled a knife or gun on me, I'd get scared and quit working" (Janoff 1987:January 9). Even more, contracting a sexually transmitted infection or becoming pregnant is a major fear for these women (Ross 1982). Issues such as these directly contribute to Inuit women specifically constituting the group that is currently at the most elevated risk of HIV and AIDS infection in Canada (Kishigami 2008). Yet despite these risks, this phenomenon has only increased in more recent years, where offers of sex continue to be a bartering tool for Inuit women living on the streets (Stern 2010).

Conclusions: Gaps in the Literature

A critical review of the literature reveals that the topic of urban homelessness has been documented over the last forty years. While homelessness is often assumed to be a male experience, recently more attention has been given to the female-dimension of homelessness. Of note are contributions made by Ross (1982), whose work is especially relevant given her focus on homeless women in Montreal, specifically, as well as Liebow (1993), and Novac, Brown and Bourbonnais (1996). While these are all certainly important contributions to the field that help us appreciate the distinct needs, concerns and experiences of women in situations of homelessness, unfortunately they are particularly dated. In this way, these resources cannot provide a recent account of homeless among women within the past 20 years. Further, any research pertaining directly to homeless women in

urban environments, Kishigami (2014) and Ross (1982) for example, has been within the context of a shelter and thus ignores the hidden segment of this homeless population.

Of the more contemporary sources, some research has focused on homelessness in general, as well as the Indigenous situation in particular, and often does include the experience of women within this context. However, existing academic literature on the marginalized voices of Inuit women in situations of urban homelessness is notably missing. While Kishigami (1999, 2002, 2008 & 2014) provides a significant contribution to the scholarly material on the Inuit homeless situation in Montreal, his research lacks a gendered lens, and cannot provide an accurate assessment of the unique needs and experiences of Inuit women in his sample. That said, Kishigami's research certainly begins to measure some of the more general aspects of this crisis, albeit from a more quantitative perspective. The statistics he provides on the number of Inuit living in Montreal, for instance the number of Inuit living without housing or employment, as well as the number of males and females who fall into each category, is especially useful. However, relying on Kishigami's research in addition to the few available strategy reports for interest-focused government and community organizations such as Makivik (2008, 2012, 2013), Network (2013) and MUAHC (2012) suggest there is insufficient scholarly material to draw from regarding the topic at present. As such, there are many questions not adequately addressed within the existing scholarly literature on urban homelessness among Inuit women in Montreal.

An in-depth overview of all relevant resources concerning the proposed topic has prompted me to search for literature beyond the published expertise of academic researchers in specialized fields. In this way, a helpful source of information has been reports published in newspapers such as *The Gazette* [Montreal]; *La Presse* [Montreal]; Canada's National Observer; CBC News; and *Nunatsiaq News* [Nunavik]. This review cites over 15 different news articles. The majority of these

have been published within the last ten years, which suggests that this subject is of current interest to readers. Even more, the large number of recent news articles on homeless Inuit women in Montreal implies that this topic is not only timely, but also extremely relevant. Given that these articles fall outside of what is generally considered academic literature yet are some of the only resources tackling the urgency of the issue at hand, there remains an open field for my research to fill the academic gap.

While the review of the literature has brought forth prior scholarship around homelessness and around the lives of Inuit women it does not address the experiences of Inuit women within situations of homelessness, especially how their current circumstances relate to the challenges in their northern communities. This foundation of knowledge allows me to situate my work as the next step to better contextualizing these experiences. The following chapter will provide insight into why semi-structured interviews are employed as the qualitative method to better appreciate the reasons Inuit women come to Montreal and the realities of their lives while living without permanent housing once here.

Chapter 2: Methodology

2.1 Qualitative Methods

Qualitative interviews were selected as a method of inquiry to provide participants the opportunity for their experiences to resonate in an academic context. The telling of their stories, expression of their needs and voiced concerns offer the possibility of being documented. In this way, it is hoped that their involvement may contribute to establishing a record of the experiences of this community while respecting the Inuit tradition of storytelling.

2.1.1 Qualitative recruitment

Given my research questions, it was decided that participants would be individuals who were born in the Arctic or Subarctic regions of Canada and self-identify as Inuit women who are currently living in Montreal without permanent housing. Additionally, only participants who were over the age of 18 and fluent in English would be included in this study.

As someone who has experienced homelessness in Montreal at various periods in my life, I anticipated being cognizant of and sensitive to the particular challenges and dynamics related to being a woman and living on the streets. Further, I relied on the experiences I have had with Inuit women to guide me through this process. These experiences provided me with additional insight into many of the different homeless communities around Montreal, including where many members of my target population congregate.

Several steps were taken before I approached anyone to participate in this project. First, I consulted with Tina Pisuktie, who at that time was the caseworker for the Inuit assistance program at Chez Doris, a woman's day shelter near Atwater. We corresponded a few times via email before

scheduling a phone conversation in June 2016 and then an in-person meeting a month later at Chez Doris. I shared my proposal with Tina and she offered some insight into how I may want to approach potential participants. We then walked over to Cabot Square where I was introduced to David Crane, a community intervention worker for Cabot Square, as well as Annie Pisuktie who is an animator at Ivirtivik, an employment training centre for Inuit, and host of Nipivut, the Inuktut radio broadcast. My intention was to ensure that these community leaders were not only aware of the project I planned to embark on, but that they agreed with my methods and did not foresee any issues. I asked to volunteer for their respective organizations but unfortunately this was not a possibility at the time.

I then approached The Open Door, another day shelter in the Cabot Square area that is often frequented by Inuit women. I spoke to the staff about my research project and arranged to volunteer there semi-regularly so that I could build trusting relationships with potential participants. After three weeks, without solicitation the intervention worker of The Open Door, introduced me to three Inuit women who are regulars at the shelter. He explained that he had informed them about my project, that they were interested in participating and that they would likely be good candidates. Indeed, I conducted interviews with these three women on a large rock under the shade of a maple tree in an isolated area close to The Open Door.

2.2.3 Interviews

Three semi-structured interviews were conducted with three Inuit women who identified as living in a situation of homelessness in Montreal. Participation required verbal consent. Each woman received a cash honorarium of $20 for agreeing to take part. Time was taken prior to and following the interview to thoroughly discuss all research procedures and to answer any questions or

concerns the participants had. Each interview was conducted in English and lasted approximately one hour. The interviews were recorded using an external recording device. The questions covered a range of topics around homelessness in Montreal and northern living situations.

The following pages provide an account of three Inuit women's experiences of homelessness as shared during our interviews together. These are presented as individual stories, rather than an amalgamation of instances, as I believe it is important to look at the whole life of an individual, rather than reducing them to selected episodes of homelessness. In this way, the words shared in these interviews have been reconstructed to feature each woman's expressions of her life and circumstances to promote an understanding of homelessness as multidimensional and storied. Ultimately these descriptions serve to answer my research questions of what it is like to experience homelessness as an Inuk woman in Montreal and how her northern circumstances have shaped her decision to live in the city. Therefore, Chapter 3 is dedicated to providing an overview of the lives of each woman, as it was presented to me in our one-on-one interview. Analysis of these stories will be presented to the reader in Chapter 4.

Chapter 3: Qualitative Results

> "It is through stories that it is easiest to draw attention to the plight of homeless women – to make their lives palpable to the reader, their situation more understandable, and to elicit empathy," (Novac et al. 1996:13).

ELISAPEE'S STORY

Elisapee is a soft-spoken Inuk woman originally from a community in Nunavik. She is 51 years old, though she looks significantly younger. At the time of our interview in June 2017, Elisapee has been living on the streets of Montreal for 3 months; since March 20th, she specifies. She tells me that she was also homeless for 8 consecutive months last year when she came to Montreal. She would have stayed in the city for longer but her mother wanted her to go home so Elisapee felt obliged. Besides, she explains, she already had a plane ticket to go back home. "So, eight months homeless – sleeping on the streets. Then I went home October 5. Five months later I came back again".

This time she was asked to escort her aunt to an appointment at the hospital and seized the opportunity to come back to Montreal. Elisapee was glad she was asked as she desperately wanted to return to the city to escape the difficulties she was facing at home.

> I had really bad family problems up North[9]. I was the only one working back home and I couldn't afford to buy food for my family in five houses. So, I got tired of it.

As a family escort, Elisapee's plane ticket is paid for and while she receives no monetary compensation, she was provided with food at the transit home. Elisapee had to wait a week in the transit home in Dorval, by the Montreal airport, until her aunt's scheduled surgery. When asked

[9] Note that the participant refers to her northern home community as "up North". This phrasing will be maintained throughout the telling of her story to stay true to her voice.

what she is supposed to do in the meantime, she says "Just stay there. Try not to get drunk or party". She was familiar with a few other Inuit who were also waiting at the transit home. "I was drunk four days straight so patient services kicked me out and so I became homeless". Her aunt returned home when her surgery was cancelled, but Elisapee stayed and made her way to downtown Montreal.

Elisapee has three brothers; one younger, one older and one twin. She does not have a close relationship with them. When she is home, she is expected to support them because they are addicted to drugs and alcohol and are unable to care for themselves. She is also required to feed both of her sons, her mother and her nephew, who live together in a two-bedroom house. She is the only employed member of her family, working as a janitor at a construction site. Elisapee enjoyed the work and remained employed there for several years. When she goes back home, she relies upon returning to that job. "They always want me there. They are waiting for me to go home but I am not ready to go".

Elisapee feels that she is required to take care of her mother as she is getting older and her siblings are unlikely to do so. She explains that her brothers only want access to their mother's elder cheque so that they can use the money to feed their addiction to weed and alcohol. Even though she lives in a dry community, there are many bootleggers that provide illegal alcohol there. A ten-inch bottle of hard liquor will go for $100. Elisapee admits that she sometimes spends some of her paycheque on a bottle for herself when she is up North.

While her family no longer lives there, Elisapee was born in an igloo in Resolute Bay[10] "Way, way up North". Her family were exiled by the government as part of the High Arctic

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[10] Resolute Bay located in Nunavut, Is one of Canada's northernmost communities and one of the coldest inhabited places in the world (Qikiqtani Truth Commission 2014).

relocation[11] in 1953, before she was born. "My childhood was awful. Awful childhood. Parents drunk all the time. Into fights". While things are different now, she says that the biggest issues Inuit are currently facing up North are rampant alcohol and drug use. Still when asked, Elisapee says it is easier to live up North than in Montreal because it less difficult to get food up North. There are not as many individuals experiencing homelessness there. "A lot of people are on welfare. There are jobs available but they don't want to work".

Elisapee has five children. Two are her natural born children and three are adopted. They are all living up North along with her three grandchildren. She has yet to meet her newest granddaughter, born just a month ago, but has seen pictures. Her daughter is living out in Wakeham Bay[12] with her boyfriend and children.

> My son, he's back home. Living with my mom. He's working for the daycare as a bus driver. My youngest son, he's in jail. He didn't respect his court…My oldest son, I adopted. He died in 2009. Suicide…And my other second youngest son I adopted too, he's living with my niece. She fostered him, but even though he is over 18, he still wants to live with her as like a mother, so she takes care of him very well.

She communicates with her living family via facebook as often as she can while living in Montreal, sometimes using the free WIFI at McDonalds to connect to the internet with a cellphone or tablet.

Elisapee prefers living in Montreal, not only because it allows her to shed her financial obligations to her family, but also because she has a boyfriend here. He is a 48-year-old man of Irish descent who is currently rooming with one of his friends. Her hope is that one day one of them will get their own apartment so that the couple can finally live together. They met at

[11] The High Arctic relocation was a government initiative in the 1950s where 92 Inuit were relocated from northern Quebec to the High Arctic islands to establish Canadian sovereignty in an attempt to allay Cold War fears of Soviet aggression (Qikiqtani Truth Commission 2014; RCAP 1996).

[12] Wakeham Bay, or Kangiqsujuaq, is a community located on the Ungava Peninsula of the Hudson Strait in Nunavik, Quebec with a population of 750 (Statistics Canada 2016).

Charlevoix metro station. She had seen him there for a while before they finally connected. "He saw me one morning. I was crying at the metro. I was kicked out from friends. So, I grabbed all my stuff. He saw me, he invited me to his home. And we started to get…loving each other". That was a year ago. They have been together ever since. She loves him. According to Elisapee, even though she would prefer to stay in Montreal, her boyfriend would like to make some money, so they can move back to her home community together. "He wants to follow me to go back home…for the first time to see how it is". Elisapee admits that they do not have plans to relocate any time soon. She would like her boyfriend to make enough money to pay for his own ticket first, explaining that while she has a reduced fare of 75% off, he will have to pay the full fare of $1500 for a one-way ticket. Her boyfriend has never been up North but has met Elisapee's family when they came to the hospital in Montreal. "My oldest brother met him. My mother met him. My niece met him. My ex-sister-in-law met him". Elisapee is relieved that her mother likes him. She wants Elisapee to come home but understands that it may take time to make enough money to do so. Elisapee expects that they will live with her mother when they make enough money to leave Montreal and return to her home community; her mother is aging quickly and is becoming less independent.

In the meantime, Elisapee is unable to stay with her boyfriend at his friend's house so she only sees him once a week. She tells me she is excited to see him this weekend before they go to Church near Charlevoix metro. They meet there every Saturday. "We eat. After we eat, we make money and start to drink and…he doesn't want me to go to his friend's place because his friend is always mean". Her boyfriend's roommate never wants Elisapee around and becomes angry if Elisapee follows her boyfriend back to his place. To avoid getting her boyfriend into trouble,

Elisapee goes to great lengths to appease his friend. “I have to be nice. To make him smile or laugh…if I bring him some beer, it helps too”.

Despite not being able to spend much time with him, Elisapee says her relationship with her boyfriend is a loving one. While they may sometimes get into verbal disagreements, he would never hit her. He has told her, “If I hit you…my mom’s never going to talk to me or say anything to me again”. Elisapee is no stranger to conjugal violence.

> Like, I had a boyfriend in the 80s? I met a man. Well, I met him, he was violent. I broke up with him. Then I met another man. He was violent again. Yeah. And I broke up with him again. Then I met a man. He was even more violent. Like, I was with him for 13 years. I finally broke up with him and after in 2013, I used to have big bruises. Broken arms. Lot of bruises everywhere.

Every relationship she has been in prior to this one has been with an Inuk and has resulted in physical violence. Elisapee notes a big difference in the way she is treated by Inuit men up North compared with the non-Inuit men in Montreal. In her community all the men were very controlling, jealous and did not allow her to have friends. Elisapee’s ex-boyfriend is currently in jail for assault and battery. She is glad to no longer have to deal with this, but the scars of her past remain.

Elisapee currently stays at a friend’s house, near Cremazie metro, rent free. She is able to stay with him when he is not away visiting his parents, otherwise she sleeps in the streets. She used to have permission to stay at his house even when he was not around but she explains an incident where she lost her friend’s trust. “I was supposed to be there but I got drunk, he saw me at Atwater metro. I was mad. So, he took the key away from me and he will never give it to me again”. She notes that she feels safe there. It is a very small place, with a single bed that she shares with her friend. They sleep head to toe. “He doesn’t mind. He’s a good friend”. They met last year and have become very close. She credits him with helping her get back on her feet. “He helped me with the welfare. He helped me with the mailbox. And he’s helping me right now to look for an apartment”.

She explains how her friend looks out for her, even advising her to lower her alcohol consumption. "[My friend] is helping me. He talks and talks and talks, oh my god. But I listen. I respect him. He respects me".

With the help of her friend, Elisapee has received her first welfare cheque this month. He helped her to manage the money, advising her to buy clothes first, then food, a cell phone so that she can more easily connect with family and a bus pass before buying alcohol. She explains that many of the Inuit women around her are jealous because of this newfound financial gain, especially given that Elisapee made sure to buy expensive clothing that would last. She explains how difficult it was before receiving this cheque, often not having any money for food or clothes. She made sure to treat herself when the money first came in. "When I got the money, it was fun. I bought all the clothes first. Me and him went to a restaurant to go eat. It was fun". Despite it only being mid-month, Elisapee spent all her money quickly as a preventative measure. "No, it's gone. I bought everything expensive. I didn't want to spend it all on alcohol. I don't take drugs, I don't take speed, cocaine, crack or anything." That $1000 cheque lasted a week. She eagerly awaits her next cheque set to arrive on the first of the month and has already planned how she will spend the incoming $628. Her priority is to get herself an apartment. She reckons it should cost her $450 rent a month. The rest will go to a monthly bus pass for $100 and $25 to pay her cellphone bill. If she has anything left, she would like to give her friend a little bit of money for his help and for allowing her a place to stay.

Elisapee frequents the many day-shelters available around Montreal's downtown area to get clean clothes, when necessary, and food. Without these resources Elisapee admits she would not have anything to eat. She remains grateful. "Tonight, I'm not going to be hungry because we had food yesterday. At the Native Centre. They gave us a bunch of food." She received a food

basket full of cookies, soups and frozen foods. She also goes to The Open Door or Chez Doris for food and mentions that she gets enough to eat depending on what they serve as she has to manage her many food allergies. On the list of foods she has to avoid are carrots, fish and milk. “My stomach. If I drink milk, I get a stomach ache. Even the Tang juice. I’m allergic to that”. Food baskets do not often last long. When she wakes up hungry, she makes her way to The Open Door for a breakfast of toast with peanut butter and jam. When she does not have access to her friend’s place, she may pop in to Chez Doris for a nap on one of their beds. She compares her current situation to the one she was experiencing just recently:

> The first time I came here I used to sleep outside, I was so dirty and really yuck. So, I went to Chez Doris to change my clothes and take a shower every week. Now I have a place now. I change clothes every day and take a shower five times a day, or four times a day.

She explains that the centres provide access to internet but the wait time to use it is long as there is often only one computer for everyone to share. She knows of Chez Doris’ zero tolerance for intoxication and will only attempt to use their services when she is sober. Otherwise, she will go to The Open Door. At both places she tries to maintain good behaviour by minding her own business and keeping to herself.

> Everybody is happy with me. Even if they’re mad at me, I don’t bother them. I ignore them. It’s their problem. I didn’t make them mad, so let them be. I don’t care if they hate me, I don’t hate them back. I don’t talk back.

Elisapee spends a large part of her day panhandling for money but admits that she is not able to make much income this way. The most cash she has ever made was $20 and that was a month ago. She is lucky if she can collect $10. She frequents the areas near Atwater or Peel and prefers to panhandle on her own. “Just by myself. I want to be alone. I don’t want anybody to bother me…I try to stay away from drug people who fight and are violent. So, I try to be by myself”. She mentions several times that when people are upset with her or aggressive, she walks

away from them. Elisapee is annoyed that she is often asked to share her earnings with other homeless Inuit. She figures if she must work for herself, they should work for themselves as well. "I try to make money to buy some beer or try to get some little bit of cigarettes. But I mostly smoke from the ground. I pick butts up." Once she has enough money for two big beers, she will return home to drink with her friend. Elisapee does not like to drink with the people on the streets as she feels they often take advantage of her. They expect her to share her alcohol or money with them but tend not to return the favour when the tables are turned. She avoids female Inuit as she claims they tend to gossip, are often jealous and sometimes violent. Elisapee emphasizes that she only has male friends, Inuit and non-Inuit alike. "They are more comfortable. And they laugh with me. We are not drinking but when I see a female and I talk to her, she'll ask me if I have money, if I have cigarettes, etc."

Elisapee mentions that she is often solicited to engage in sex work to make some extra money, mostly by non-Inuit male strangers around the city.

> Yeah, guys do that to me, they ask me. And I say no. I respect myself. I take care of myself. So, guys ask me to go have sex with them, I say no. Blow job, no. Because I respect myself and I take care of myself.

Elisapee admits that she used to have a problem with alcohol but is now trying to get her drinking under control with the help of her friend. She used to smoke weed as well but stopped. She still drinks on and off, but much less than she used to. "When I drink, I get into problems, so [my friend] told me to calm down, so I did. Drinking once a day is ok. I like it now. Less drinking. Even I miss one day sometimes". While she has never gotten into trouble with the police or been hospitalized due to her drinking, Elisapee would drink up to six 40 oz bottles of 10.1% beer every day.

> So, I used to drink those, 4 to 6 bottles a day. I've calmed down. By that man. He made me calm down. (louder, excitedly) I don't like to be controlled. I try to tell him that but he told me to calm down drinking. If I don't calm down, he's gonna kick me out. So, I have to respect him.

She explains that her friend does not drink very much, often having a small can or two and only when Elisapee is there with him. When asked why Elisapee feels the need to drink she says, "To keep away from my stressness (sic). Or to keep away from people, from me. Like in my childhood I wasn't happy. And I had very big problems". She knows that when she imbibes, she often becomes angry and aggressive. "I have to be more careful now". She mentions several times how important it is for her to respect her friend and his requirement that she stop drinking so much. Elisapee has already lost the privilege of having a key to her friend's house. She needs to control her drinking if she wants to continue to be allowed to sleep there.

When Elisapee does have to sleep in the streets, she tries to seek out warm, dry spaces. In the winter, the most difficult part for her is the physical pain induced by the cold weather. "I had pain in my legs because when I get cold, I get muscle cramps…All my muscles get cramps. I even try to find a big box to cover myself". When she can find a warm spot, it is usually on private property, in a stairwell, metro station, janitor's closet or a garage. Again, she tends to choose places to sleep where she can be alone, away from others who may cause trouble. Security usually finds her before long and kicks her out. When asked if police often bother her: "Sometimes. They would ask for my I.D. but they won't give me a ticket because they know me, I'm homeless". In the summer Elisapee often sleeps under a bridge, someone's porch, or in a park where authorities are less likely to apprehend her, "but it's colder". She will try to cover herself with blankets to keep warm. "One time I ended up sleeping on the bench. It was cold. I was crying, nobody would help me. People were passing by. It was hard. Yes."

Elisapee usually carries a backpack with her, containing her possessions. She is always sure to carry her I.D. with her, which she lost last year and now tries to keep safe. She is also sure to have a water bottle as she is often thirsty and drinks a lot of water. “Pen and a pad of paper. So, I can know where everything is. Like, who to call”. She keeps herself entertained with a book of word search puzzles. She admits that her backpack contains “mostly Kleenex because sometimes when I’m allergic to anything I sneeze a lot”.

When asked what she would change in her life right now Elisapee says she would like to get a job in Montreal. “I don’t know. Maybe janitor job? Yeah. I like cleaning places, so mostly that kind of job I would like to get. Yeah. Try to cool down alcohol too. I want that”. She says it is almost impossible for her to find a job here because she does not speak French, only English and Inuktut. Additionally, she feels like the size of the city presents a challenge in accessing resources. “It’s too big. Very big. And I have to go very far to go to work. Very far to go home. Get the food. Buy the food. It’s hard”. Still, the most difficult aspect of her life right now is that she misses eating country food. “Caribou…Geese. Beluga. Walrus. Polar Bear. Seal. Everything, country food. Fish.” She says it is rare to have access to those foods here. Every once in a while, Elisapee says she can get country food at a community centre event or at Chez Doris on the rare occasion, but not often enough to suppress her craving. Elisapee’s favourite country foods are “caribou and arctic char. Mostly walrus, the fat”. When asked what she considers her biggest problem right now in Montreal, Elisapee says it is having no house and living on the streets. “Just hoping to go back home with my boyfriend in the future. To go see my mom. And stay with my mom.”

LALY'S STORY

Laly has been in Montreal for seven months, the last six of which she has spent homeless sleeping on the streets. She is a 23-year-old Inuk woman from one of the northernmost Inuit communities in Nunavik. She is among the youngest of six biological sisters, three adopted sisters and one adopted brother. She has visited Montreal several times with her family for vacation. This time she came to the city in December to live with her boyfriend, a white man she met on facebook. She paid $800, after a 75% discount, for a one-way plane ticket on her own. Once here, she was able to stay with her then boyfriend and his mother in their apartment for one month before she was thrown out onto the streets. "Because I wouldn't even do the dishes, clean up. That's why [his mom] kicked me out". Even though she does not have a place to stay anymore, she would prefer to stay in Montreal than to return home. "I don't wanna be there," she says of her community. Instead, she went to Atwater metro, where people knew her. "They're nice to me there because I'm nice to them. I'm always nice. I'm not a fighter. I don't hurt nobody".

Laly spent the next six months sleeping on the streets of Montreal. For the first few months Laly spent most of her time with a new boyfriend, Josh, until he was apprehended by the police for violating his conditions when he was caught drinking and sent to jail. Josh has currently served two-thirds of his three-month sentence. She felt safer when he was around to keep her warm and protected. Laly believes that it is important for an Inuk woman to have a man around to protect her. She does not like to be alone and is now looking for someone else to spend her time with until her boyfriend is released. "I always have a friend. I'm looking for a friend. But I know not to be alone". When she is alone, she is afraid. While she has never been attacked before, this remains one of her fears while living on the street. Laly avoids people, places and situations that seem dangerous. "When I feel something bad or I feel it, I run away. When people try to…are angry

with me, they yell at me, I go. I run away". When asked why people may sometimes be mad at her, she shrugs and says that sometimes they are jealous.

To make money, Laly used to panhandle, but chooses not to anymore. She panhandled for a total of three weeks. She says she stopped because she can simply ask her friends to share their drinks and cigarettes with her instead. Otherwise, she receives money from her parents or from her tax returns. She does not often agree to sleep with men for money. She will say no if she finds a man unattractive. "I know what I like. I can pick them. But when I don't like them, I say no". In addition to cash, sometimes they give her cigarettes, alcohol or drugs as payment.

The places Laly finds to sleep vary day by day but are all public spaces. She says these are safer than many alternatives. "Um, I sleep in public. To be safe". She often sleeps inside Guy metro next to the depanneur. She has also spent several winter nights in the garage of a big building in NDG near Vendome metro where Laly and her boyfriend were able to keep warm. When she is not with her boyfriend, Laly chooses to sleep alone. She spends her days in Montreal moving from one place to another, passing time. Sometimes she walks, other times she hops the metro turnstile to illegally take the metro without a bus pass. She has designated areas of the city where she finds time alone, like around Guy metro, and other places where surrounds herself with other Inuit friends and has access to different resources. "I hang out with my friends. Sometimes drink. When I want to be alone, I stay away from Atwater". When Laly is hungry or needs a change of clothes she will drop by Chez Doris or The Open Door. Sometimes she will take a shower at Chez Doris after a nap. If she is menstruating, she is able to get feminine products from the Native Women's Shelter. She has to be careful with her underwear as securing a new pair from one of the centres is rare.

If she was unable to sleep the night before, Laly will take up a bed during the day at Chez Doris to get some rest. When she is tired of sleeping on the streets she will sometimes ask to stay at the Native Women's Shelter, but she does not like to do this often. She does not like their rules, especially the curfew of 11pm. "I feel like I'm in jail there". Laly explains that she used to frequent PAQ as well but stopped going because a man who was in residence there would often solicit her, asking for a one-night stand. "That's why I don't like being there. And they wake us up around 7am to get us out. I'm still tired". Laly prefers living on the streets rather than adhering to the restrictions within the overnight shelters. She likes to come and go as she pleases and to go to bed whenever she is tired. Instead, Laly prefers sleeping on the streets and using the day shelter services while complying with their substance policies. "I don't want to have drugs there. I respect them". She will often go in to use the internet, the telephone or get something to eat.

Living on the streets is difficult for Laly. She says that she cries often. "I'm tired of being in the streets". She misses her family. She has a return ticket home but cannot use it because she no longer has her ID. She lost it a few months ago while she was drunk. In the meantime, she has to wait until her parents visit Montreal so that they can bring her the documents she needs to obtain a new ID. Laly admits that the most difficult thing about living on the streets of Montreal is dealing with her crack addiction. She wants to stop badly but is having trouble doing so on her own. She was introduced to the drug by her boyfriend almost five months ago. He often panhandles throughout the streets of Montreal using Laly as bait.

> He would always tell people, like she needs a bus pass to go to the metro. He always lied to get the money. Then he would keep it for himself. For crack. To buy some crack.

She blames her ex-boyfriend for getting her addicted. Laly's crack cocaine consumption has serious repercussion on her health. She becomes physically ill and is unable to eat for days after she has smoked.

> Kind of a little bit harder for me. I can't eat. I cannot eat. I feel like no more stomach. I don't eat. I tried to eat but it's disgusting when I try to eat. Because of crack.

She says that when she smokes, she feels a lot better. The only thing she can stomach in that physical state is alcohol, her favourite being a 11.9% beer called Four Loko, sold in depanneurs across the city. The alcohol both appeases her stomach and gets her drunk enough to handle the rest of the day. She tries not to drink so much anymore because she no longer wants to black out, which used to be a common occurrence. She drinks to feel better, because she is unable to deal with the stress of her life. Besides, she says, "it's kind of a little bit hard for me to sleep in the street, you know?". The drugs and alcohol help take the edge off and make Laly feel more comfortable in her surroundings. When asked what the best part of each day is for her, she does not hesitate to answer: "drinking. Because, like, I don't care about people who are around when I am drunk". Consequently, the worst part of her day is having a hangover. She is afraid to stop drinking altogether because she says her heart will stop if she does. When asked if she needs help to stop drinking or smoking crack, she responds with a resounding no. She can do it on her own. "Of course. I'm all Inuk," she laughs. Laly mentions that the only substance people are addicted to in her home community is weed. For now, when asked what the best part of her day is, she says "drinking!" and explains it keeps her emotions at bay and helps her care less about the intentions of those around her.

Laly hides her alcohol in a non-descript water bottle, to facilitate drinking throughout the day while concealing it from the police. "Like, I'm hiding from cops!" she says proudly. She says the police bother her less now that she does not black out as often as she used to. She has spent several nights in jail for intoxication. The longest she has spent in jail was one week when she was caught drinking in her home community. She prefers Tanguay, Montreal's prison for women compared with the facility up North, because the former is much cleaner. The Northern prison, she

says, is disgusting and smells like urine. When asked to describe what being in jail is like, Laly says it is boring.

> But next time when they are trying to take me, it's ok to take me. To put me in jail, so what? Because I'm gonna sleep, and I'm gonna have a blanket. And I'm gonne be inside.

At this point Laly welcomes a stay in prison as it offers her an alternative to the harsh street life that she is currently experiencing.

While she had initially said she would prefer to stay in Montreal, Laly now says she wants to return home with her boyfriend. Ideally, she would get a job at the nickel mine in the kitchen, "because I love doing dishes". Her sister already has a job at that location. She is unsure whether there are more jobs available in Montreal or in her community, but she says with certainty that it is harder to secure one here. She acknowledges that she needs an ID and would likely have to know how to speak French to get a job in Montreal. Laly can understand a few words in French but is unable to speak it. She speaks both English and Inuktut every day with her family and friends in Montreal and up North.

Laly's life up North prior to coming to Montreal presented some challenges as well. She has had four miscarriages. The first one was eight years ago. She speaks of the traumatizing experience with tears in her eyes.

> I told my mom, I have vomit all over. "Mom, why I vomit?" I told her. I was a teenager of ten or fifteen around. And I think she doesn't know that I'm not a virgin anymore. So, I tell her "Mom, I vomit. Mom, why?" because I'm young and I don't know. When I go back home, back to my ex and we had sex and little things. So…

Sometime after this Laly had a dream where she saw Jesus and 3 or 4 children around him. She believes these are her unborn children, watching over her. "God puts the kids [in the dreams] sometimes, you know?" She would love to have children one day. Josh wants them to have a baby girl, but they are not ready while he is in jail.

Prior to coming to Montreal, Laly was in a previous relationship with an Inuk man up North who was physically abusive. At one time she had to go to the hospital following one of his attacks. She was covered in bruises and had several broken bones. They had to do an X-ray of her face but were unable to surgically mend her injuries as the procedure was deemed too dangerous given its proximity to her brain.

While her new relationship with Josh is less abusive, he does tend to get angry and is often jealous. She met Josh, a white anglophone, in China Town for the first time just over six months ago. Older than Laly, he is unemployed and has spent the last ten years homeless in Montreal. Her life would be better, she says, if she could move back home with her boyfriend. “He wanted to follow me up North”. As she waits for Josh to be released from jail, she says she cries often because she misses him so badly. When together, the two get into verbal altercations on occasion. His drug problem has become an issue as he smokes a lot more crack than she does. When asked if he treats her well, Laly says “um, yeah. But when he has too much drugs on him, he gets angry, yelling at me”. She says he fails to listen to her and purposely tries to make her jealous. He has cheated on her numerous times, once asking another girl to give him a blow job for crack in front of Laly. “I don’t wanna be with him anymore because I heard that”. Still, Laly’s feelings for Josh swing from one extreme to the other, depending on the direction of our conversation.

Laly admits that they do not use condoms when they have sex because they do not share partners. “Um, we’re not sharing with everybody. I would never share with anybody”. Despite his transgressions, she is not worried that Josh may carry a sexually transmitted disease nor that she might get pregnant. Should she get pregnant again, she says, she will leave the streets to live in the Native Women’s Shelter until she carries the child to term. Laly hopes for a daughter who she will name after her mother and raise in the city. Her one wish is to have a big house that she can live

in with Josh and a daughter in Montreal. When asked whether Laly feels whether this dream is possible for her she exhales and says “Yeah. I hope so. I want to change my life”

SIASI'S STORY

Siasi is a quick-witted young Inuk woman from a community in Nunavik. When asked to describe herself, she says

> Um, I'm 32. I have 7 kids. One granddaughter and her name is Kayla. And I love sewing. I do mitts, boots, parka. And also, a hat. I basically do, cover, all of it. I'm also an alcoholic.

This is not Siasi's first time homeless in Montreal. She has been coming back and forth since July 2012, once living on the streets for three and a half consecutive years before she returned home. Of that time, she spent two years living exclusively on the streets, and a year and half sleeping at people's houses. At the time of our interview, Siasi has been in Montreal for a total of six days. She initially intended to visit for the weekend but is in no rush to return to the responsibilities that await her up North. This time she already has a return plane ticket but is not ready to leave yet.

When Siasi says she is an alcoholic, she does so in earnest. She has had a problem with drinking for ten years. Siasi drinks mostly because she is lonely and wants to dull the emotional pain she experiences. "Something hurt me *bad*". Siasi was adopted. The death of her adoptive mother fifteen years ago still affects her profoundly. She was her mother's favourite:

> I was the most spoiled. But when she passed, my sisters started kicking me out, saying you were this, you were that. And you remember my mom did this because of you? That was *very* hard.

The loss of her mother and the rejection of her sisters still weighs on her heavily. Siasi's alcoholism has increased as a direct result of having her children taken from her by child protection services six years ago. Of the seven children she has given birth to, three of them have been removed from her care. "When DYP (Department of Youth Protection) took them away and put them into other villages, I felt so alone. So, my drinking has increased more". While alcohol is both legal and available in her community, Siasi does not drink when she is up North. "I don't like to drink in front of my kids or in front of my family".

In addition to her own children, Siasi was fostering three of her cousin's kids and raising two of her sister's. She identifies caring for the children as the most difficult part about living up North; tending to their needs and watching out for them takes up most of her time and energy. Siasi manages the large household on her own. She is also responsible for her sister who has a brain tumour and has difficulty caring for herself. One of her brothers is addicted to weed and the other is an alcoholic; neither of them help out. Of the five siblings, Siasi is the middle child and the only wage earner in the family. She had a job caring for the elderly but felt that she was not gaining enough income to support the family. She was introduced to bootlegging liquor and saw it as an opportunity. "I see my friends doing it and they are having cash, and I have…because I have a big family, my money wasn't enough. So, I increased it through bootlegging". One day her cousin wanted to front some alcohol from Siasi. When Siasi refused the request, her cousin took revenge by telling the authorities that Siasi had abused one of the children.

> So, some cousin of mine told the social worker that I threw my kid to the floor. Which, look, I have her children and my own. And she wanted to borrow some alcohol. She's an alcoholic too. And I said, no, not in front of the kids. So, no. I said no. Then she…she got upset.

Despite her innocence, child protection services were quick to believe Siasi's cousin. Consequently, three of her children aged four months, four years and nine years old at the time were removed from Siasi's care. They had a medical doctor examine her youngest son to verify the story and were told that he was perfectly healthy and has never been abused. Still, Siasi has not regained custody of her children. She has not seen the youngest son since he was placed with a foster family in Gatineau. When asked if she believes she will ever see her son again Siasi begins to cry. "I don't…That's what hurts me, *a lot*". Siasi admits that she has trouble dealing with the pain from the memory of this event. The only way she knows how to manage this emotional trauma is by drinking.

Siasi has also been addicted to crack cocaine for six years. She does not have access to drugs in her community but will indulge with her boyfriend when she is in Montreal. Siasi identifies having access to drugs as the biggest challenge she faces while living in Montreal. Siasi admits that she is powerless, especially in a city where drugs are readily available. She has difficulty saying no, especially "when there's drugs and alcohol right around the corner over there…"

Despite her decision to remain drug and alcohol free while at home, Siasi's family does not support her.

> Sometimes when my cousins come over, they are drinking and they annoy me. They HATE me there, eh? They're drunk. And I'm sober at home. She's um, they're calling me a former crackhead. Saying 'now she's all that'.

Siasi expresses that while she takes care of her family around her, no one takes care of her. Still, she recognizes that she has an alcohol and substance abuse problem and should get help. Her first experience with a treatment centre in Montreal was a traumatizing one.

> I tried to go to detox but it didn't work out. Detox St. Luc. They were gonna let me stay in the room for three days. They are coming in with their yellow gowns like I'm sick. That freaked me out.

This negative encounter does not dissuade Siasi from trying again. She has been accepted to a treatment centre for a session that will begin three months from now. This time she will try to get help for her addictions away from Montreal. "In my home town. Because I told them if I'm here and I'm gonna run away and I'm gonna end up in jail (laughs)". Siasi says she has everything she needs to recover, she just has to be ready. "I'm almost ready".

Siasi identifies shifting between Montreal and her community as a pattern. Given that she refuses to drink up North, when she seeks a reprieve, she comes to Montreal to party.

> Yeah. So, the DYP they're just telling me like, you're not gonna change. Because when I was home, I don't drink. I don't do that. I stopped drinking in front of my kids. So, I paid $700 to get drunk here, in Montreal (laughs)…Yeah. I went up North because I was tired of what I did. But when I was home, I kept thinking to come here, like to go have alcohol. Because when I was home, I didn't drink.

When Siasi comes to the city to let loose and drink, she stays on the streets. Siasi remains in Montreal until homelessness becomes too chaotic; she then returns home to a more responsible life. She currently has two jobs up North; one with the department of health as a hospital aid, the other as the manager of her local homeless shelter. Siasi prefers life up north and does not want to establish herself here permanently. "I'm still going back home. This is just a temporary vacation". Prior to this trip she spent just two months in her northern community. Once home, however, Siasi feels uneasy. "But now I'm trying to go home. All the time. And there's missing something".

Siasi arrived in Montreal without financial resources because she spent all her money on her plane ticket. As she does each time she travels here, Siasi relies on the services provided by the day shelters in the area to help her survive during her stay in the city. While she was drunk, Siasi lost the clothes she brought with her from home. She is not concerned that she now has only the clothes on her back. Should she require a piece of clothing she will go to The Open Door for a donation. She may sometimes go to The Open Door when she is hungry, yet she prefers to eat breakfast at Chez Doris "because Chez Doris gives more food. Like eggs". Siasi does not panhandle for money. When asked where her main source of income is from while in the city, she says "Cheese. I'm good at stealing cheese". Siasi swipes mozzarella from one of the major grocery stores and sells it to a pizza place. She is able to make a sustainable amount of money through this venture. "Yeah, we lived in a hotel, me and him, for a month because of cheese. (giggles) I have a nickname in the streets: Cheese Girl". She spends the money she earns on hotels, alcohol and

crack. Siasi says she also goes 'stinge-ing' by asking her many friends to buy her alcohol when she runs out of money. "Heyyy, can you buy me a Loko?"

Siasi sleeps behind the church every night when she is not able to pay for a hotel. Sometimes she uses the beds at Chez Doris to get some sleep during the day when she has been up all night. Siasi recognizes that she limits her available options for a place to stay because she prefers to spend nights with her boyfriend. "I have places but…I can go into an apartment to sleep, but…I'm too stupid to stay with that Black guy over there. I feel sorry". When her relationship with her boyfriend is on bad terms, Siasi chooses to sleep on her own rather than with friends or other individuals who identify as homeless. She explains that it is safer to stay on her own rather than with others. "Because I'd rather be alone. Because a lot of, a lot of them are bullshit. Um, they're talking like they wanna beat me or something". Siasi says both men and women on the streets are potential threats to her and she fears for her safety. "Around them, no. But when I'm alone I feel safe. Because I do my own thing".

Six months ago, Siasi gave birth to a baby boy. She emphasizes that she remained sober during her pregnancy. "When I was carrying him, when I was pregnant with him, I didn't drink, I didn't do drugs. Nothing". She had the baby in Montreal while she was living on the streets, sleeping behind The Open Door. She points out her baby's father, a black man who is also homeless.

> You saw my baby father. That's my baby father. Him too he doesn't care whatsoever. All he's saying is 'you get money for my son, you owe me'. And he doesn't even take care of my son.

Siasi's son has since been placed in foster care with a French family up North. She explains that contingent on her sobriety she will likely get her son back next month and "yeah so that's kind of a temporary little thing to stay here".

Siasi has a difficult history with French Canadians. “I hate them”. The child protective service agents, the social workers and both foster families for her two sons are French. Siasi has become distrustful of French-speaking individuals as she does not believe that they have her best interest at heart. “Well, I’m kind of a victim from French people, eh? Yeah. They can make you look so stupid”.

Siasi has been with her boyfriend, the father of her newborn, for five years now. They met at Atwater. At the beginning of their relationship, he was very kind to Siasi.

> First couple of months he was charming, Like, he used to go to church, on a Sunday. He had an apartment. He was like, cooking for me. He was nice.

Her boyfriend eventually became physically, verbally and emotionally abusive. “Well, a couple of months passed and he started being abusive. Asking money from my drugs. Drugs does that to him”. He began cheating on her, lying to her and constantly berating her. Siasi has several physical injuries due to the abuse she has endured from her boyfriend. “He used to beat me up so bad. Kill me, almost kill me, this and that”. Some of her permanent damages include a crooked finger that can no longer bend and stomach issues from an untreated hernia when he kicked her in the stomach during her pregnancy. He refused to allow her to go to the hospital when these injuries were sustained. “No, he didn’t let me go out. He doesn’t let me go out. He’s afraid to go to jail. So, I mostly have pain. And I mostly healed myself”. Last year Siasi brought her boyfriend up North with the hope that they could have a good life together there.

> Yeah, I brought him up North, eh? And he cheated on me with a fourteen-year-old. Yeah, I paid $1300 one-way ticket for him. Cheated on me with a fourteen-year-old. And um…I got mad, for sure. And when I’m saying this about it, um he starts to act up. Then he beat me up that time, so he went to jail. They brought him back here because I said I don’t want him in my home town.

Siasi feels conflicted about her relationship with her boyfriend. On the one hand, she says they are not really together, yet she still feels drawn to him. When he broke up with her a few years

ago, Siasi was so devastated that she tried to end her life by taking 700 pills. She ended up in a coma. "I lost a lot of weight that time. My bones were showing". Siasi struggles to deal with her boyfriend's inconsistent behaviour toward her; one day he fights with her and the next he will tell her he loves her. "At the same time too, he's comforting me. 'I've got you, eh? This, that. And at the same time, he's making me look shit, because he's shit". Siasi knows he is not right for her but is having trouble leaving him. "But he keeps calling, looking. Me too, I don't understand myself…I keep calling him". This ambivalence often pushes her to leave Montreal and return home.

> Because I was tired of all this. Because he's letting me watch that…he's telling me that I'm no good. Letting me watch that he has so many whores. Like…I kept saying that, I don't care.

Siasi admits that she has never been in a non-abusive relationship. Her bad experiences with men have altered her behaviours in the past as she tried to protect herself from being mistreated by others. Siasi used to be actively aggressive and close herself off from people to avoid seeming vulnerable. "No. I was like, cold cold. Like, I was like…if I were like that still, I would be like 'fuck you! Leave me alone'. I was bad. I was fighting". When she returns to her community, she chooses not to date anyone. Today, Siasi continues to be distrustful of men and their intentions toward her.

> I'm afraid though. I'm afraid though. (crying) I was always treated like I'm shit. I saw…I saw…a guy. With like, I told you, he was going to church. Feeding me. This, that. I thought he was good to me. So, if I meet somebody like that, I'm afraid. Yeah, I'm afraid.

Siasi expresses that she is satisfied with her life up North. "Not a big house. But yeah, a good life". She is not sure what would help make her life better. "I have everything I need". She would love more children and more grandchildren. "I love babies. I love them". When asked what kind of life she wants, Siasi begins to cry. "Happy," she says. For Siasi that means "Just normal. Not really normal, like…I dunno…I'm not sure I know".

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This brief snapshot into the lives of Elisapee, Laly and Siasi provides a glimpse into their current attitudes, beliefs, emotions and behaviours while living on the streets of Montreal. Taken together, this categorical data offers insight into the social structures that explain some of the motivations behind their frequent transitions between Montreal and their home communities. In the analysis that follows, we will delve further into the phenomenon of Inuit women alternating between living with the pressures of their northern communities and living in situations of homelessness while in Montreal.

Chapter 4: Discussion and Analysis

The following chapter presents a discussion of qualitative results organized to follow a thematic analysis derived from interview data. Specifically, two major sections are outlined as follows: *Life in the North* and *Homelessness in Montreal*. Further, several themes have emerged from the accounts provided by the Inuit women interviewed, indicating similarities in their experiences of homelessness in Montreal as well as within their home lives in their respective northern communities. Five sub-themes have been identified within both overarching themes. The purpose of this chapter is to explore the range of factors that determine the shift of Inuit women from their northern communities to the city, as well as the complexity of Inuit women's homelessness in Montreal.

In order to arrive at this analysis, each interview was transcribed word for word by computer. Thematic analysis was selected as the process "for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data" (Braun and Clarke 2005:79). I engaged in several careful readings of the transcripts with the purpose of identifying similarities across the Inuit women's depicted experiences. The approach used was inductive in that "the themes identified are strongly linked to the data themselves" (Braun and Clarke 2005:83). This data-driven method sought to establish logical connections between the recorded experiences.

As such, a thematic analysis has been applied to said narratives to "provide a rich and detailed, yet complex account of the data" (Braun and Clarke 2005:78). This identification of themes was processed at the semantic level. In other words, the language used by each narrator is taken to have explicit meaning where "the analyst is not looking for anything beyond […] what has been written" (Braun and Clarke 2005:87). Therefore, I did not attempt to explore what was

left unspecified or unsaid in each story. This method of inquiry is intended to provide a snapshot of the experience as each woman has expressed it, while limiting interpretive interference.

Throughout the analysis process, I was sure to pay close attention to the language used and actively read for any overarching similarities between different accounts of the experiences shared with me by the women. With the research questions in mind, strong consideration of descriptive language around life in the North or life in Montreal were noted both on the transcripts themselves and on a separate piece of paper. Further, focused attention was paid to the ways in which events and people were presented within the narrative. Forethought was given to any repetition that may be present within a single transcript, as this may be indicative of a woman privileging a particular incident. Hand-written notes were taken throughout the first few readings of the transcripts as a preliminary guide toward establishing themes.

Once I was sufficiently familiar with the narratives in question, I listed any obvious patterns of shared experiences within the transcripts. A table was created using a word processor where emergent themes were listed as column headings. Any key quotations drawn from the text that seemed to signify a potential sub-theme were transcribed under their respectively relevant label. This coding process allowed me to systematize the large amount of data collected, but also facilitated the adding, removing and adjusting of data as well as the thematic categories. Finally, several prominent themes were identified. These were divided into two overarching categories, as per the nature of our research questions, with each divided into five sub-categories.

4.1 Life in the North

All three women interviewed for this project are from Inuit communities in Nunavik[13], northern Quebec. As they share their experiences around living on the streets of Montreal, they each refer to life in their home community to explain why or how they arrived in the city. First, *Life in the North*, has been divided into five sub-sections depicting aspects of these Inuit women's lives within their communities. The first section, *Northern Housing*, provides a brief description of the living conditions as identified by the women during their discussions of home life. Secondly, the section titled *Northern Family,* explains the relationships each woman has with the members of their family up North. The third section, *Northern Employment*, provides an overview of the level of employment available to the Inuit women within our research as well as the types of jobs that are offered up North. The fourth section, *Northern Challenges*, describes the difficulties these Inuit women face when they are living in their home community. The fifth and final section, *Moving North with Significant Other*, outlines the rationale each woman has shared regarding their hope to move back to their home communities with their significant other rather than stay in Montreal. Taken together, these five sub-themes are meant to provide insight into how each Inuit woman views their experience of northern life and why they moved to Montreal.

4.1.1 Northern Housing

The first theme extracted from our three interviews explores the situations all three Inuit women experience around housing in their northern communities. The following paragraphs will focus on each woman's living situation, types of housing, and instances of northern homelessness. This first

[13] It was not by design that all three participants are originally from Nunavik, Quebec as this was not a qualification for participation. In this way, the conditions of living in the North presented in the literature review is not specific to this area and includes sources from the other three major regions of Nunagat.

section is intended to outline the living conditions pertaining to northern housing situations as described within the women's interviews.

All three women identified that they live with their relatives when they are up North. While Laly did not provide many details around her living situation at home, she does mention that she stays with her parents. Her family is in the process of building a house. Elisapee lives at her mother's and Siasi stays with her sister. Both women describe their northern housing as small. Siasi says her family's dwelling is "not a big house" yet she mentions caring for at least 8 other family members within the house. Similarly, including herself, there are five family members sharing Elisapee's family home. She says "it's a two-bedroom house. Small. Even though, we share the rooms". This signifies that in both Siasi and Elisapee's dwellings there are not enough bedrooms for each family member and they are forced to share the limited space. This corresponds to the literature indicating multi-generational families living in small pre-fabricated houses within northern communities. (Bopp 2007a; Laneuville 2015; Makivik 2012). As per the literature, the living conditions outlined by these women indicate overcrowding in Nunavik housing. We are reminded that overcrowded living situations in the North may sometimes trigger several other social issues for Inuit women (Bopp 2007a; Bonesteel 2008; Tester 2009; Makivik 2012; Laneuville 2015) and could lead to situations of northern homelessness (Makivik 2012), perhaps prompting a need to move to the city.

Siasi says that there are several instances of homelessness in her northern community. "A lot of them get kicked out because they cannot pay. Because AL-CO-HOLLLLL!" She explains that many individuals in her community spend all their money on the purchase of alcohol and are thus unable to pay their rent. Consequently, these individuals are evicted from their homes and end up homeless in the North. Siasi confirms that there is a homeless shelter in her community. When

asked, Elisapee says that there does not seem to be overt instances of homelessness in her community, but many individuals choose not to work and are at-risk of falling into such situations. The literature informs us that the rate of non-payment of rent is 19% in Nunavik, sometimes prompting the eviction of Inuit women and their families (Tester 2009; Laneuville 2015).

4.1.2 Northern Family[14]

This section provides an account of the relationships the three Inuit women have with each of their families up North. The purpose of exploring these relations is to provide an understanding of the social ties these women currently have within their own families to potentially further our understanding of why they moved to Montreal. As such, the relationships with their siblings, cousins and parents will be outlined, as far as they have been discussed during the interviews.

Each woman mentions their siblings when discussing life up in their home community. Laly is the youngest of eleven siblings. She does not provide details about her relationships with her brothers or sisters; however, she speaks of her family fondly. Elisapee's relationship with her family is more nuanced. She has three brothers. When asked if she gets along with them, she says "not really". Elisapee's relationship with them is poor and she supports them financially as they suffer from addiction. They do not visit her when she is in Montreal. "No. No. If they did, I know they would be asking for money. Money for drugs and alcohol. I'm not going to be expecting them to come here". She mentions that she has many family members living in the North, including cousins, aunts and uncles. "Too many. They are living everywhere". Siasi also has a large family. She is the middle child of four siblings and mentions that she does not have an easy relationship with them. Like Elisapee, Siasi has two brothers who are addicts. She also has a sister with a brain

[14] Family here includes adopted kin, as per traditional Inuit custom adoption (Pauktuutit 2017).

tumor whom she helps care for. Siasi also explains that she has a difficult relationship with her cousins. She says they hate her. They call her names and annoy her. One of them reported Siasi to child protection services as an act of revenge and Siasi has lost custody of three of her children as a result. For Elisapee and Laly at least, these tense family relations are a main catalyst for their move to Montreal; that is, to get away from the fighting, addiction and expectations.

All the women have been pregnant, but only Siasi and Elisapee have children. Laly had four miscarriages. The first was 8 years ago at the age of 15. She hopes to have a baby girl one day. Siasi has 7 children, including a baby boy born just this year. She also has a three-month-old grandchild. Of these children, Siasi is fostering 3 and lost custody of 3 others. Each of her children currently live in various foster homes in the North. Unfortunately, Siasi fears that she may never see some of her children ever again. She hopes to regain custody of her youngest child next month should she maintain good and sober behaviour. According to Morris:

> Those who know Montreal's Inuit community say virtually every Inuit parent in the city has either had a child taken away by youth protection, has been threatened with placement in an institution, or knows an Inuit family that has suffered the same fate (2016: 9).

This unfortunate reality is all too real for these women. Nevertheless, Siasi says she would love to have more kids. "Yeah sure! I love babies. I love them". Elisapee has five children; two are her biological children and three she adopted. She also has 3 grandchildren. Her oldest son committed suicide 9 years ago. Her youngest is currently in jail. She mentions that one of her sons is a bus driver and is living with her mother, while another is fostered by her niece and continues to live there even though he is an adult. With their children caught in government systems such as child protection services and jail, Siasi and Elisapee do not have access to them. Siasi admits not being able to see her children has been traumatic, prompting her to consume drugs and alcohol to forget; substances which are readily available in Montreal.

Every woman mentioned their mother several times during their interview. Siasi is the only child of her biological mother but she calls the person who adopted and raised her "mom". She had a very close relationship with her mom and boasts that she was her mom's favourite child. This was the woman who taught Siasi to sew. Unfortunately, Siasi's adoptive mom passed away fifteen years ago. She still speaks with her biological mother but misses her mom dearly. Elisapee's mother is getting older and would prefer that Elisapee return home to help support her. While her health is stable, she is aging quickly and Elisapee helps feed her. She mentions that when she does return home, she is "going to stay with my mom, because my mom is elder now. I have to take care of her". Her mother's approval of Elisapee's boyfriend means a lot to her. When asked what she hopes for the future, she says "To go see my mom. And stay with my mom". Laly also seems to have a close relationship with her mother. She was the person Laly went to when she was having her first miscarriage. She also hopes to name her first child after her mother. Laly is the only woman who also mentions her "parents" collectively, rather than simply referring to her mother. She explains that her parents send her money, take her on vacation every year and advise her to seek medical help when needed. Laly's parents will come visit her in Montreal soon and will bring her a copy of her identification so that she can return home with them. When asked if she is still close with her parents, Laly says "yeah. Always".

Laly makes an effort to call her parents often and also uses facebook to stay in touch. Elisapee and Siasi confirm that they too use the same means to regularly communicate with their family up North. When Elisapee was asked who she calls on her new cellphone, she responds excitedly, "My family back home! My mom!" All three women disclosed that they miss their family while living in Montreal. Similarly, 42.3% of Inuit females indicated that the primary reason they would not move is because they would miss their family and friends (APS 2012).

While this did not prevent Laly, Siasi or Elisapee from leaving their home communities, it was likely a factor they considered when making their decision to relocate to Montreal. Further, it may contribute to their future plans to move back to their home community. In fact, when asked what the most difficult thing about living in Montreal is, Laly says "ummmmmmm….missing my family. That's it".

4.1.3 Northern Employment

This next section will explore the types of employment opportunities available to the Inuit women in the North, as outlined in their interviews. This includes jobs the women formerly held, current employment as well as future prospects. Additionally, levels of difficulty obtaining employment in the North will be discussed. The aim of this sub-section is to characterize the range of employment opportunities the women have when living in the North and identify whether this may have factored in to their decision to move to Montreal.

When living in her home community, Elisapee is employed as a janitor on a construction site. She has held this job for several years and finds it enjoyable. She explains that she will not have any difficulty regaining her position when she decides to return North. Given her northern job security, Elisapee states that there is no urgency to fly back to her community. She explains that she was offered this job several years ago by a lady who worked there and has kept it ever since. While she feels it is relatively easy to find work in the North, the other members of her family do not have jobs. Her mother used to work in the early 80s but no longer does. According to Elisapee this is characteristic of northern life, as she suggests that there are several jobs available, yet many people choose to collect welfare rather than find employment.

Siasi has worked in several capacities in the North. She used to work in a home for the elderly, helping clients who require assistance with their chronic conditions. Unfortunately, this

job did not provide enough financial security for Siasi to support her family. She was introduced to bootlegging and was able to supplement her income by selling alcohol on the black market within her community. She also recently worked as the manager of a northern homeless shelter. When Siasi returns North she holds a job as an hospital aid.

Laly says she also has a job waiting for her in the North, though does not specify what it entails. Ideally, she would like to return home and secure a job in the kitchen at a mine, where her sister works. While she has never been employed there, she would love to work there because she loves doing dishes. Laly says there are just as many jobs up North as there are in Montreal, but suggests it is much easier to secure employment in her community.

Most academic literature suggests that unemployment rates across northern communities in Canada are extremely elevated due to the lack of employment opportunities available to Inuit (Kuitenbrouwer 1991; Makivik 2012; QTC 2014; Laneuville 2015). In the same vein, statistics show that 50.7% of Inuit respondents listed that they were unemployed and in search of work. Even more, 81.2% of Inuit living in the North claim that a shortage of work caused them difficulty in finding employment (APS 2012). Conversely, Laly, Siasi and Elisapee say they have no difficulty finding jobs when they are living in Inuit communities. Their responses correspond to statistics indicating that 23.1% of Inuit females living in northern communities do not list shortage of jobs as related to their difficulties in finding northern employment (ibid). All three women are employed and say that there are ample jobs available to them in the North. It is then clear that they did not move to Montreal to find employment. Similarly, Kishigami's research indicates that only one of the seventy-five Inuit he interviewed in Montreal responded that they have moved there due to lack of employment in the North (2014). Kishigami's research and our testimonies from these three Inuit women contradict the statistics generated from the Aboriginal Peoples Study (APS) and

the literature. It is perhaps not at all difficult to secure employment in the North. One may consider, then, Elisapee's suggestion that while jobs are indeed available, northern residents may often choose not to work and decide to collect welfare instead. She reminds us, "no. A lot of people are on welfare. There are jobs available but they don't want to work, so…" It is noteworthy that both Siasi and Elisapee mention that some of their siblings do not work due to their struggles with addiction, which is not accounted for in the literature we reviewed for this study.

4.1.4 Northern Challenges

This section will explore the many challenges the Inuit women encounter within their home communities. As outlined by each of the three Inuit women interviewed for this research, the struggles they face range from domestic violence, an overburden of responsibility and substance abuse. This section is meant to provide context for the many reasons that may have prompted their relocation to Montreal.

Elisapee has been in a series of relationships with Inuit men in the North and they have all been violent. She says that since the 1980s every single one of her relationships prior to coming to Montreal has resulted in domestic abuse. Even though she would eventually leave relationships that became violent, she would eventually find herself with another man who was just as bad. She stayed in one relationship with a man who physically mistreated her for 13 years. One of her ex-boyfriends is in jail due to the physical abuse she sustained from him. Elisapee says the reason Inuit men in the North are often violent is because "they get jealous easily". Her ex-boyfriends prevented her from speaking to other people including greeting her friends. Laly has also experienced at least one violent relationship. "I got injured by my ex," she says and had to go to the hospital for X-rays. She describes the bruises, broken bones and permanent injuries she

sustained. While Siasi is currently involved in an abusive relationship with someone she met in Montreal, it is unclear whether she has experienced domestic abuse perpetrated by someone from within her community. Nevertheless, Siasi has been beaten while up North. She explains that she brought her non-Inuk boyfriend whom she met in Montreal to live with her in her home community. Once there, he cheated on her with a minor and physically attacked her when she accused him. He was sent to jail for this offense. The literature states that Inuit women often report instances of sexual abuse, familial abuse and violence while living in the North (Bopp 2007a; Bonesteel 2008; Tester 2009; Makivik 2012; Laneuville 2015). It should be considered that Inuit respondents to the Aboriginal Peoples Survey living in northern communities had assessed both their overall health (85.5%) as well as their mental health status (85.9%) as high; this, despite our findings that correspond to a phenomenon of abuse toward Inuit women in the North (2012).

Elisapee lives in a dry community, meaning the purchase, sale and consumption of alcohol is illegal. Still, she confirms that many individuals drink within her community, including herself. They obtain alcohol from bootleggers who sell the smuggled product at extremely high prices under the table. When she wants to indulge, she will buy one of these bottles to consume on her own. She says that many people from her community are addicted to both alcohol and weed, including her three brothers. She says they will often take their mother's elder cheque and spend the money on supporting their habit. All of her siblings deal with addiction, mainly to weed. Elisapee indicates that substance abuse has become a serious issue in her community, as it consumes peoples' lives preventing them from seeking employment or taking care of themselves. When asked to identify the most challenging aspect of living up North, Elisapee says "Alcohol problem. And Weed problem".

Siasi, who has been a bootlegger herself, also speaks about the alcohol abuse within her community. She admits that she is an alcoholic but refuses to drink when she is in the North because her children and family are there. Like Elisapee, Siasi's brothers also struggle with addiction. "My brother, he's an alcoholic too, so he doesn't care. And my little brother too, he's a pot head". She also mentions that her cousins drink in front of her, despite her sobriety. Unlike Elisapee's community, Siasi's is not a dry one, so alcohol is legal and available. She links the rampant alcoholism within her community to the increase in homelessness up North, as some individuals have become too drunk to pay their bills. Laly, on the other hand, says that many people are addicted to weed up North but does not delve further into the substance use within her community. The academic literature indicates that alcoholism is an issue in several communities (Makivik 2012; Pauktuutit 2010; QTC 2014). From a survey interviewing 46 Inuit women conducted by Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada for a final report on "Understanding the Needs of Urban Inuit Women":

> Drug and alcohol addictions represent a more complex social motivation to move into southern urban centres. While about half of research participants stated that addiction played a role in their migration journey, only a few openly mentioned *access* to drugs or alcohol as a motivation to relocate. In fact, dealing with addiction issues was the most common reason for these women to leave or even flee their community (Pauktuutit 2010: 15).

Of the three women interviewed for this project, Siasi confirms that the reason she came to Montreal on the most recent occasion, was to consume alcohol and access crack cocaine as she does not use while in the North. Conversely, she mentions that she returns home for a break when her addiction becomes too much.

The burden of familial responsibility while living up North is mentioned by both Siasi and Elisapee as one of the reasons they came to Montreal. When asked why she came to the city, Elisapee responds that her large family relied on her for food and she was the only member able

to provide, which led to family troubles as she could not afford it. As mentioned earlier, Elisapee supports her three brothers given their problems with addiction. She is also responsible for her two children, her mother and her nephew. As the only employed member of her family, she must ensure that everyone has enough to eat and that the bills are paid. She is not ready to return home to assume these responsibilities.

Siasi says the most difficult aspect of northern living for her is taking care of the kids. Being cautious around them, meeting and anticipating their needs and ensuring they are well taken care of are her priorities. Like Elisapee, Siasi is the only employed member of her large family. She is additionally responsible for her sister who is unable to care for herself due to a brain tumor. She does not mention whether she also takes financial responsibility for her brothers, who are in active addiction, but she does say that they do not contribute to the family financially or otherwise. Siasi describes a situation where she was caring for nine members of her family at once, while working full time. At the time she was responsible for her own three children, fostered her cousin's three children, as well as her sister and both her sister's children. Her single-income was not enough for the family, so she began selling alcohol illegally to earn more. She says she was 'managing it, until…" it all became too much. When she wants to let loose, Siasi consumes alcohol. Given her promise to herself that she would not drink in front of her children, Siasi decided to come to Montreal instead, for a "temporary vacation" from these responsibilities. According to the literature:

> Many women in the North feel the weight of a strong pressure to provide for many different individuals. In small communities where few people have well-paid jobs, the social pressure to "help" and "support" relatives and friends can prove untenable. Despite a strong desire to stay in their hometown, some women felt that only moving away might free them from demanding relatives (Pauktuutit 2010: 18).

For both Elisapee and Siasi, moving to Montreal was a much-needed reprieve, both financial and emotional, from caring for their families.

4.1.5 Moving North with Significant Other

This next section explores the theme of moving back North with a southern boyfriend. All three women have indicated a desire to return to their home community with their boyfriend in tow. As this is a subject that was discussed in all three interviews, it is important to recognize it as linked not only to the lives these Inuit women envision for themselves in Nunavik, but also generated from the experiences they have cultivated while homeless in Montreal. As observed by Kishigami, "Inuit women in Montreal tend to live with, or marry, non-Inuit partners" (2002: 57). The literature does not uncover instances of Inuit women moving North with their non-Inuit boyfriends as related to northern life. In this way, this section is intended to provide insight into this phenomenon as we explore the aspirations these women have for their futures.

As mentioned, Siasi has already experienced a move back home with her southern boyfriend a year ago. "Yeah. I brought him up North, eh?" Unfortunately, the event was not a pleasant one. It ended with her boyfriend cheating on her with a minor, becoming physically aggressive and being transported to a southern jail, because as Siasi said, she no longer wanted him in her home town. Despite this misadventure, prior to this Siasi did expect things to work out. She wanted him to stay with her in her home community forever. She explains how he met her family and how she paid for his one-way ticket home. It is clear her initial intention was to establish herself up North with her boyfriend.

While Laly relocated to Montreal for a man she met online, she now dreams of moving back home with her new boyfriend. When asked what would help to make her life better, she says "to be with my boyfriend and back home. He wanted to follow me up North". Her boyfriend is a Montrealer who is currently serving a jail sentence. They have been dating for five months now

and he has never been to the North before. According to a study conducted by Pauktuutit, "gendered roles and relationships shaped female participants' urban experiences" (2010: 32). Laly is unsure whether her boyfriend intends to come with her when he is released next month but ultimately this is her hope.

Elisapee says she is not ready to leave Montreal and return to her home community because she is waiting on her boyfriend. They have plans to move up North together however she would like him to make enough money to cover his airfare first. Elisapee confesses that she would prefer to live with him in Montreal, but her boyfriend would rather move to her community. Her boyfriend wants to meet her family and enjoy a new experience in a new place. Her mother wants them to move up North immediately to live with her but understands that Elisapee's boyfriend cannot yet afford to do so. When asked when she expects them to relocate, Elisapee says "no plans yet, not soon". Still, when asked what her hopes are for herself, Elisapee answers "just hoping to go back home with my boyfriend in the future."

4.2 Homelessness in Montreal

The second section derived from the interviews is around homelessness in Montreal as experienced by the three Inuit women interviewed for this project. This section is divided into five themes depicting the dominant aspects the women have identified when conveying their stories about living within the city without a permanent dwelling. The first theme, *Places to Sleep*, expands upon the many areas these women have eked out and regularly use to rest their heads in Montreal. Secondly, *Safety & Security*, describes the measures taken by these women to seek protection and limit their vulnerability while living on the streets. The third theme, *Making Money*, looks at the varied ways these women attempt to gain funds to sustain themselves while experiencing homelessness. The fourth sub-section titled *Drugs and Alcohol*, delves into the experiences these women have with substance abuse while living in Montreal. Finally, *Hospitals and Institutions*, the fifth theme generated from the interviews, provides an account of the social services these women have accessed and their experiences with them. Taken together, the objective of these five themes is to present the multifaceted experiences, conveyed through the stories told by these Inuit women, as they navigate the city of Montreal without a home.

4.2.1 Places to Sleep

This section provides an overview of where the Inuit women interviewed sleep while living on the streets of Montreal. Without the option of permanent housing, they will sometimes find temporary accommodation in friend's houses or hotel rooms. Sometimes the women will rest in public spaces such as garages, metro stations or park benches. The women also mention using day and night shelters when necessary. The purpose of this theme is to explore the many options for

accommodation, as indicated by the Inuit women, to foster a better understanding of their sleeping situations.

For the most part, Elisapee stays at a male friend's house in a small one-bedroom apartment where they share a bed. Her current rent-free arrangement depends on her friend's kindness. Unfortunately, Elisapee does not have free access to this space as her friend no longer grants her a key to the house; the privilege to come and go as she pleased was revoked during a past incident when Elisapee was drunk. In this way, when her friend leaves for an extended period, Elisapee once again finds herself sleeping outside. This agreement is a temporary one contingent upon Elisapee's good behaviour. In the meantime, her friend urges her to drink less, demonstrate financial responsibility and make plans to find her own apartment. Elisapee hopes to find her own place soon so that she and her boyfriend, who is staying at one of his friend's apartments, can live together. While Elisapee misses her boyfriend, she understands that she must take this time to sleep apart from him while she establishes herself.

Like Elisapee, Siasi also mentions that she has the option of staying in someone's apartment. She chooses not to do so as she would rather stay in a place where she can sleep with her boyfriend. When Siasi makes enough money, she will stay with her boyfriend in a hotel. As indicated in the review of academic literature, when staying in friends' apartments or hotels both Siasi and Elisapee are living in situations of hidden homelessness (Ross 1982; Janoff 1987; Layton 2008; Rogers 2014a). We are reminded that while it is difficult to account for the rates of concealed homelessness in the city due to the lack of visibility (Echenberg and Jensen 2008), Layton (2008) suggests that this type makes up the largest segment of homelessness in Canada.

When she is not staying with her friend, Elisapee must sleep in public places. During the winter months, she must be creative in finding spaces to sleep where she is able to keep warm.

Elisapee has slept in the garage of a public building downtown, a janitor closet in the same building and on the floor of a metro until she was spotted and kicked out by security. When asked what other places she uses, she mentions under bridges, porches and benches. It is quite difficult for Elisapee to keep warm when sleeping on the streets and the cold weather consequently affects her physical health. Elisapee tries to find boxes or blankets to cover her while she sleeps. Likewise, Siasi sleeps on the streets when she is unable to afford a hotel. She currently sleeps behind a church with her boyfriend. The upcoming weather report announces rain for the next few days. When asked where Siasi will stay to keep dry she admits "I dunno".

When Laly first arrived in Montreal she had a place to stay. She was kicked out shortly after and has been living on the streets ever since. She usually sleeps beside a small store inside a metro station. Like Elisapee, she has also found a garage to stay in when it is cold out. Luckily, Laly has never been caught by security in the large apartment building in NDG, despite admitting that she and her boyfriend have left quite a few messes there. She says her boyfriend was keeping her warm "all the time" until he was sent to prison. Now Laly says she prefers to sleep in public places as these are safer for her. Staying safe and warm is such a struggle for Laly that she invites the next opportunity to be arrested and sent to jail, as it will provide her with a warm, safe space to sleep. Laly's sentiment is in line with Aileen D. Ross' 1982 research outlined in our literature review which indicates that women often turn to prisons to house them when they have run out of alternative options.

All three interviewed women mention that they sometimes sleep in the day shelters when they are unable to get sufficient sleep at night. Laly will sometimes take a nap until lunch time at Chez Doris, a women's day centre. "When I didn't sleep, I go there and have a sleep". While they do not offer private rooms, Laly is glad when she is able to secure a bed for a few hours at the

shelter. Siasi also avails herself of Chez Doris' day beds for rest. "Yeah. I sleep there a little bit. Nowadays, yeah". While Elisapee usually has an apartment to stay in, she no longer sleeps at Chez Doris during the day but confirms that she used to.

Laly is the only woman of the three who mentions that she additionally uses night shelters. Laly stopped using Projets Autochtone du Québec (PAQ) as a resource after she was solicited for sex several times by another resident. She also dislikes the curfew and waketimes she must abide by in the shelter. Laly is averse to all the regulations she must follow when there and confirms that she would rather stay on the street than at PAQ. "Sometimes if I'm too tired from sleeping in the street I go to the Women's Shelter". At the Native Women's Shelter, too, Laly feels uncomfortable with all the rules. "I feel like I'm in jail there […] You have to come home at 12 or 11". Laly would prefer to wake up and go to sleep as she pleases than to remain in a night shelter where her liberties are constrained. It is possible that Siasi and Elisapee share this view as they did not mention these night shelters as potential options for them, however this was not explicitly asked and cannot be confirmed. The review of the literature suggests that many Inuit feel uncomfortable accessing non-Indigenous-specific shelters due to discrimination (Kuitenbrouwer 1991; Network 2012; Kishigami 2014; Laneuville 2015). Both the Native Women's Shelter and PAQ are open to Indigenous residents only, but are not Inuit-specific. It is possible, then, that the cultural needs specific to Inuit women are not being met by these shelters, thus prompting these women to go elsewhere. This, however, was not addressed within the interviews.

4.2.2 Safety and Security

This section will introduce the theme "Safety and Security" as it relates to the ways the women protect themselves from harm. Within their interviews the women refer to remaining close to their

boyfriends, distancing themselves from other homeless individuals and altering their behaviours as ways of staying safe and out of trouble. The aim of the paragraphs that follow is to convey the women's concerns for their safety and the means by which they attempt to remain safe while living on the streets of Montreal.

Laly believes that an Inuk woman is safer when a man is there to protect her. Before her boyfriend was sent to prison, Laly relied on him to protect her while she slept on the street. Now that he is unavailable, she feels vulnerable. "Yeah. Because sometimes I'm scared". She admits that she fears being attacked. It is for this reason that Laly prefers sleeping out in the public rather than on her own in obscure areas. Until her boyfriend is released, Laly looks to others for safety. Laly also mentions that she relies on her instincts and will leave an area when she senses danger. Likewise, Siasi feels safer when her boyfriend is around. Despite them not always being on good terms, Siasi explains that her fears are assuaged when she is able to sleep next to her boyfriend. Similarly, Elisapee rests easy when she can sleep at her friend's house as she feels safe there. Like Laly, in the absence of her boyfriend, Elisapee relies on the company of a trusted male friend to help keep her safe.

All three women mention that one of their strategies to remain out of harm's way is keeping to themselves. Elisapee avoids trouble by staying away from other homeless individuals, especially when they are intoxicated; she prefers her own company in such situations. Additionally, Elisapee mentions that she chooses not to have many friends as the people around her gossip a lot and are often jealous of her. In this way, Elisapee will often isolate herself from others while moving around the city and would rather not be bothered by others. Siasi mentions that she fears for her safety around others in the street. She says she feels other homeless individuals want to attack her. When sleeping next to her boyfriend is not an option, Siasi chooses to sleep alone as both males

and females have threatened her. She explains, “but when I’m alone I feel safe. Because I do my own thing”. Even Laly, who is in search of companionship to keep her safe, recognizes that there are times when she would prefer to be alone. She seeks out less populated areas of the city where she knows her friends and other homeless individuals are less likely to find her. She makes specific reference to avoiding the Atwater area when she chooses to be alone, as that is where many Inuit congregate. It is important to recognize that, as Laly reminds us, remaining in public areas can sometimes be a source of protection, as a woman is less likely to be physically or sexually accosted when surrounded by witnesses. Still, as Elisapee and Siasi explain, being around large groups of homeless individuals who are sometimes intoxicated or threatening can also be an affront to one’s safety, persuading some Inuit women to distance themselves from the drama and stay by themselves.

Elisapee often alters her behaviour to avoid trouble. She takes care to mind her own business to avoid potential altercations. “I don’t bother people, with their problems or anything. So, I’m always by myself”. As mentioned, she is sure to avoid people who are drunk or high as they are likely to try to fight with her. Elisapee also manages her conduct around her friend so that she can continue sleeping in his apartment. She explains that she has promised her friend that she will reduce her drinking, otherwise she risks being asked to leave. She has consequently mitigated her drinking out of respect for her friend and the sleeping arrangements he has offered her. Elisapee mentions that when she is intoxicated, she becomes aggressive and talks a lot. Limiting her drinking allows her to maintain good behaviour and avoid the consequence of losing a warm place to sleep. Elisapee’s boyfriend stays at a friend’s apartment; the friend does not want Elisapee around his place. Here too, Elisapee adapts her behaviour to avoid upsetting the friend so that she can visit with her boyfriend. Should Elisapee not manage her comportment, the repercussion that

would follow may mean that she may not be permitted to enter the apartment and will thus see her boyfriend even less than she already does.

Siasi also alters her behaviour to protect herself from harm. She recounts a time, years ago, when she would keep others at arms' length to avoid getting hurt by them. Siasi adopted an aggressive attitude while experiencing homelessness in the city to keep potential aggressors at bay. Laly's approach is the opposite of Siasi's. Instead of approaching others with hostility, she does so with kindness. She says she has many friends who treat her well because she does the same. Making a concerted effort to be combative, as with Siasi, or pleasant as we see with Laly and Elisapee, is an attempt to manage their surroundings to limit their vulnerability. Ultimately, altering their behaviour is just one of the ways these women protect themselves while living on the streets of Montreal.

4.2.3 Making Money

The following section identifies the ways these women make money while they are living in Montreal. Some of the approaches mentioned by the Inuit women throughout their interviews were panhandling, social assistance, and selling of food stuffs. Additionally, they discuss what they spend their income on as well as the difficulties they have finding legal employment in the city. This theme is intended to delve into the varying ways Inuit women in situations of homelessness gain money to help them survive while in Montreal.

All three women mention that they have, at one time, made money in the city by panhandling. Laly panhandled for three weeks. At times, Laly's boyfriend would panhandle the streets asking for change from passersby by lying and saying he needed the money to help his girlfriend. While he would sometimes share some of his earnings with Laly, more often her

boyfriend would spend it on drugs for himself. When she does panhandle on her own, Laly does so in the evenings. She tries to make just over $4 so that she can buy herself some Four Loko, her preferred alcohol. Most times Laly chooses not to panhandle because she would prefer asking other homeless individuals to share their goods with her. "I panhandle, but I don't panhandle anymore. I have friends who have drinks. I can ask them". After spending her savings on her plane ticket, Siasi arrived in Montreal without money. Siasi is also more apt to ask those around her for alcohol rather than money. Elisapee does not panhandle as much as she used to, but when she does, she stays around downtown metro stations to ask people for change. "Sometimes I panhandle money. I get money from people. Sometimes they give me a few cents". She admits she does not make much money this way. The most she has made is $20, however, Elisapee says that she is lucky if she is able to make $10 in one day. Unlike Siasi and Laly, Elisapee feels that each person should make their own money and not ask others to share their earnings. She remarks that many homeless individuals, especially female Inuit, expect her to share change, alcohol and cigarettes with them, which is one of the reasons Elisapee prefers to keep to herself. "If they ask for some money from me…I work for myself, they have to work for themselves too. So, I'm trying to be strong to panhandle and to keep it to myself. If they ask me if I got money, I'll say no. But I know they will ask me".

Now that Elisapee receives welfare, she no longer panhandles as much. Her friend encouraged her to consider social assistance, brought her to the welfare office and helped her with the application process. She received her first cheque two weeks ago and the money has already been spent. She proudly explains what she bought to avoid spending it on alcohol. Next month Elisapee expects to find an apartment. While she acknowledges that the money depleted quickly, Elisapee is glad to receive assistance. "I don't care because I panhandle at the metro or anywhere.

Like, I'll get the money, so. As long as I have a house and cellphone and bus pass". She says that it was very difficult to live without social assistance. Now she will only panhandle to make a little extra money for alcohol, as she refuses to spend her cheque on what she considers non-essentials.

While Laly will sometimes sleep with men in exchange for alcohol, drugs or a place to stay, she specifies that she is particular with who she will engage with. She admits that she will only sleep with them if they are attractive. Elisapee says that although she is often solicited by strangers on the street, she rejects their offers. She draws a link between selling sexual services with self-esteem. The literature does indicate that many Inuit women offer sexual favours while homeless in Montreal, either in exchange for money, a place to stay, or to help support their drug or alcohol addiction (Rogers 2014a; Curtis 2017; Ross 2017).

Siasi says she does not exchange sexual favours; rather she sells cheese that she steals from grocery stores. She admits that she is very good at this endeavour. In the past she was able to make enough money to pay for a month's stay at a hotel. When Siasi does not spend her money on a hotel room she uses it to buy crack cocaine.

Laly says that while there are jobs available in the city, she feels that it is difficult to find gainful employment in Montreal. "It's kind of hard to look for a job here," she says, but she does not know why. She explains that she was offered a job by a stranger who saw her panhandling downtown once, which included a haircut, clothing and a place to stay, "but I didn't even call him because I'm not French". Elisapee also experiences challenges finding work because she is unable to speak French. "No, I'm not French, so it's very hard for me". Ideally, she would like to find a job in Montreal as a janitor. She adds that the size of the city presents a challenge. Coming from a small community, Elisapee explains that given that the city is so vast, she is uncomfortable with the prospect of travelling long distances each day for work. Siasi, on the other hand, has been

discouraged by friends from accepting employment in Montreal. In this way, Siasi would rather return to her home community to work.

All three women are unemployed and mention a desire to find work in Montreal. According to the Aboriginal Peoples Study, 54.4% of Inuit females responded that a shortage of work in major Canadian cities caused them difficulty in finding employment (2012). Yet, it also shows that female Inuit living outside Nunangat are more likely to be unemployed, with 51.6% responding that they were living in a southern city without a job. In fact, Inuit without employment are 1.256 times more likely to live in a city outside Nunangat, such as Montreal (APS 2012). "Even if urban centres present more employment opportunities than northern communities, women cannot necessarily access these jobs easily" (Pauktuutit 2010). The inability to speak French, as indicated by Laly and Elisapee as a challenge in finding a job here, is one of the factors revealed in Kishigami's 2014 research as a limitation of employability among homeless Inuit in Montreal.

4.2.4 Drugs and Alcohol

Addiction is a theme that is present in all three accounts of homelessness in our interviews with Inuit women. The following section will explain how Laly, Siasi and Elisapee express their experience with substance abuse, the many consequences they have faced as a result of their using as well as their attempts at abstinence. This fourth sub-section is meant to provide an overview of the challenges these Inuit women face as they contend with alcoholism and drug addiction while living on the streets of Montreal.

When Siasi is asked what she has been up to in the six days she has spent in the city thus far, her response is "getting drunk". She says she is an alcoholic and her main purpose to travel to Montreal was to drink, as she refuses to do so while up North around her family. She admits that

while she was in her home community, her thoughts would often turn to alcohol, “so, I paid $700 to get drunk here”. Laly also says she drinks a lot while living on the streets although she is trying not to drink as much as she used to. Still, when asked what her favourite part of the day is, she says “drinking”. Elisapee drinks every day. Like Laly, she is trying to reduce her consumption and tries to drink only one big bottle of beer in a 24-hour period.

All three women mention that they use alcohol to cope with the difficulties in their lives or to forget about their past traumas. Laly says the reason for her drinking is to help her deal with her current homelessness. Drinking makes her feel more comfortable around strangers as she navigates public places. Laly mentions several times that she drinks because she is sad. In the same way, Siasi says her alcoholism increased when her children were removed from her care by child protection services. Siasi drinks to dull the pain of missing her children. Elisapee does not make a direct link to any event in her life but does mention that she had a rough childhood and that life in the North is difficult for her. “I had really bad family problems up North”. In this way, all three women use alcohol to try to numb the emotional pain they experience.

The consequences of drinking have been numerous and can range between mild and severe. Laly has lost her identification cards “when I was too drunk”. She admits that she used to regularly blackout from drinking. Last year Elisapee also lost her I.D. while she was intoxicated. Similarly, when Siasi is asked if she brought any clothing with her, she admits that she lost them. When asked how this happened, she says “I don’t know. I was drunk”. Clothing and I.D. are not the only things lost, however. Elisapee has also lost the privilege of having a key to her friend’s place. Additionally, when she first arrived in Montreal as an escort for her aunt’s medical appointment, Elisapee’s drunkenness got her thrown out of the patient facility and on to the streets. Elisapee

recognizes that when she drinks, she becomes loud, aggressive and talkative. “When I drink, I get into problems”.

Elisapee has been given an ultimatum to reduce her drinking or lose the apartment she sleeps in rent-free. Elisapee is trying to cut down the amount of alcohol she drinks at the request of her friend. While she used to drink several 40-ounce bottles of 10% alcohol a day, she has now reduced it to just one. “So, I used to drink those, 4 to 6 bottles a day. I’ve calmed down”. Elisapee continues to make every effort to curb her drinking, sometimes even going 24 hours without indulging. Laly is afraid of the physical consequences she may suffer if she stops drinking entirely. “No, if I try to stop just like that my heart is gonna stop, you know?” Siasi would also like to manage her drinking as she recognizes she is powerless over her addiction. She was able to stop while she was pregnant with her last child but could not remain sober after she gave birth. While she has been through a detox centre before, she is excited to start a new treatment program in the coming months. Siasi understands that she must maintain good behaviour, including sobriety, if she is to regain custody of her children.

Drugs are not an issue for Elisapee. She used to smoke weed but no longer does. “I don’t take drugs. I don’t take speed, cocaine, crack or anything”. In addition to alcohol, both Laly and Siasi regularly ingest crack cocaine. Laly has been using for five months now. She says that she never wanted to try it but her boyfriend ignored her protests and got her hooked. She now often feels sick and suffers from intestinal issues due to her use and barely eats anymore. Laly says that her addiction is the most difficult part about living in Montreal. “[…] I wanna stop smoking crack. I wanna stop”. Laly is currently unable to stop smoking crack on her own. When asked if Siasi uses any drug other than alcohol she says, “crack. We use crack”. She has been using for six years now. She would like to stop using but finds it difficult while in Montreal where she has access to

drugs and alcohol on every corner. Indeed, the literature confirms that "[Inuit] women frequently mentioned struggles with addiction and the dilemma they faced in an urban environment with easy access to alcohol and drugs" (Pauktuutit 2010: 13).

4.2.5 Hospitals and Institutions

While living in the city the women access several social services. This fifth and final section of homelessness in Montreal pertains to the experience these three women have when using these institutions. The following theme will delve into how these Inuit women convey the service they receive in shelters, jails, hospitals and by officers of the law. These accounts are meant to provide a review of the various services Inuit women use while homeless in Montreal. Additionally, they are intended to account for how well these women have been served by the institutions delivering these services.

Elisapee has never had any trouble with the police. She says that sometimes they will approach her when she is sleeping in a park or other public places, but they do not bother her. "They would ask for my I.D. but they won't give me a ticket because they know me. I'm homeless". For Elisapee, security guards are much more of a nuisance, as they will often find her sleeping on private property and ask her to leave. They often find her in janitor's closets, garages and metro stations and she is escorted out of these warm spaces and back on to the streets. Laly says that she does not have many run-ins with police, despite her public drinking, drug use, taking public transit without paying, and sleeping in public. She does admit that the police used to arrest her regularly for public intoxication. Once apprehended, Laly says they would take her to jail for the night.

All three women have spoken about jail in some capacity throughout their interviews. Elisapee's youngest son is currently in jail for failure to appear; as is her ex-boyfriend for domestic abuse. Siasi's boyfriend also served jail time for beating her. Laly's boyfriend is currently serving a three-month jail sentence for breaking his conditions when he was caught consuming alcohol. She is unable to visit him as she no longer has pieces of identification, which visitors are required to present. As mentioned, Laly has also been to jail several times for her drinking. She is usually detained for the night but has spent up to a week in jail. When arrested in Montreal she is sent to Tanguay prison. When asked what it is like to be incarcerated, she says it is "boring". Laly prefers this prison to the one in the North, which she says is "yuck. It's disgusting". She admits that the conditions in the Montreal jail are much better. In fact, as indicated in section 5.2.1 *Places to Sleep*, Laly welcomes future imprisonment in Montreal as it would at least allow her a warm place to sleep. Laly's prison experience corresponds with reports in our survey of the literature indicating that Inuit women from Nunavik are overrepresented in the prison system (Bopp et al. 2007a; Rogers 2014c; Savoie and Cornez 2014; Laneuville 2015; Curtis 2018).

Siasi had a negative experience the last time she went into treatment for her drug and alcohol addiction. She was referred to a detox program at St. Luc Hospital by a shelter intervention worker. Siasi feels that the hospital attendants and doctors on staff treated her as though she were infectious when she was simply coming in for her drug and alcohol addiction. She feels that the protective gowns they were wearing were unwarranted given her situation as she was not being treated for a contagious condition. Given this experience, she has decided to pursue her upcoming treatment in her home community. "In my home town. Because I told them if I'm here and I'm gonna run away and I'm gonna end up in jail". She no longer trusts Montreal facilities to treat her addiction. As discussed in the literature, when Inuit are frustrated or embarrassed when accessing

medical services, they tend to avoid such places in the future. Feeling uncomfortable in medical settings is not uncommon for Inuit patients (MUAHC 2012; Hanrahan 2012).

Elisapee first came to the city as a medical escort for her aunt who needed surgery. She explains that she took on this role because she was selected by her aunt and wanted desperately to return to Montreal. The hospital paid for their flights and they were lodged in a transit home near the airport as they awaited the appointment. Elisapee says that there was not much to do there but wait and try not to get drunk. Unfortunately, Elisapee was kicked out of the home for drunk and disorderly behaviour. In any case, she admits that she intended to use this trip as an opportunity to stay in Montreal.

Our literature review reminds us that there is a lack of medical care and health facilities in the North, which means that Inuit women will often have to travel South for care (Tait 2008; Makivik 2012). The APS indicates that 64.8% of Inuit living in a northern community do not have access to a medical doctor in their area; specifically, female Inuit are more likely to respond that they do not have a regular doctor as there is not one available in their community (2012). It is common for an Inuk woman to act as a medical escort, as a report released by Makivik (2012) estimates that there are currently between 150 to 200 Inuit who are in Montreal to accompany a family member from Nunavik to their appointment. News articles written by Janoff (1987), Banerjee (2004) and Rogers (2014b) confirm that, like Elisapee, some Inuit who escort their family members for medical care choose to remain in the city.

When asked where they get food, clothing or access to services such as showers, beds, or internet, all three women consistently go to day shelters to fulfil these needs. Although Laly has difficulty eating due to her crack addiction, she will sometimes eat breakfast or lunch at Chez Doris. Elisapee uses several options when she is hungry. “Sometimes I go to Open Door. And

sometimes I go to Chez Doris. Or Au Berri Place […] and sometimes Native Centre". She usually eats breakfast at The Open Door. "Toast with peanut butter and jam. I like that. And lots of water. I drink water a lot". Despite her many food allergies, Elisapee does say that she usually receives enough to eat when she attends these institutions. She was able to receive a food basket from the Native Friendship Centre filled with a variety of foodstuffs. When these services are closed or not accessible to her, she says she lacks food. "I'm hungry. Nothing to eat. Nothing to drink". Elisapee sometimes goes to bed hungry, so she is glad to receive this donation. Her only complaint is that she misses country food, which is not often served at these shelters. She says on the rare occasion she will attend a feast serving caribou, char, ptarmigan, and all her favourite foods from back home, at a community centre or one of the shelters but there are few opportunities for this. For her, the lack of access to country food is the most difficult part of living in Montreal. Elisapee recalls the last time she ate Inuit staples while in Montreal: "It was at a church. Inuit people gathered together to eat country food. We had country food. It was fun. And at Chez Doris, we had country food. All the ladies". Siasi is more selective when attending a day shelter for food. While she will also go to The Open Door, she says that she prefers Chez Doris for breakfast because they offer larger quantities and more options. The 2012 Aboriginal Peoples Survey reveals that 19.7% of Inuit females living in a Canadian metropolitan city responded that they experience low to very low food security. It should be noted here, that the individuals who responded to the APS did so through a census that was administered to homes. In this way, individuals who are homeless are not accounted for in this data and are ultimately much more likely to be food insecure.

Now that Siasi has lost her bag of clothes, she asks both Chez Doris and The Open Door for a few essential articles. Laly also goes to both shelters when she needs a change of clothes, although she prefers Chez Doris for this venture. She confirms that they have a good selection of

clothing for her there. Laly mentions that receiving new underwear is rare. Should she need feminine hygiene products she knows to ask Chez Doris or the Native Women's Shelter, two institutions that serve homeless women in the city. Elisapee also used to get her clothing and take showers at Chez Doris until she recently began receiving welfare. Now that she has received money and has a place to stay Elisapee is able to buy her own clothing and take showers every day. Laly expresses that she showers at Chez Doris.

All three women use the internet to connect with their family back home through Facebook. Both Laly and Siasi mention that they use the internet at The Open Door. Even though Elisapee now has an income that will afford her clothing and food, she still uses the shelters for internet. Elisapee explains that while there is internet access at Chez Doris, there is a long wait time for the computer, so most prefer to come to The Open Door instead to use Facebook. "At Chez Doris you can do that but there's only one computer so everybody uses it". She admits that one of the main reasons she comes to The Open Door is so that she can use one of their computers to connect with her children online. In the evening when the shelter is closed, she will borrow her friend's tablet and use the free WiFi at McDonalds to connect.

The Open Door, Chez Doris, and the Native Women's Shelter are used regularly by Laly, Siasi and Elisapee. Siasi says that she spends most of her days at The Open Door as she has made many friendships there. Elisapee confirms that she feels comfortable in these spaces. "Yeah, everybody is happy with me". She understands Chez Doris' policy to not allow access to intoxicated women. "Yeah. If I'm sober, I go there". Laly also says she knows not to drink there and will go to Atwater when she feels the need to imbibe. Laly confirms that both The Open Door and Chez Doris treat her well and she is glad for their help. Our literature review confirms that

these three shelters serve a large percentage of Inuit women who are in distress in the city (Laneuville 2015; Obendrauf 2018).

This chapter was intended to allow us to gain a stronger appreciation for the lived circumstances of Inuit up North compared with Inuit living in a southern city, like Montreal. Further, it provided context to many of the themes presented here. It is with this in mind that we are better able to answer what experiences Inuit women have in their northern communities and how this prompts them to move to Montreal. Once in the city, their rendition of everyday life helps illuminate the difficulties these women face while living without permanent housing. Research shows that Inuit women are leaving their home communities due to the hardships that they experience there. Once in Montreal, they spend some time sleeping on the streets until this too, becomes too much to handle. They then make plans to return home. The final section of analysis looks to the theory of 'spiritual homelessness' as a way to help explain the phenomenon of Inuit women frequently moving from their northern home communities to Montreal, and vice-versa.

4.3 Should I Stay or Should I Go?

Of note, is that each of the three women interviewed seemed ambivalent about whether they would prefer to remain in Montreal or move back home, as both options present their own challenges. Torn between two opposing courses of action, this pattern of relocation from the North to the streets of Montreal is a common thread in the experiences the Inuit women shared in their narratives. I borrow the theoretical concept of spiritual homelessness (Keys Young 1998; Christensen 2013; Memmott 2015) to explain this why this may be the case.

Developed by Keys Young (1998) to more appropriately describe the multi-layered experiences specific to the Australian Aborigine and Torres Strait Islanders, 'spiritual homelessness' signifies a form of contemporary Indigenous rootlessness. This refers to Indigenous loss of connection to land, family and traditions as a result of colonialism. Specifically, spiritual homelessness constitutes three aspects:

> a state arising from: (a) separation from traditional land, (b) separation from family and kinship networks, or (c) a crisis of personal identity wherein one's understanding or knowledge of how one relates to country, family and Aboriginal identity systems is confused (Memmott and Chambers 2008 as cited by Christensen 2013:810).

As discussed in the historical context outlined in our literature review, beginning in the 1950s Inuit have been displaced from the land and placed into government fabricated communities (Rigby, MacDonald and Otak 2000; RCAP 1996; Bonesteel 2008; QTC 2014). The rapid social change experienced by this population in the last seventy-years due to colonisation has meant that Inuit ways of being, knowing and growing have been disrupted. I suggest that this resultant disconnection from Inuit culture, family, community and traditions has led to the prevalence of spiritual homelessness among contemporary Inuit. Keys Young (1998) suggests that this form of

homelessness is a "state of mind rather than a physical state of being" (26) as it involves a break from both land and family relations.

Expanding on Keys Young (1998), Memmott defines spiritual homelessness as experiencing "the absence of both a nurturing family and an identity with a homeland" (2015:70). Prior to colonization, traditional Inuit ways of learning focused on developing strong relationships with the land, sea, wildlife and families that make up their northern environment (Vick-Westgate 2002). With a focus on performing tasks firsthand, traditional Inuit were encouraged throughout their youth to mimic their parents and elders within the community. It is in this way that the young Inuit were taught the importance of their role as a member of society (ibid). "In the traditional Inuit lifestyle, education is not separated from day-to-day living. It was not something you studied, it was something you did. The essence of education was getting ready to assume adult life roles" (Vick-Westgate 2002:41). This social model served Inuit well as it clearly defined the roles for each member of its society and effectively prepared youth to be proficient in the duties they would carry out as adults as they subsist on the land. However, as Inuit were settled into communities, the Canadian government made a concerted effort to assimilate and acculturate the northern inhabitants (Bonesteel 2008), thus disrupting their traditional ways of living. In just a few decades Inuit went from self-sufficient to government-reliant. Consequently, many of their ancestral social principles have dissipated over time.

As it specifically relates to the northern context, Christensen explains:

> Spiritual homelessness acknowledges the presence of varying degrees of homeless experience among northern Indigenous people---from collective experiences of colonialism and displacement, to cultural detachment or family stress, to individual experiences of homelessness such as lack of shelter (2013:810).

It is no wonder, then, that Inuit women seem to want to escape both their northern situations and homelessness in Montreal. According to this theory, even when they are living in their community with access to a dwelling, they may be experiencing a form of homelessness. In this way, spiritual homelessness among Inuit women allows us to understand their rooflessness through their experiences of rootlessness. As family structures have been disrupted, traditions forgotten, and cultural values displaced, many Inuit have lost their sense of connectedness to their social and physical environment. In an interview conducted with an Inuk from Ottawa, Budak presents the following sentiment:

> Going home now imparts a broader perspective, one that comes with having been away, but also having lived through a few eras. […One Inuk] has known a more ancient time, and he worries about this modern one and what it means for today's Inuit who are caught in between. 'If they are dropped off in the south, they're not gonna make it; if they're dropped off on the land, they're not going to make it,' he says. 'So, we have a generation now that is hopelessly lost' (Budak 2010).

When we review the three interviews conducted with our participants, we see a breakdown of social relationships. Instances of gossip, jealousy, and violence are all mentioned. Additionally, a lack of shared responsibility for caring for the family and household is cited as a main reason these Inuit women leave the North. Further, the prevalence of alcoholism and drug use as a consequence of emotional trauma is an indicator that Inuit women struggle to deal with their circumstances. The women mention feeling sad, angry and vulnerable. They often prefer to alienate themselves from others while in the city, rather than build relationships. Certainly, the northern circumstances outlined by our research participants of being bound in abusive or exploitative relationships and living in an overcrowded dwelling with family members suffering from addiction do not constitute a healthy and happy life. Spiritually bereft, as these women move back and forth from the North to the city, they are searching for a place to feel at home. Inuit women, then, who are dealing with homelessness in Montreal as well as mired in troubles in their

northern communities, consequently are perpetually searching for ways to escape; this life condition constitutes spiritual homelessness.

Conclusion to Discussion, Analysis & Theoretical Considerations

This chapter was divided into two main sections, *Living in the North* and *Homelessness in Montreal,* followed by some theoretical considerations. An analysis of the interview transcripts conducted with three Inuit women generated five themes pertaining to each of the overarching sections. These provide insight into the shared experiences these three women have related to living on the streets of Montreal and living in their northern communities, as well as the push and pull to and from each area.

Around *Living in the North*, the themes of *Northern Housing*, *Northern Family*, *Northern Employment*, *Northern Challenges* and *Moving North with a Significant Other* were presented. Each of these topics helped explore the conditions of northern living that may have prompted a transition to Montreal. Specifically, *Northern Housing* detailed the number of family members the women live with when in their home communities, the size of their family's dwellings and instances of homelessness in the North. *Northern Family* details the poor relationships the Inuit women have with their siblings and cousins, the number of children they each have, and their communication with their parents and other family members. Next, *Northern Employment* details the types of jobs the women have when they live up North and the availability of employment in their communities. The section on *Northern Challenges* explores the women's experiences with abusive relationships, substance abuse and the overburden of familial responsibility placed on them while up North. *Moving North with a Significant Other* shares the desire these women have

to move back home with their southern boyfriends. These five sub-themes are meant to present an understanding of the different aspects of northern living these women have experienced as they pertain to their relocation south.

Next, five additional themes are discussed in relation to the ways these Inuit women experience homelessness in Montreal. Sections titled *Places to Sleep*, *Safety and Security*, *Making Money*, *Drugs and Alcohol*, and *Hospitals and Institutions* have been extracted from the three interviews as they relate to the women's accounts of living on the streets in the city. Regarding *Places to Sleep*, the women identified staying with friends, sleeping in public places such as park benches, accessing private property like apartment garages, and staying in shelters as areas they were able to sleep. *Safety and security,* is a theme that delves into the ways the women protect themselves from harm while living on the streets, including their encounters with police officers and security, choosing to stay close to male friends and boyfriends, trusting their instincts, avoiding other homeless individuals, keeping to themselves and altering their behaviours. The section pertaining to *Making Money* discloses the various ways these women earn money to help support themselves, such as panhandling, asking friends to share their alcohol with them, welfare, the exchange of sexual favours, and the selling of stolen goods. The women also divulge the challenges they encounter in trying to secure employment in Montreal, namely due to a language barrier. *Drugs and Alcohol* outlines the types of drugs these women consume, the amount they ingest, their reasons for using, the consequences related to their drinking and drug use behaviour, and their difficulties in managing their addictions while experiencing homelessness in the city. The final section related to *Homelessness in Montreal* is the theme titled *Hospitals and Institutions,* which relays the experiences these three women have with police officers and security, jails and prisons, medical services as well as shelters for food, clothing and internet access. These themes are meant

to convey the experiences of Inuit women in situations of homelessness in Montreal as they were expressed in their interviews. Both sections, together with each theme, are intended to capture what it is like to live on the streets of Montreal as an Inuk women without a home, and the challenging situation they experience in the North that led to these circumstances.

Finally, this chapter concludes with a suggestion that the phenomenon of Inuit women having difficulty settling in either their home communities or in Montreal stems from a form of spiritual homelessness; that is, a sense of detachment to one's roots due to the effects of colonialism and subsequent intergenerational trauma. I suggest this is one of the reasons they neither feel comfortable in the North nor in the city. It seems they are searching for a place to feel at peace. According to this theory, to find home, emotionally and physically, they need to reconnect with their traditional roots. Some suggestions as to how to achieve this will be presented in the recommendations for future research.

Chapter 5: Conclusion and Theoretical Considerations

5.1 Closing Remarks

This thesis explored the experiences of Inuit women in situations of homelessness in Montreal. Specifically, it sought to draw a link between the prevalence of homelessness among Inuit women in the city to the experiences these women have in their home communities. That is, this research was intended to provide an understanding of how northern life is directly related to homelessness in the south by expanding on the reasons prompting a transition among Inuit women to Montreal. While previous research has investigated instances of homelessness among Inuit in general, academic studies specific to the experiences of Inuit women in such circumstances is limited. Even more, research exploring the relationship between northern challenges and homelessness in the city as experienced by Inuit women had not been written.

Generated by this gap in the academic literature, the aim of this project was to answer the following questions: How do Inuit women experience homelessness in Montreal? And further, how is their experience in the North linked to their relocation to the South? The methodological approach used to answer these is a qualitative inquiry into the phenomenon of homelessness among Inuit women in Montreal presented through semi-structured interviews. Three interviews were conducted with Inuit women in Montreal who self-identify as homeless. Through the analysis of this data, themes related to aspects around homelessness in the city as well as the living conditions within their home communities emerged. The five themes pertaining to homelessness in Montreal dealt with where the women sleep, their concerns with safety, the ways they make money, addiction to drugs and alcohol, and their encounters with institutions. Additionally, five themes were extracted as they relate to the lives the Inuit women experience up North. These sections considered the Inuit women's housing conditions, their relationships with their family, the types

of employment available to them up North, the challenges they experience within their home communities, as well as their shared desire to return to the North with their boyfriends.

5.1.1 Qualitative Overview

The themes generated by our qualitative data helped to answer our research questions. As for how they experience homelessness in the city, Inuit women share many difficulties while sleeping on the streets of Montreal. Namely, Inuit women find it difficult to find a safe place to sleep. This is especially true in the winter as they are often kicked out of private areas by security and have limited options available to them. We find that they are often fearful of attacks, seek protection from men and alter their behaviours to avoid harm. Inuit women often panhandle or engage in street economies for money, alcohol or a place to stay. They have difficulty gaining employment in Montreal as they are unable to speak French. When accessing services around the city, the women's experiences vary. While they maintain good relationships with the day shelters, such as The Open Door or Chez Doris, they tend to avoid night shelters. That said, they rely heavily on the day shelters to provide them with food, clothing, beds, showers and access to internet. Their experience with police officers is neutral yet they indicate that security officers often prevent them from finding unauthorized shelter. One woman mentions that the medical attention she received was inadequate and insulting. Of note is that each woman has been or is currently close to someone who has been incarcerated. Finally, we learn that all three of the women interviewed are addicted to alcohol, crack cocaine, or both. The consequences these Inuit women experience as a result of their using varies from losing a place to sleep, misplacing their identification cards, poor physical health, or permanently losing custody of their children. They have all attempted to reduce their consumption but are struggling to do so on their own.

Analysis of these interviews related to the theme of northern living helps to answer our second question; that is, how is homelessness in Montreal related to the experiences Inuit women have in their home communities? First, we see that these Inuit women live in small, overcrowded housing. The review of the literature indicates that lack of northern housing offers limited privacy in overcrowded houses. This is likely to increase the prevalence of physical, emotional and sexual abuse toward women and children, as well as contribute to physical health issues. These circumstances increase rates of northern hidden homelessness. Many of the relationships these women have with their family members is poor. Two of our women have given birth at a young age and have several children, whether adopted or biological. They are also the only working members of their families and are responsible for supporting them financially. Two of the women have family members in poor health who they must assist. They cite the overburden of responsibility to their families up North as the primary reason they relocated to Montreal. It is clear that they did not move to the city to look for employment as they each confirm that it is easier to get a job in the North. All three women have experienced domestic abuse either from their current partners or their exes, often resulting in permanent physical injuries or requiring medical care. This cycle of abuse is only one of the reasons these women cite using alcohol. Toxic relationships with family members, too many obligations to uphold, the loss of a loved one or losing custody of their children were also mentioned as reasons they drink and use drugs. Ultimately, these Inuit women use both alcohol and the relocation to Montreal as ways to cope or avoid dealing with their emotional trauma. In this way, the experiences these Inuit women shared regarding their lives in their home communities helps to answer our research questions. Specifically, the difficulties in the North have prompted the Inuit women to migrate to Montreal and as such was directly related to their current homelessness. Yet, it should be mentioned that each woman has moved back and

forth from Montreal to the North several times over the years. Even more, each of the women have expressed a desire to move back home at some point, with or without their boyfriends. It is then obvious that while some women have suggested that an ideal situation would allow them to have a job and a home in Montreal, the expectation is that this will not be possible. Definitive plans to permanently establish themselves in Montreal were not discussed. Ultimately, this indicates that living on the streets of Montreal is often seen as a temporary solution to their Northern problems, and likely a form of spiritual homelessness.

Indeed, the decision made by Inuit women to move to Montreal is directly related to the challenges they experience in Inuit communities. So too, however, is their decision to return home once in Montreal, related to the additional difficulties they experience there. That is, while answering how Inuit women navigate situations of homelessness in Montreal, the conclusion is they look to the city as an escape from their home lives, but quickly decide that the circumstances are temporary as the many challenges it presents are not much better than the ones they fled in the first place. Life on the streets of Montreal is particularly linked to drug abuse, namely to alcohol and crack cocaine, and complicated relationships with non-Inuit romantic partners. Their dreams vacillate between establishing themselves in Montreal, with stable employment and a home - and a return home to their family, ideally with a loving partner in tow. While the circumstances in both Montreal and inside Nunangat seldom change, producing the same push and pull factors to and from each, the Inuit women appear caught between two worlds. On the one hand, they can choose to live in their northern community, replete with an overburden of responsibility, gossip, a lack of resources, and abuse; otherwise, they can live in Montreal, likely in a situation of homelessness due to poor opportunities for employment, contending with drug and alcohol addiction, in unstable relationships with men who are physically, mentally and financially abusive or incarcerated, while

dependent on shelters to meet their basic needs. We can look to the theory of spiritual homelessness to explain this phenomenon of moving back and forth in search of a better life. Due to the rootlessness Inuit women face as a result of the effects of colonialism on their culture, land and family dynamics, no matter where they are located, they seem to be saying, "I want to return".

5.2 Limitations

This research answered both research questions. That is, the ways Inuit women experience homelessness in Montreal was captured. Additionally, the northern circumstances prompting a relocation to the city were outlined. The unexpected outcome is that Inuit women use either location to escape from the immediate challenges they contend with, contingent on where they are situated. Still, there remain several limitations to this project.

5.3.1 Qualitative limitations

First, the sample-size of three respondents is not large enough to account for all the experiences of homelessness among Inuit women in the city. That said, given the scope of this research and the time-constraints surrounding it, three semi-structured interviews seemed sufficient. Next, it is a disadvantage that I am an anglophone researcher with only a limited capacity to speak a few conversational words in Inuktut. Inuktut is the mother-tongue of all three women interviewed, therefore they responded to interviews in their second-language. It is fair to assume that this hindered the women's ability to express themselves and is likely to have altered the ways their stories were conveyed. Unfortunately, I did not have access to resources that would have allowed me to hire a translator to accompany us throughout the interview process. Even more, it is possible that having another person present may have been awkward. Nevertheless, it should be considered

that the women typically speak English throughout the day when accessing services around the city. Each woman communicated adequately, and our conversations flowed naturally.

During the interview process I missed several opportunities to expand on a number of social conditions, such as level of education and assessment of mental health status. Another limitation is that as a non-Inuk woman, I am an outsider. While this can present several opportunities in conducting research, it also means that the Inuit women may have altered their responses, omitted information or were selective with what they chose to share with me. Further, as the women self-reported their circumstances, there were some inconsistencies in their stories. While it is possible that the women truly believe in both sides of their contradictory statements, or whether this was a consequence of a language barrier, in most cases I chose not to address this during the interview to avoid potentially embarrassing them. I have painstakingly transcribed, analyzed and relayed the stories as they were told to me, regardless of contradictory remarks. For instance, our analysis included instances where the women expressed that they want to stay in Montreal and at other times they say they want to return home. I took this to mean that both responses were true. Ultimately, these were their stories to tell and I believe that it was not for me to attempt to derive any particular rendition. Given that this was a qualitative study, the experiences expressed are not necessarily generalizable, but they do provide a better understanding of circumstances related to urban homelessness among Inuit women and ultimately helps open pathways to future research.

5.4 Recommendations for Future Research

Many of the observations made in the literature about the living conditions within Inuit Nunangat remain true, despite often stemming from data from over a decade ago. This suggests that if conditions are changing, the transformation has been slow to date. That said, an area of interest for

future research could be a comparative analysis between the results of the key social determinants of well-being for Inuit inside and outside Inuit Nunangat from different survey years. The purpose of said analysis would be to assess the variation of conditions over time which might help point to future policies and objectives to improve the living situation for Inuit inside Nunangat thus helping to reduce urban homelessness among Inuit women. Beyond this, possible extension of this research might include interviews with Inuit women within their home communities rather than relying on literature to account for the conditions in the North. According to my research, northern circumstances directly motivate Inuit women to move to Montreal, and conversely, the conditions of urban homelessness prompt Inuit women to return to their home communities once things become too difficult. A longitudinal study following the cyclical moves of Inuit women to and from their home communities and Montreal could help further illuminate how these moves are interconnected and potentially related to a sense of spiritual homelessness.

It is hoped that this snapshot of the experiences of these Inuit women will contribute to the production of new knowledge and may eventually translate into future policies and objectives that challenge cultural dislocation; to prompt the creation of Inuit-centred places of healing, that seek to improve the condition, well-being and quality of life of Inuit women living in Montreal as well as within their home communities. Ultimately, my hope is for the creation of culturally appropriate spaces both in Montreal and in Nunangat, so that Inuit women no longer crave a desire to return (…to Montreal, to northern communities) as they would have found spiritual home in reconnecting with Inuit ways of being.

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Glossary

The definitions that follow are adaptations from Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (www.itk.ca) as well as www.katilivik.com

Inuit:	Meaning "the people" in Inuktut, Inuit is the term the Indigenous population of the international Arctic and Sub-Arctic regions use to refer to themselves. Despite differences in geographic location, Canada's Inuit all share common cultural roots. Inuit are not included under the labels *First Nations* or *Métis*. The preferred usage is Inuit and not *The Inuit* nor *Inuit Peoples*.
Inuit Nunangat:	The collective term for the four Inuit regions of Canada which includes Inuvialuit (Northwest Territories), Nunatsiavut (Labrador), Nunavik (Northern Quebec) and the territory of Nunavut. As of June 2009, the use of the term Nunangat is preferred rather than the Greenlandic *Nunaat* which does not include water and ice in its description of the land.
Inuk:	The singular proper noun to the plural of Inuit.
Inuktut:	The official language of Canadian Inuit, including its six regional dialects[15].

[15] As of 2019, ITK has worked toward decolonizing and harmonizing the syllabary, thus shifting the use of the former "Inuktitut" towards the use of "Inuktut".

APPENDIX I

CERTIFICATION OF ETHICAL ACCEPTABILITY
FOR RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS

Name of Applicant: Lydia Fanelli

Department: Faculty of Arts and Science \ Sociology

Agency: N/A

Title of Project: Home Street Home: A look at situations of homelessness among Inuit women in Montreal

Certification Number: 30006234

Valid From: July 08, 2016 to: July 07, 2017

The members of the University Human Research Ethics Committee have examined the application for a grant to support the above-named project, and consider the experimental procedures, as outlined by the applicant, to be acceptable on ethical grounds for research involving human subjects.

____

Dr. James Pfaus, Chair, University Human Research Ethics Committee

APPENDIX II

Interview Guide

N.B. prepared with consideration to the following research in particular:
Kishigami 2014; Novac, Brown & Bourbonnais 1996; RCAAQ 2008

A. **Respondent Background:** (Note: to be established throughout the interview)
"Tell me about yourself"
1. Gender:
2. Age [approximate]:
3. Languages
    a. Mother tongue?
    b. Spoken & understood?
4. Education level
5. Place of origin
    "Where did you grow up? Can you describe what it is like to live there?"
    a. Town, community or area;
    b. either from birth or established later [include multiple mentions]
    c. describe living situation of home community
6. Status of Relationships:
    "Do you maintain any close relationships?"
    a. Romantic partner (s)? Children? Family?
    b. If breakdown, what is this related to?

B. Current Living Situation
"Can you tell me how you came to live in Montreal?"
1. Reason for travel
2. Modes of travel
3. Duration of stay
    a. How long have you been here?
    b. How many trips to Montreal? (First? Many? How often?)
    c. Any travel up north since you first arrived?
    d. Any travel to other cities in the south?
4. Associations made within city
    a. Travelled alone or accompanied?
    b. Contact with anyone prior to arrival?
    c. First impressions of the city? (as expected? Anything surprising?)
5. Plans to return home or stay in Montreal?
    a. Or somewhere else
    b. What motivates this decision?
    c. Any challenges?

C. Housing
"Can you describe what a typical day looks like for you right now?"
1. Where do you stay?
    a. Public spaces?
    b. Hostel or hotel spaces?
    c. Help from friends or family? (couch surfing)
    d. Acquaintances?
2. How do you get money?

   a. Past & present employment (include temporary)
   b. panhandling, welfare, selling items
   c. sex work
3. How is your day spent?
   a. Where you go? What you do?
   b. Transit?
   c. Who you spend time with?
4. Safety concerns
   "How safe do you feel on the streets?"
   a. Has this changed?
   b. Types of people or places that you avoid?
   c. Safety tips or concerns for other women?
   d. Safe spaces?

D. Homelessness

1. Can you tell me what brought you to this situation?
2. Have you used shelters before?
   a. How often?
   b. When?
   c. Type? (day, wet, co-ed, Indigenous, for domestic abuse?
   d. Experience

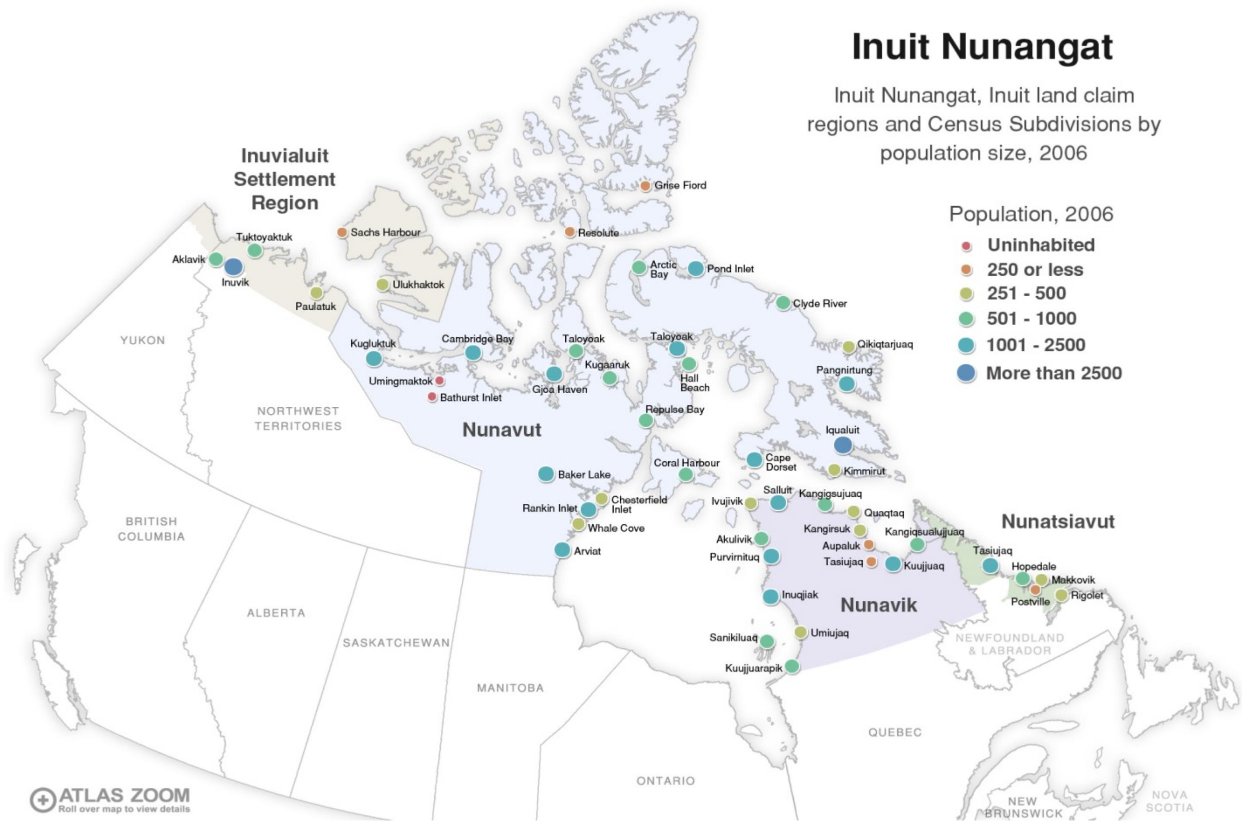
E. Access to Services

"Where do you go when you need help?"

1. Experience with law enforcement?
   a. Police, public security, STM agents
2. Have you used food banks?
3. Government services
   a. Lawyers? Welfare?
4. Health Services
   a. How is your health?
   b. When was the last time you saw a medical practitioner?
   c. Where do you go when you need help for a health problem?
   d. Experience?

[Verify how the respondent is feeling before, throughout and after the interview. Direct to assistance as necessary]

APPENDIX III



Credit: ehatlas.ca