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In Pursuit of "A Good Life": Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit and Inuit Women's Movements in and out of Mining Work

Suzanne Mills,[1] Deborah Simmons[2] and Karla Jessen Williamson[3]

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ABSTRACT. This article adopts a cross-cultural lens to understand why Inuit women enter and leave mining jobs in Inuit Nunangat (Inuit homelands), Canada, using Nunavik as a case study. Previous research has often depicted Indigenous women as either victims of mining or as anti-mining activists. Interviews with ten Nunavimmiut women (Inuit women of Nunavik), who had worked or were currently working at one of two mines in Nunavik, complicate these portrayals. As a team consisting of settler and Inuit scholars, we draw on Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit principles to extend previous understandings of Indigenous women's pathways through, and out of, mining employment. Women's descriptions of mining employment were ambivalent. Inuit women applied *qanuqtuurunnarniq* (resourcefulness) in using mining work to share with others, connect with Inuit culture and community after moving to southern cities, and participate in language and skills training. However, over half of the women interviewed ultimately left mining when it compromised their ability to achieve well-being by restricting their ability to care for their children, to develop their skills through job advancement, or both. Collectively, the narratives demonstrate how women adopted multi-faceted strategies to pursue a good life; they considered mining employment in relation to their ability to care for and share with others, work for a common purpose, acquire skills and training, and maintain connections with land and culture. By centring Inuit values and well-being, Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit principles prompt a reimagining of how mining might be reorganized to support the lives of Inuit women in the context of devastating impacts of colonial trauma and displacement.

Keywords: Indigenous; mining; gender; Arctic; women; agency; extraction; Inuit; well-being; Indigenous knowledge; Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit

RÉSUMÉ. S'appuyant sur une étude de cas du Nunavik, cet article adopte une optique interculturelle pour comprendre ce qui incite les Inuites à accepter des emplois dans l'industrie minière de l'Inuit Nunangat (terres ancestrales des Inuits), au Canada et ce qui les incite à quitter ces emplois. D'après d'autres études, les femmes autochtones sont souvent considérées soit comme des victimes de l'exploitation minière, soit comme des activistes militant contre l'exploitation minière. Des entrevues avec dix Inuites du Nunavik qui ont travaillé à l'une des deux mines du Nunavik ou qui y travaillent encore viennent compliquer ces hypothèses. En tant qu'équipe composée d'érudits colonisateurs ou inuits, nous nous appuyons sur les principes de l'Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit pour mieux comprendre le cheminement des femmes autochtones dans le cadre de leurs emplois miniers, à l'entrée et à la sortie de ce secteur. Les descriptions des emplois miniers par les femmes étaient ambivalentes. Les Inuites faisaient preuve de *qanuqtuurunnarniq* (ingéniosité) en ce sens qu'elles se servaient de leur emploi du secteur minier pour se rapprocher d'autres personnes, pour faire le lien avec leur culture inuite et la communauté après avoir déménagé dans des villes plus au sud et pour prendre part à des occasions de formation en langue et d'acquisition de compétences. Toutefois, plus de la moitié des femmes interviewées finissaient par quitter le milieu minier lorsque celui-ci compromettait leur bien-être en restreignant leur capacité à prendre soin de leurs enfants, à acquérir des compétences par le biais de l'avancement professionnel, ou les deux. Sur le plan collectif, les témoignages des femmes permettent de comprendre comment elles ont adopté des stratégies polyvalentes pour se faire une bonne vie. Elles ont considéré un emploi dans le secteur minier en tenant compte de leur capacité à s'occuper des autres et à se rapprocher d'autrui, de travailler dans un but commun, d'acquérir des compétences, de faire de la formation et d'entretenir des liens avec la terre et la culture. En mettant l'accent sur le bien-être et les valeurs des Inuits, les principes de l'Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit incitent à repenser comment l'exploitation minière pourrait être réorganisée pour favoriser le bien-être des Inuites dans le contexte des effets dévastateurs des déplacements et des traumatismes du colonialisme.

Mots-clés: Autochtone; exploitation minière; genre; Arctique; femmes; agence; extraction; Inuit; connaissances des Autochtones en matière de bien-être; Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit

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[1] School of Labour Studies and School of Earth, Environment and Society, McMaster University, 1280 Main Street West, Hamilton, Ontario L8S 4L8, Canada; smills@mcmaster.ca

[2] Executive Director, Sahtú Renewable Resources Board. Deceased.

[3] Department of Educational Foundations, University of Saskatchewan, 28 Campus Drive, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan S7N 0X1, Canada

INTRODUCTION

> All I can say is that [the mine] is so positive for me personally, in my head and healthy. And what I don't like is being apart from home. And being part of my son [his life]. The long hours, 11 hours a day… But we get used to it.
>
> (Interviewee 21.3)

The above quote articulates a paradox that surfaced in our interviews with Inuit women who have worked or are currently working in mining. As we describe in greater detail below, most women we interviewed describe enjoying mining work, and specify many ways that they benefited, or continue to benefit from their jobs. However, many of the same women ultimately left mining employment. This ambivalent relationship with mining is also apparent in the position papers of Indigenous women's organisations. For example, Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada has published reports that both critique mining altogether by highlighting the negative socio-cultural impacts of mining for Inuit communities and women (Pauktuutit, 2012; Kudloo et al., 2014), and position mining employment as an opportunity for Inuit women, while calling attention to gendered barriers to participation (Pauktuutit, 2021). These seemingly contradictory stances complicate media portrayals of Inuit women as victims of the negative effects of mining activists or as opposed to mining development altogether.

Unlike Inuit men who have a long history of employment in mines in Inuit Nunangat, Inuit women have only recently become a focus of the recruitment efforts of Canadian mining companies. This shift is partially a result of the Impact Benefit Agreement (IBA) context of contemporary mining which frames Indigenous employment as a key benefit Indigenous communities receive in exchange for providing companies with a social licence to mine in their territories. The underrepresentation of Inuit women in an IBA context poses a political problem since it introduces gender inequality into benefit sharing, which is further amplified by gender disparities in mining's impacts (NAHO, 2008; Cox and Mills, 2015; Czyzewski et al., 2016; Nightingale et al., 2017; Hall, 2022). In the case of Nunavik, adopting a gendered lens was the most recent attempt by mining companies to address the gap between their Inuit employment numbers and those promised in their IBAs with local communities and Inuit organisations.

Over the past ten years, the two nickel mining companies operating in Nunavik, Glencore and Canadian Royalties Inc., began to adopt an intersectional approach to Inuit employment. In 2014, the Kativik Regional Government and the Kautaapikkut Strategy Table (a body aiming to increase Inuit employment in mining in Nunavik) launched regional consultations with women in communities across Nunavik to identify barriers to participation in mining and address recruitment and retention challenges (Rogers, 2015). Despite these efforts to increase the participation of Nunavimmiut women (Inuit women of Nunavik, hereafter referred to as Inuit women), the number of Inuit women employed in mining has remained stagnant and concentrated in catering and housekeeping positions (Mazer et al., 2022). The persistent employment segregation and under-representation of Indigenous women in mining in Nunavik, like elsewhere, highlights the need to better understand Inuit women's employment pathways in mining (Parmenter, 2011; Cox and Mills, 2015). In this paper, we ask why Inuit women enter jobs in mining, how they experience mining work, and why some women ultimately leave mining employment.

To answer these questions, we draw on Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit principles adopted by governance institutions across Inuit Nunangat (Lévesque, 2014). Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit, or Inuit knowledge, roughly translates to "that which the Inuit have always known to be true" (Tagalik, 2009:1). Karetak and Tester (2017:3) describe Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit: "It is an ethical framework and detailed plan for having a good life. It is a way of thinking, connecting all aspects of life in a coherent 'way.'" Previous research about Indigenous women's experiences in mining has typically adopted a feminist anti-colonial lens and focused on identifying and unpacking gendered and racialized barriers to mining work (Parmenter, 2011; Lahiri-Dutt, 2012; Jenkins, 2014; Cox and Mills, 2015). This emphasis on systemic and overt barriers underreported the strengths, creativity, and agency in the stories told by the women interviewed for our study. Our cross-cultural research team—consisting of an Inuk faculty member living in the south, a northern settler who was the executive director of the Sahtú Renewable Resources Board at the time of writing, and a southern settler faculty member—found that Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit principles allowed for a deeper understanding of the complexity of Inuit women's experiences. In reflecting on Inuit women's narratives through the lens of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit principles, we seek to honour the experiences and resiliency of Inuit women while also pointing to the structural constraints that mining poses on women's agency as a colonial project entwined with hegemonic masculinities.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Academic writing about Inuit and other Indigenous peoples and mining has increased in recent decades as predominantly settler scholars seek to understand the expansion of extractive development in relation to evolving forms of colonial dispossession and Indigenous governance. As a result, there is now a relatively comprehensive literature documenting the colonial history of mining in the North, the oral histories of Inuit and Dene miners, the impacts of mining on Indigenous communities and their governance, and the impacts of mining on Indigenous women (Sandlos and Keeling, 2012; Keeling and Boulter, 2015; Dalseg et al., 2018; Bernauer, 2019; Mills, 2019). While this work has provided an important framework to

understand mining's embeddedness in colonialism and hegemonic masculinities, it has not always provided space for Indigenous women's lived experiences of mining, or the ways Inuit worldviews might shape understandings of mining employment.

Mining Employment and Colonialism

Contemporary policies to promote Inuit employment in mining are bound up with the state's colonial drive to harness natural resources for economic development in the post-WWII period. In this early period, where the state facilitated the harnessing of resources in northern Indigenous territories by crown corporations and companies, Inuit employment plans were often used to justify the state's support for mining by providing critical infrastructure and support (Tester et al., 2013). Inuit employment plans related to mining during this early period were often positioned as social welfare programs aiming to assimilate Indigenous populations into wage labour (Watkins, 1977; Sandlos and Keeling, 2012; Tester et al., 2013). Mining employment brought many Inuit to northern mining towns, speeding the process of relocation and settlement into permanent villages.

Advances in Indigenous rights legislation since this time have provided Indigenous communities and institutions with a greater role in resource governance on their territories, including in the realm of employment through environmental assessments, impact benefit agreements, and partnership agreements which are becoming more prevalent (Mills and Sweeney, 2013; McCreary et al., 2016). Though there is some evidence that Indigenous employment outcomes are better in mines with IBAs than those without (Caron and Asselin, 2020), Indigenous workers tend to be overrepresented in entry-level, low-skilled jobs and to have lower retention and pay compared to non-Indigenous workers, even in mines with IBAs. IBAs have also been unable to address the negative health and social consequences of fly-in, fly-out arrangements (Davison and Haw, 2012; Hodgkins, 2018; Bernauer, 2019). These findings raise questions about whether the shift from the post-war mining period to the present IBA environment has provided real change for Indigenous communities (Rodon and Lévesque, 2015). The inability of IBAs and accompanying employment programs to significantly alter the wealth of northern Indigenous communities and workers has led some scholars to describe contemporary mining as a form of "internal colonization" (Hall, 2013:383), or as embodying colonial continuities (Bernauer, 2019).

Scholars applying a gendered lens to mining employment extend these critiques. Much of this literature focuses on negative social impacts of mining employment in communities that disproportionately affect Indigenous women, including increased alcohol use, violence, inadequate social services, and relationship breakdown (Kudloo et al., 2014; Nightingale et al., 2017). A smaller number of studies have outlined the barriers that northern Indigenous women face entering work in mining, as well as the gender-based harassment and discrimination in job allocation and advancement that Indigenous women face on the job (Cox and Mills, 2015; Hall, 2017). Others suggest that the gendered effects of mining are more far-reaching than either of these approaches, hindering Indigenous women's participation in governance while simultaneously undermining traditional economies and non-extractive forms of development (Kuokkanen, 2011, 2019; Dalseg et al., 2018).

These critiques are important, yet in their aim to problematize mining, they tend to reduce Inuit women's experiences in mining to the category of victimhood. Scholars, particularly in Indigenous health, have critiqued deficit-based research for its ability to further stereotype and marginalize Indigenous peoples (Hyett et al., 2019; Bryant et al., 2021). Sidestepping this critique, some scholars have highlighted cases where Indigenous women actively resist mining (Hall, 2022; Horowitz, 2017). These efforts usefully highlight the agency of Indigenous women and mitigate the stigmatizing effects of research. A frame of resistance, however, does not reflect the ways that all Indigenous women understand themselves in relation to mining. As Lakota scholar Hilary Weaver (2019:9) suggests, "Multiple things can be true within the same time and space: trauma and resilience, strength and vulnerability, loss and continuity." Capturing this complexity of experience is important to better understand the strengths and vulnerabilities of Indigenous women vis-à-vis mining (Sinclair, 2021). Oral histories recounting the work experiences of Indigenous men in northern mines capture some of this complexity (Keeling and Boulter, 2015; Sandlos, 2015). For example, in their study of the North Ranking Nickel Mine, Keeling and Boulter (2015:44) find that despite being initially segregated into lower paid jobs and not provided with housing benefits, many "Inuit miners appreciated the security of regular wages and … the opportunity to purchase goods at the mine commissary and Hudson Bay store." This complexity has been largely absent from scholarship about Inuit women and mining.

We draw on Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit principles to better understand the complexity of Inuit women's perceptions and experiences of mining. Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit inherently understands "everything as related to everything else in such a way that—counter to the logic of western science—nothing can stand alone, even in the interest of gaining an appreciation of the whole" (Tester and Irniq, 2008:9). Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit principles offer a wholistic approach to women's experiences that centres ethics and well-being. As such, they offer a useful starting point from which to understand the multifaceted and seemingly conflicting dimensions of Inuit women's relationships with mining.

Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit

Over the past twenty years, many Inuit organisations have sought to incorporate Inuit knowledge/epistemology

in their decision-making processes and the operation of their institutions. This has involved distilling Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit into a framework that could be used in these contexts. As described by Lévesque (2014), the Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit framework was introduced by the Nunavut Social Development Council in 1998 to integrate "all aspects of traditional Inuit culture including values, world-view, language, social organisation, knowledge, life skills, perceptions, and expectations" into policy-making and decisions (NSDC, 1998, as cited in Lévesque, 2014:121). The framework has been adopted by a range of organisations throughout Inuit Nunangat including *Nunavumi Avatilikiyin Katimayin* (The Nunavut Impact Review Board [NIRB]), the Nunavut government, and *Kativik Ilisarniliriniq* (the regional school board; Kativik Ilisarniliriniq, 2022).

Four natural laws or *maligait* underpin the framework of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit, including "working for the common good, respecting all living things, maintaining harmony and balance and continually planning and preparing for the future" (Tagalik, 2012:1). In addition, elders initially identified six guiding principles that "form the basis of an interlocking conceptual philosophy for Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit, but also inherent in each is a process for developing the principle in an individual and society" (Tagalik, 2012:2). These include:

- *Pijitsirniq* (or the concept of serving)
- Aajiiqatigiingniq
  (or the concept of consensus decision-making)
- *Pilimmaksarniq*
  (or the concept of skills and knowledge acquisition)
- *Piliriqatigiingniq*
  (or the concept of collaborative relationships or working together for a common purpose)
- *Avatimik Kamattiarniq*
  (or the concept of environmental stewardship)
- Qanuqtuurunnarniq
  (or the concept of being resourceful to solve problems)

(Tagalik, 2012.2)

These principles are meant to guide individuals and communities to live in harmony and balance as a basis for well-being, stability, and cultural strength. Nunavut has since added an additional two principles: *inuuqatigiitsiarniq* (respecting others, relationships, and caring for people) and *tunnganarniq* (fostering good spirit by being open, welcoming, and inclusive) (NIRB, 2022). As described by Tagalik (2012), these principles should not be understood as philosophical abstractions, but rather as guides to action in the past, present, and future. Central to Indigenous knowledge systems, living a good life requires living respectfully with people, animals, and the land to find harmony and balance (Tagalik, 2018).

Though many have viewed Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit principles as a critical step to centring aspects of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit in policy discussions and institutional practices, others have been more critical. DeCouto (2020:11), for example, suggests that the Nunavut Government has "successfully turned Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit into a limited definition of a set of principles, minimizing the critical concepts of Inuit worldview" to fit into a western governance system. According to DeCouto (2020), Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit needs to be transmitted in context and through relationships and examples. More broadly, Starblanket and Stark (2018:181) have questioned the use of Indigenous knowledge in academic scholarship, suggesting that it is "most often given consideration or taken up by western thinkers when there is either a vacancy or bankruptcy in western thought, replicating a power binary between western and Indigenous knowledge."

As we elaborate below, our cross-cultural application of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit principles is preliminary, with the aim of creating an ethical space for better understanding Inuit women's experiences in mining. We view the use of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit principles of analysis not as a representation of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit worldviews in their entirety, but rather as a way to shift away from western frames of analysis. Our incorporation of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit is therefore necessarily partial, a way to open an ethical space to analyze the experiences and concerns of Inuit women. As theorised by Willie Ermine (2007), an ethical space is:

> … produced by contrasting perspectives of the world, entertains the notion of a meeting place, or initial thinking about a neutral zone between entities or cultures … The ethical space offers itself as the theatre for cross-cultural conversation in pursuit of ethically engaging diversity and disperses claims to the human order.
>
> (Interviewee 20.2)

In this spirit of creating an ethical space, we centre principles of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit in our analysis of the perceptions and experiences of Inuit women, while also building on feminist understandings about work, gender discrimination, and racism in employment.

INUIT EMPLOYMENT AND MINING IN NUNAVIK

Comprising a huge area of 443,685 km^2 in the northern third of Quebec, Nunavik (the great land), was forged through the struggle for self-determination of Nunavimmiut and Cree in response to the proposed James Bay hydroelectric development. The eventual negotiation of the James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement (1975) laid the groundwork for the creation of Nunavik. Inuit comprise 90% of Nunavik's 13,000 residents (Statistics Canada, 2018). Inuit living in Nunavik have the highest language retention of all of the Inuit regions; in 2018, 98% of Nunavimmiut reported Inuktitut as their mother tongue

(Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, 2018). English is the second most common language spoken in Nunavik, which is used regularly by one fifth of Nunavik's population (including non-Inuit) and understood by 81.7% (Statistics Canada, 2017, 2018). A minority of Nunavimmiut have a knowledge of French, the third most common language used in Nunavik. French is spoken regularly by fewer than 2% of Nunavik's total population and only 29.9% of people living in Nunavik have a knowledge of French (Statistics Canada, 2018).

Multiple generations of colonial policies culminated in a wide array of socio-economic disparities between Nunavimmiut and non-Indigenous residents of Nunavik and Canada. In 2011, 49% of Inuit in Nunavik lived in crowded homes (Smith and Li, 2016). Moreover, the median individual income of Inuit living in Nunavik in 2015 was $25,627, compared to $79,328 for non-Inuit in the region (Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, 2018). Nunavimmiut are less likely to finish high school; the graduation rate of a 2011 cohort followed over seven years in Nunavik was 14.4% for men and 21.9% for women compared to Quebec provincial averages of 77.6% and 86.1% respectively (Lévesque and Duhaime, 2021). Indigenous women and men living in Nunavik in 2016 were less likely to hold a postsecondary diploma or degree (22.8% of women and 27.3% of men) compared to Quebec as a whole (69.6% of women and 66.8% of men) (Lévesque and Duhaime, 2021).

Similar to other Arctic regions, wage employment opportunities in Nunavik are few and less varied than in southern Quebec. In 2016 Inuit living in Nunavik over the age of 15 had lower employment rates (55.7%) and higher unemployment rates (17.8%) compared to Quebec's total population (59.5% and 7.2% respectively) (Lévesque and Duhaime, 2021). The most common employment sectors for Inuit women living in Nunavik were health care and social assistance (39.8%), educational services (18%), public administration (33.6%), and retail trade (10.1%). Mining employment was relatively insignificant (1.8%) and only slightly higher for Inuit men living in Nunavik (4.1%) (Lévesque and Duhaime, 2021).

Many Nunavimmiut migrate to Montreal or other cities in southern Quebec to pursue education, find employment, obtain health care, or escape difficult circumstances in the North including housing shortages (Watson, 2017). Migrating south is an increasingly common phenomenon among Inuit. In 2021, only 69% of Inuit in Canada lived in Nunangat (down from 81% in 2001), and 15.3% of Inuit resided in large urban centres (Pauktuutit, 2017; Statistics Canada, 2022). North to south migration is higher for Inuit women than men, possibly due to their higher educational attainment or because of social problems in the North faced disproportionately by women, such as domestic violence (Pauktuutit, 2017).

There are two fly-in, fly-out nickel mines in Nunavik approximately 100 km and 120 km south of Deception Bay. The Raglan mine, owned by Glencore Canada, began production in 1997 with a projected lifespan of 30 years. The mine site includes underground mines in operation as well as a concentrator and employs approximately 1,200 employees, 20% of which are Inuit according to Glencore (Glencore Canada, 2023; Glencore, 2023). If catering and housekeeping are excluded, Inuit participation falls to 10.9% of the workforce and the share of Indigenous women employed falls to 2.4% (Mazer et al., 2022). The Nunavik mine, owned by Canadian Royalties Inc. (a subsidiary of the Jilin Jien Nickel Industry Co., Ltd.), began production in 2013 and has a projected lifespan of 10 – 15 years. The site employs 419 people directly and 161 people indirectly at one open pit mine, one underground mine and a port facility. Catering and housekeeping, where Inuit women are most likely to find work, is outsourced and as a result the number of Inuit and Inuit women working at the mine is lower than comparative numbers at the Raglan mine (11.9% total Inuit and 1.9% Inuit women) (Mazer et al., 2022).

Most Inuit women in Nunavik mines work in catering and housekeeping. In one Nunavik mine 80% of Inuit women were employed in catering and housekeeping, 5% were employed in administrative positions, and 15% were employed in plant/concentrator or mining departments (Mazer et al., 2022). This pattern differed from that of non-Inuit women who had a significant presence in administrative positions (27%) as well as catering and housekeeping (57%), and from Inuit men who were more likely to work in mining roles (58%) than catering and housekeeping (36%) (Mazer et al., 2022). Inuit women's concentration in catering and housekeeping constrains their earning potential since these job classifications have lower wages than all other positions in the mine. For example, in 2021, the wages for the most common positions for Inuit women working at Glencore, janitor and dishwasher, were $24.40/hr. In comparison, the lowest paid mining position was $36.60/hr (Glencore and USW, 2017).

Inuit employment at both mines is governed by an IBA. The Raglan Agreement was negotiated in 1995 between Falconbridge and five entities including Makivik Corporation, the communities of Salluit and Kangiqsujuaq, and the landholding corporations of these two communities (Falconbridge, 1995). The Nunavik Nickel Agreement was signed in 2008 between Canadian Royalties Inc. and four entities including Makivik Corporation, the landholding companies of Kangiqsujuaq and Salluit, as well as the Inuit community Puvirnituq. Both agreements stipulate that Inuit beneficiaries have priority in hiring and advancement and commit the companies to dedicated training and advancement programs. The Nunavik Nickel Agreement stipulates the creation of Inuit training positions for skilled and technical positions and the Raglan Agreement created the foundation for the Tamatumani program. Tamatumani is a broad approach to Inuit training and recruitment at Raglan incorporating focused recruitment strategies, essential skills and focused mining training programs, a rapid development program to move Inuit into higher level positions, and a mentoring program for Inuit apprenticing in the trades. The IBAs at both mines also stipulate that

Inuktitut and English may be used as languages of work, that work camps include an Inuit kitchen to cook country food, and that workers are able to take cultural leaves. Other provisions to promote Inuit employment and retention include the organization of flights from the worksite to Nunavik villages and non-tolerance of racism. In addition to the Raglan Agreement, Glencore provided Inuit workers with the ability to spend time on the land. Workers at both mines are represented by the United Steelworkers union.

Since 2000, a number of socio-economic summits between organizations representing the Inuit of Nunavik and the governments of Quebec and Canada provided Nunavimmiut with opportunities to put their views on socio-economic development on record (Katutjiniq 2000 and Katimajiit Summit 2007). Negotiation of the Sanarrutik Partnership Agreement on Economic and Community Development by the Kativik Regional Government, Makivik Corporation, and the Government of Quebec in 2002 was also an important venue for registering Inuit needs in Nunavik. A Nunavik Plan was prepared in 2010 by the Kativik Regional Government and Makivik Corporation as a regional response to the Government of Québec's "Plan Nord." The Nunavik Plan, Parnasimautik, was a catalyst for an expanded consultation in Inuit communities during 2012–14 that aimed "to create a comprehensive vision for the development" of the region (Makivik Corporation et al., 2014a:1). The resulting Parnasimautik report and statement arising from this work pointed to the need to "improve Nunavik Inuit well-being according to Inuit culture, language and way of life" (Makivik Corporation et al., 2014a:1) and address the fundamental issues identified by Nunavik Inuit, along with goals related to land, future generations, and governance (Makivik Corporation et al., 2014b). These include food security, education, health and social services, justice and social regulation, cost of living and housing, local development and essential services, and employment.

METHODS

Research was conducted as part of a larger project, MinErAL (2023), a knowledge network on mining encounters and Indigenous sustainable livelihoods, and in partnership with Pauktuutit and Makivik. Inuit women who were informants for this study had worked or were currently working in one of two mines in Nunavik. Each one was recruited using email distribution and social media of Inuit organisations and services in Montreal and partner organisations. Participants were compensated with $50. In-person interviews were not possible because of travel restrictions resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic and all interviews were conducted over zoom or by phone. While we sought to eliminate barriers where possible by conducting interviews by phone for those who did not have reliable internet access, online recruitment and remote interview formats may have limited the participation group to those with greater technological access. Semi-structured interviews were 30–90 minutes in length and were conducted in English by an Inuk researcher and a settler researcher. Interviewees were invited to speak in the language that they felt most comfortable with, and Inuktitut or French were spoken by interviewers and participants when needed. Three Inuit community member co-researchers and Pauktuutit staff provided feedback on interview themes and questionnaires. Interviews contained questions about employment and training pathways, work experiences, participation in cultural activities, decisions to work or to leave work at the mines, and overall perceptions of mining employment.

Interviews were analysed first deductively and then inductively using NVivo by two separate authors. We began coding following themes in the literature about challenges that women faced in mining employment including experiences of discrimination, employment segregation, childcare challenges, and reasons for leaving work. We found that these themes from the literature did not adequately capture women's positive descriptions of mining work as well as the strengths, agency, and self-determination in the stories of the women interviewed.

Guided by our Inuit co-author, we sought to move out of traditional, deficit-based frames of analysis to centre women's resourcefulness and resilience. The eight Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit principles adopted by governance institutions across Inuit Nunangat resonated with the complexity of experiences among our interview participants and provided a theoretical lens. Accordingly, we reanalysed interviews using Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit principles to better reflect the holistic approach that women took to understanding mining as well as their resourcefulness. Our integration of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit was limited by many of the challenges experienced by Nunavut institutions including, only one of the three co-authors was fluent in Inuktitut; our physical location outside of Inuit lands; and the constraints of conducting research within pre-existing western institutions (Lévesque, 2014). Additionally, many interview respondents themselves were predominantly living outside of Inuit territories and many were speaking English more often than Inuktitut in their daily lives. Notwithstanding these constraints, as an imperfect reflection of Inuit world views and ways of being, Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit principles provide a partial corrective to western theories commonly applied to Inuit experiences.

The ten women who participated in the interviews ranged in age from 23–42. Although nine of the ten women were born in Nunavik, most had moved to southern Quebec. At the time of the interviews only two women lived in Nunavik. Women's reasons for moving south varied: some of the women had moved to Montreal to attend college enseignement général et professionnel (CEGEP); two women had moved with their families as children, and some described moving to access better opportunities including employment and housing or fleeing social problems. Two women had moved south after they had started working in

mining. One key informant also suggested that it may be more likely for Inuit women to relocate to larger cities after working in mining, having acquired the financial means to do so. Half of the ten women had completed high school (one as an adult); in addition, one woman had completed a vocational program and one woman was currently in university. Two of the women had worked at the mines as summer students. Three women started CEGEP but left prematurely and all but two of the women interviewed had children. The first language of all interviewees was Inuktitut however, some women no longer spoke Inuktitut fluently. Two women who identified as Québécoise Inuit were most fluent in French as they had one non-Inuit francophone parent. Of the remaining participants, one was fluent in all three languages, four were fluent in Inuktitut and English and had some knowledge of French, and three were strong Inuktitut and English speakers and had no knowledge of French.

RESULTS: NAVIGATING COMPLEXITY

The stories of Inuit women reflected their ambivalent relationship with mining work. Although each of the women interviewed described enjoying working at the mine and recounted multiple ways that it contributed to their well-being and that of their families, most of the women interviewed left mining work when it hindered rather than helped their well-being. Women's decisions to enter and leave mining were ultimately guided by their desire to live a good life and find balance, a key aim of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (Tagalik, 2018). We begin by showing how Inuit women found meaning and purpose in mining work and how their employment allowed them to foster their well-being and care for others consistent with Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit principles. We then describe the ways that mining work inhibited women's abilities to attain well-being and made it difficult for them to live according to Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit principles, causing many women to ultimately leave mining work.

Mining as a Pathway for Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit

The principle of *qanuqtuurunnarniq* or resourcefulness was an overriding theme in the interviews as women selectively used mining employment to improve their well-being in a number of ways. First and foremost, mining work was a means of securing economic stability in difficult circumstances. Mining work was also, however, a way to renew connection with homeland, support family, and acquire new skills and knowledge. Although they did not refer directly to Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit principles, women's stories illustrated ways in which they felt they were able to apply the principles of *pijitsirniq* (serving), *pilimmaksarniq* (learning), *piliriqatigiingniq* (working together), and *inuuqatigiitsiarniq* (caring for people) through their work at the mines. Even the less obvious principles of *avatimik kamattiarniq* (environmental stewardship) and *tunnganarniq* (inclusivity) surfaced as women described their aspirations to renew connections with their homeland by travelling to the mines, and their willingness to embrace living and working in the cross-cultural context of the mine.

***Qanuqtuurunnarniq* (Resourcefulness)**: Women's decisions to take jobs at the mine applied the principle of *qanuqtuurunnarniq*. Women resourcefully applied for and took jobs at the mine to achieve goals including financial independence, find independent housing, and support their families. Women found their jobs through job fairs, from their teachers at school, or through word of mouth of family and friends. Several women noted that it seemed to be an advantage if they were known by recruiters or others at the mine, though they were also aware that the mines were often desperately seeking Inuit employees and that they were almost guaranteed a job. One woman described finding out about mining opportunities through her sister, relating them to the IBA:

> … they [the mining company] have to give back to the communities and to the Inuit beneficiaries. And my sister … decided to apply the mine. She was she was hired first and she started making lots of money, like she would bring me out and go shopping and like bring me places I, I was like, "how do you have all this money?" She was like "oh mining life" and anyway, I thought it was cool and I was like "I need money too let me just follow" we ended up going, like my [other relatives].
>
> (Interviewee 21.8)

Each of the ten women decided to work in mining because they needed the income. Those who had moved south to Montreal described the challenges that they faced finding work in the city. For many, the French language requirement of many jobs was a barrier to finding work. One woman described:

> Well, I don't speak French. And so my choices and jobs were very limited. And so I decided to get a job at Raglan because it was easier and less stressful to get a job that's enjoyable.
>
> (Interviewee 20.2)

Jobs that were available to the women in southern Quebec were often low paid and precarious, such as working as a warehouse clerk, in a café, or as a production line worker. Those living in Inuit communities often had more fulfilling jobs prior to working at Raglan, albeit with lower pay. Jobs at the mine provided a higher income than other jobs available and a greater sense of cultural safety—from being able to work in English and Inuktitut—than jobs available in southern Quebec.

Wages from mining provided women with economic independence and basic food and housing security. Taking a job at the mine allowed one woman to find stable housing

on her own, a level of housing security not available to her in her home community:

> I did not want to move back into my mom's because I was going from house to house … I needed change, I needed to get out of [my home community] so I kind of took that opportunity to be like "well I'm going to be two weeks on two weeks off and I might as well take this opportunity to move to Montreal."
>
> (Interviewee 21.6)

This same woman later recounted how the expanded income caused her to learn to plan her finances so that she could pay bills, maintain an apartment, and purchase her first car:

> I was definitely making more money … So I had to readjust on paying my bills on time. Budgeting … so you know, that was an adjustment from me. I started putting extra money aside for RRSP. I managed to learn how to do that …. So I was able to also find my first car. It was like my first vehicle under my name that I had to find insurance and all that.
>
> (Interviewee 21.6)

Another young woman spoke about working toward reducing the dependence of her family on her: "I'm kind of like, 'Hey, guys, it's time for me to, you know, move on with my life'" (Interviewee 20.2). One woman talked about the jobs at the mine as "one of the few real jobs" (Interviewee 21.4) up North, perhaps in contrast to the temporary, ill-paid nature of the few jobs that exist in the communities.

***Pilimmaksarniq* (Learning), *Pijitsirniq* (Serving)**: The job represented more than just an income and economic independence. Women also valued working at the mine because it provided them with opportunities to learn new skills (*pilimmaksarniq*) and serve others (*pijitsirniq*). The women often deliberately sought training or job transfers to achieve the kind of job that they could enjoy, and the kind of team context that would allow them to flourish. Training opportunities, through the Tamatumani program in the case of Raglan, including both specialised job skills and other opportunities such as French language training, were repeatedly referred to as excellent benefits of the work at the mine. In other cases, women sought out new work opportunities to further their skills development. One woman described her elation at being able to move into a new position when returning to work at the mine:

> And so when I contacted [the mine] I said I'm ready for a new challenge if you have something other than [previous position], I'm ready. And so they called me back. Then the day I was flying up. I looked at my ticket and they said [new job title] and I literally like almost cried. I'm like, are you kidding me, that job?
>
> (Interviewee 20.2)

Women who had worked at one of the mines as students appreciated the summer employment with two weeks off between shifts, and loved the opportunity to travel, meet new people, and gain new experiences. One woman used her job at the mine as a bridge to working in another job for her community.

At the mine, women took pride in their work and in *pijitsirniq* as Inuit workers. One woman remarked that non-Inuit workers were less applied in their duties than Inuit workers, and another made it clear that she wanted to be appreciated for the good work that she did (and resented most that this appreciation was not shown). Another woman described finding meaning by serving others at the mine: "I like that all the mine needed me, you know? Because they always need supplies and stuff, you know, so I'm always there to serve them … you're actually like serving your mining community" (Interviewee 21.4).

***Avatimik Kamattiarniq* (Homeland/Environmental Stewardship), *Tunnganarniq* (Fostering Good Spirit)**: Women also used employment at the mines to follow the principles of *avatimik kamattiarniq* through reconnection to homeland, and *tunnganarniq* through reconnection to community. In many cases, women's descriptions of, and motives for, working at the mines were bound up with who they were as Inuit. This was particularly the case for Inuit women living in southern Quebec who described how being at the mines provided them with a connection to their homelands, cultures, country food, and language. Many women spoke about how much they valued the increased access to country food afforded by the Inuit kitchen at the mine, as well as other healthy foods. For some southern-based women, this was their only access to country foods: "Me living in Montreal it's not easy to have some, but when I go to [the mine] that is country food. So, for me I miss going to [the mine] to eat country food" (Interviewee 21.3). Another highlighted plucking geese as one of "the most fun things" (Interviewee 20.2) and described the Inuit kitchen as a place of abundance that combined cultural and social benefits as well as good eating: "After work, we would all gather together at the kitchen and make meals together and talk and tell stories" (Interviewee 20.2). Opportunities to go fishing on the land were a highlight, though they were required to take vacation time for such excursions.

Several interviewees indicated in various ways that the structure provided by mine life enhanced their well-being, promoting healthy food and exercise, and getting them away from the dangers of addictions and other detrimental factors in the outside world. In the words of one woman:

> For real like no alcohol, it's healthy, you know. So sober it's nice to see like. Even you know Inuit and, in their communities, a lot of stuff happens. And even they told me that they love it because it's sober life over there, so pretty cool for that…. All I can say that [the mine] is so positive for me like personally, in my head and healthy …. It changed my life, totally.
>
> (Interviewee 21.3)

Whatever conflicted feelings the women had about the impacts of the mine itself on the landscape, they were very conscious that a return to the mine was also a return to homeland:

> It's nice when we see animals outside because we are on the land. It's not like the city where you cannot see foxes or caribou you know? It's wildlife over there, so it's nice to see that there's animal passing by.
>
> (Interviewee 21.4)

Only one woman had decided not to return to the mine because she was concerned about its environmental impacts on Inuit lands: "I didn't feel right after because I found out like they're destroying the land and I didn't feel right" (Interviewee 20.7).

***Inuuqatigiitsiarniq* (Showing Respect and Caring for Others)**: In various ways, the women interviewed indicated that they saw their work at the mine as part of a support system that extended beyond themselves as individuals, a perspective that fits well with the principle of *inuuqatigiitsiarniq*. Working at the mine allowed many women to support others financially. Of the 10 women interviewed, 6 confirmed that their wages were used to support one or more family members, whether it be their children, partners or former partners, parents, or other extended family members. Relationships and responsibility towards family and friends were important factors in women's decisions to work at a mine. One woman deliberately sought a temporary student position because she wanted a family (Interviewee 21.4) and another woman sought out employment at a mine where her sibling was working (Interviewee 21.6). Social networks, including partners, ex-partners, and extended family (sometimes informally adoptive family), outside the mine context were important not only as beneficiaries of the mine employee's income, but also as a support system, sometimes as caregivers for the employee's child when they were away. One woman's child was in day care, but she relied heavily on family for additional childcare: "We have my boyfriend's parents who help us. And as of recently, my father and stepmother actually moved up to Kuujjuaq too. We have both sides of the grandparents helping out" (Interviewee 21.6).

Social and cultural connections at the mine were also highly valued aspects of mine work. While some women at times described conflicted relationships with other Inuit, they found ways to create a sense of family with other social networks. As one woman said, "You get really close you know, six months in a year we're together so we get to know each other more personally" (Interviewee 21.8). For one Montreal-based Inuit woman, working at the mine was her first introduction to Nunavik and her Inuit culture: "It connected me with my origin" (Interviewee 21.4). One woman talked about the mine as her second family:

> My little Inuit family creation, where I [spent] the summertime. My Inuktitut really came back stronger because I got to speak with so many Inuit and be around Inuit more compared to in the city. So, I always said that Raglan really kept my language alive.
>
> (Interviewee 20.2)

Barriers in Finding Security and Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit in Mining

Alongside their stories of how mining provided important cultural, social, and economic opportunities, Inuit women described several ways that mining work inhibited their ability to achieve their goals of well-being for themselves and their family. Tellingly, all but three of the women interviewed had left mining work as they were ultimately unable to find a good life—harmony and balance—while working at the mine. The most common reason for leaving mining work was the incompatibility of mining work with childcare, pregnancy, and the principle of *inuuqatigiitsiarniq* (caring for people) (Interviewees 21.1; 21.4; 21.6; 21.10). Women also described dissatisfaction with the types of jobs available to them and the difficulty of moving into more desirable jobs inhibiting their ability to apply the principles of *pilimmaksarniq* (learning) and *aajiiqatigiingniq* (decision-making), though these were less commonly cited as reasons for leaving work altogether. Gender-based harassment, although not widespread, also inhibited women's ability to apply *tunnganarniq* (fostering good spirit).

***Inuuqatigiitsiarniq* (Caring for People)**: Pregnancy, childbirth, and childcare interrupted the mining careers of many of the interviewees (20.1; 21.4; 21.6; 21.9). These women found that the fly-in, fly-out work arrangement challenged their ability to follow the principle of *inuuqatigiitsiarniq*. Prohibited from working at the mining camp while they were pregnant, women were sent home, compelling some to hide their pregnancy to prolong their employment. After they had stopped working, however, many women found it difficult to balance work at the mine with caring for children. When asked why she felt so many Inuit women left their jobs at the mine and did not work at the mine over a long period of time, one woman succinctly answered: "Babies" (Interviewee 20.2). Work rotations involving two weeks of work at the mine site followed by two weeks off, not only made childcare arrangements difficult but also conflicted with some women's understandings of motherhood. One woman described why she ultimately quit her job, though she had family in Nunavik caring for her child while she was on shift, stating: "I felt that it wasn't their responsibility to raise my [child], it was mine. Mine and my boyfriend's. And I just couldn't stay away for that long, that far" (Interviewee 20.2). She went on to explain that women:

> … get tired of working long, long hours and they want to spend more time with their family and older children … The majority of them do end up quitting to get jobs in town, so that they can be with their child.
>
> (Interviewee 20.2)

It was not only the two week-rotation that made caring difficult, but also the long shifts of mine work that create a rigid separation between life and work. When asked whether she would be able to keep working if childcare was available at the mine site, another woman said:

> Yeah, but not big shifts. It could be nice like a normal job, normal schedule but not a big schedule to be tired you know? It should be 9 to 5 you know? It's only for work there. More life time over there, activities; it's only for work.
>
> (Interviewee 21.4)

For this woman, along with several others, the choice to leave mining work was driven not only by childcare challenges but also by an unwillingness to forgo important non-work aspects of life, including caring for their children, for the two weeks that they were at the site. For these women, the inability to find balance and harmony among different important responsibilities and aspects of well-being made continuing work at the mines untenable.

Some women balanced their desires to parent and to continue to work in mining by taking a break from mining when their children were very young, and then returning to mining when their children were older (Interviewees 21.3; 21.9). In one case, however, this career break interrupted job progression; a woman was required to go through probation a second time and was unable to pursue a course that she had been scheduled to take pre-pregnancy. When she returned to the mine site, she had to resume work in one of the lowest-paid positions at the mine. Several women found innovative childcare solutions that were often predicated on reciprocity. Two women supported partners or ex-partners who in turn watched their children when they were away working (Interviewees 21.5; 21.9). Another woman developed a close relationship with a babysitter who is also a single mother, and whom she helped with transportation and financially, stating, "We help each other a lot" (Interviewee 21.3).

Women who continued working at the mine after having children faced challenges maintaining connections with family while at the mine. They tried to stay connected by talking on the phone in their few non-work hours and there was frustration with the limitations on communication imposed by slow internet. One woman coped with missing major celebrations with her children including Christmas, birthdays, March break, and summer holidays by "talking on the phone in the morning, after their school, at least twice a day" (Interviewee 21.5).

***Pilimmaksarniq* (Learning), *Aajiiqatigiingniq* (Decision-making)**: Notwithstanding official company policies prioritizing Inuit in training and advancement, many interview participants described how Inuit tended to be concentrated in the lowest-paid jobs and how it was difficult to transition into more meaningful or better paid work. These challenges placed limits on the women's ability to continue learning (the principle of *pilimmaksarniq*) as well as on their ability to participate equally in decision-making (the principle of *aajiiqatigiingniq*) at the mine. The majority of Inuit women interviewed worked as cleaners/janitors, or in the kitchen. The overrepresentation of Inuit in catering and housekeeping was so pronounced that other employees often assumed that all Inuit women worked as janitors.

> … most of the janitors before the pandemic were Inuit … And that's actually a negative thing too, because a lot of Raglan workers sometimes assume the moment they see an Inuk they're automatically a janitor.
>
> (Interviewee 20.2)

The job classification janitor/concierge is the lowest paid at the Raglan mine along with general kitchen help and dishwasher, at a wage of $24.40/hour in 2022 (Glencore and USW, 2017). In fact, the only job classifications with wages lower than $30/hour by the end of the agreement period included cafeteria work (with the exception of cooks), cleaner/janitor, two specialized day labourer positions, and Inuit trainee positions under the Tamatumani program. Several participants found jobs as a cleaner/janitor or kitchen worker undesirable and a few women were able to move out of these positions and into more desirable jobs in the warehouse. One woman described how the job of sandwich-maker, undesirable by virtue of its low pay and permanent night shifts, was almost always held by Inuit.

Inuit women described facing barriers to moving into other more desirable forms of employment. Two women described how not being fluent in French limited the types of jobs that were available to them. One woman said:

> They called me, saying all right. We have different job positions that you are fit to take. Because my French is not strong at all, or I didn't have any French. Then I couldn't work in, let's say, an office which requires speaking to people … And so I chose a job that required minimal face-to-face interaction with people, because a lot of the workers only speak French.
>
> (Interviewee 20.2)

Another woman described:

> If I'm not good at French I can't get a job …. At first they always say, like before the company opened, they'd say that because when I was in my community and we had a vote saying like it it's going to open many jobs to Inuit. We'll be first priorities and then, once you get into it, they don't treat you like you're the first priority… But being Inuk with a different culture, they had to see like they didn't see the way we are, it had to be how they expected us to look like. Or speak like …
>
> (Interviewee 21.10)

This woman connected her inability to advance as a result of not being able to speak French to be a violation

of the company's IBA commitments and a reflection of its inability to truly embrace Inuit culture.

Another woman's reflections on education as a barrier to Inuit advancement communicated a similar sentiment:

> … like most of Inuit, we don't have education, because it's not offered, it cannot be offered there. So, all we can have is like janitor or like low, lower than the white people. It's like they're saying like Inuit are priorities, but like they're not making a priority… They don't want Inuit to go higher than them because they don't want Inuit to take their job you know? They're not training them to be higher…
>
> (Interviewee 21.6)

Although there are some training opportunities at the mine, these two women note that their effectiveness is undermined by the absence of a true desire to promote Inuit. Inuit women who wanted to move into jobs where few or no Inuit women were employed often faced the most resistance. One woman described facing opposition when she asked if she could train for an operations position typically coded as a male job:

> I feel like, you don't want me to go higher all of a sudden? It's like they'll use us as janitors or like basic jobs, but when they want to go higher they won't help us .… I prefer being alone. I think I'd like to be like on trucks or machines more.… I don't like human contact too much. I don't like to fix smile and act like if I'm happy to see you but I'm not really happy to see you, you know? But everything about the warehouse except the client. I would like to work more alone.
>
> (Interviewee 21.8)

***Tunnganarniq* (Fostering Good Spirit)**: **Gender-based Harassment**: Gender-based harassment at the mine sites also hindered the women's well-being and their ability to foster good spirit, *tunnganarniq*. Although few women described experiences of gender-based harassment, this may be an underestimate and partially a result of conducting interviews remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic. Both mines had zero-tolerance guidelines for sexual harassment and in two cases, women felt that anti-harassment guidelines were appropriately enforced by management (20.2; 21.8). One woman who was the target of sexual harassment described how her co-workers complained to their superiors on her behalf, and the result was a letter of apology from management: "I'm still pleased to see how my team members had my back over that" (Interviewee 20.2).

Other study participants, however, felt that anti-harassment policies were not effective in changing the masculinist culture of mining that objectified women. A case of harassment reported by one woman went undisciplined since "there was no witness" (Interviewee 21.9).

Another woman remarked, "There's white men, they take advantage of Inuit women. And I don't know like for myself, I don't want to be used" (Interviewee 21.10). Additionally, several women noted that notwithstanding strict application of a zero-tolerance policy for harassment at the mine, there is still a culture where the male gaze and flirting are considered acceptable. One woman noted that:

> After work there's a lot of guys sitting on the couch and all the girls never like to walk around. You know those men they're like trying to pursue something … the men are after three weeks, looks like they get, you know, I don't know, hungry.
>
> (Interviewee 21.3)

For another woman, the experience of being the object of men's gaze at the mine negatively affected her well-being and contributed to her decision to leave work at the mine:

> I felt like I was always hiding, you know I didn't want people to watch me … I couldn't even go to the gym without feeling like a piece of meat, you know. I had to cover and I couldn't put makeup because people would stare too much, or I couldn't wear the clothing I want to wear. It was making me so mad at the end. I would just walk around and get mad at anyone who would stare at me. So, I said this is too toxic. I even I did a depression once, because I didn't want to go back to work being scared of everyone watching. You know it's like I'm a superstar for three weeks, even though I don't want to be.
>
> (Interviewee 21.8)

Two reports suggest that these women are not alone and that gender-based harassment and violence is prevalent at remote mining sites. A mixed method study on social and economic impacts of mining near Baker Lake, Nunavut conducted by Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada and University of British Columbia found that sexual harassment and violence in mining was causing Inuit women to leave their positions at mines (Kudloo et al., 2014; Czyzewski et al., 2016). This finding was reconfirmed in a 2019 study with 29 Inuit women workers, of whom more than half "experienced repeated events of sexual harassment and violence in the workforce, with the most common examples being comments, so-called jokes, unwanted touching, and emotional abuse" (Pauktuutit, 2021:23).

Consequences of Leaving Mining

While leaving mining allowed the women more time to care for their children and an escape from gender-based harassment and the frustration of being unable to advance in their job, there were severe financial consequences. Women who were working full time at their respective mines reported high annual incomes ranging between $70,000

and $100,000. Except for two women who were working for Inuit organizations at the time of their interviews, women who had left mining reported very low incomes below $20,000/year. One woman living in Montreal described: "We're just on welfare now—all my welfare cheque goes to my rent so, and my child allowance help me. Yeah" (Interviewee 21.7). As mining also provided many women with the ability to maintain cultural connections with homeland, the loss of mining jobs represented more than a loss of income, it also represented a loss of the benefits that mining brings in terms of well-being. Participants often described missing the cultural connections they had enjoyed at the mines, particularly country food, which was largely unavailable in southern cities. Many of the women who had left mining and lived in Southern Quebec brought up this lost benefit: "Sometimes I miss it, sometimes I don't. Mostly the cooking and um, sports … yeah I love country food a lot, I miss it" (Interviewee 21.7).

DISCUSSION

The above descriptions present a seeming paradox: while the women described many ways that their lives benefited from mining, staying in mining was untenable for most of the women interviewed. Applying the lens of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit principles helps to explain this contradiction by positioning women's entry and exit from mining in the context of a broader quest for well-being. Read through Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit, Inuit women's descriptions both of their entry into mining and of the constraints they faced reflect a wholistic approach to work/life that aims to balance material needs with relationships, responsibilities, and a desire to maintain connections with land and culture. Women's multifaceted approaches were hybrid, however, reflecting values aligned with Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit principles as applied and transformed by the colonial context of their lives, mining itself as well as the cross-cultural identities of some of the women themselves.

Inuit women's emphasis on relationships and cultural continuity through mining challenge common understandings of mining work. In academic and policy debates, mining employment is often narrowly construed as either an economic benefit/opportunity or an agent of dispossession and colonization. The meanings that Inuit women ascribed to mining work unsettled these two depictions. This included using mining as an opportunity to serve others *pijitsirniq*, gain skills and knowledge (*pilimmaksarniq),* work together for the common good (*piliriqatigiingniq*), care for their families financially (*inuuqatigiitsiarniq* (caring for people), foster good spirit *(tunnganarniq)* and maintain connections with homeland and Inuit culture (*avatimik kamattiarniq)* and *tunnganarniq* (inclusivity). Inuit women's descriptions reflected past and present attempts of Inuit organizations and workers to make space for Inuit culture and worldviews in mining workplaces by negotiating language and cultural provisions in IBAs as well as by using the workplace to maintain family and friend networks and build positive relationships and community.

When describing why they left mining, women similarly approached mining from a wholistic perspective. Women's explanations of why they left mining were not recounted as barriers but rather as a choice they made when mining no longer allowed them to find well-being and balance with their roles as caregivers in applying *inuuqatigiitsiarniq* (caring for people) (Interviewees 21.1; 21.4; 21.6; 21.10) or in their ability to move into more desirable jobs inhibiting their ability to apply the principles of *pilimmaksarniq* (learning) and *aajiiqatigiingniq* (decision-making). They also disagreed with the greed that they felt accompanied mining as well as its embedded colonial hierarchies, both attributes that are not aligned with Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit laws. The decision to prioritize raising their children over working on rotation in mining can also be interpreted as an affirmation of Inuit identity given the central importance of children in Inuit culture (Karetak and Tester, 2017). Women therefore harnessed mining work to build well-being for themselves and others and to reaffirm their identities as Inuit in spite of the rigidity of colonial gendered hierarchies embedded in mining. This creative approach allowed women to use mining work to achieve well-being by applying Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit principles for varying amounts of time.

The ability of Inuit women to improve their lives for a limited time through mining work needs to be understood in the context of the intergenerational effects of colonialism that often necessitates cultural hybridity, mobility, and resourcefulness. For many Inuit women living in Nunavik or southern Quebec, the effects of past and present colonial policies—including low educational attainment, housing shortages, language barriers, poverty, and intergenerational trauma—act in consort to curtail economic opportunities. The choice to work in mining and to leave mining was made in the context of challenging personal circumstances including language barriers to other employment, housing challenges, and caring responsibilities. Inuit women used mining wages to reaffirm their identities as Inuit by providing for their families and themselves, building relationships with Inuit co-workers, and embracing opportunities to join field trips and use Inuit cultural spaces and foods when they were offered. Working in mining was one of the creative solutions that women used to navigate difficult and complex circumstances. These solutions were not always acts of resistance, and were essentially hybrid, crossing cultural divides and embracing multiple subject-positions as a platform for building coherent identities, homes, and livelihoods. Women also displayed agency by seeking to protect themselves from gender harassment, advocating to move into less menial jobs, changing companies, and taking opportunities to further their education. Mobility was central to these strategies, with periodic migration from home communities or urban

centres to the mine landscape and back, forming the totality of each women's sense of home and livelihood. In many cases, however, Inuit women were unable to fully resolve the contradictions of mining work despite their attempts.

Others have recounted the ambiguity of mining for Indigenous northerners and sought to balance positive recollections with memories of disruptions to land based activities, experiences of employer and co-worker racism, and negative environmental impacts (Cameron 2015; Keeling and Boulter 2015; Sandlos, 2015). In their historical study of the Rankin Inlet mine, for example Keeling and Boulter (2015:53) conclude that:

> … Inuit in Rankin Inlet embraced a variety of strategies as they pursued their life projects in the context of rapidly changing historical-geographical circumstances, including environmental change, the growing influence of colonial forces in their lives, and the opportunities and challenges presented by industrial development and decline.

These examples differ from our study since they predominantly explore the recollections of Indigenous men who lived in mining communities with a less rigid separation of home and life from several decades ago. Inuit women in our study were further constrained by the incompatibility of fly-in, fly-out work with the care of children and by gendered occupational segregation that limited the job choices and opportunities of women. Still, however, the optimism and self-determination of Inuit women in our study resembled that of mining workers in the studies above. Women's resourceful attempts to find benefits in mining in light of these circumstances reflects a broader dilemma that Inuit face with respect to resource development. As described by Karetak and Tester (2017:15):

> Inuit youth need jobs to survive in the modern world, but Inuit history and culture tells that resource development has serious consequences for the values, beliefs, and rules that protected Inuit for hundreds and even thousands of years… …Faced with few choices, Inuit have adopted, or tried to adopt, *allunaat* ways of doing things while trying to preserve, strengthen and better understand Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit. In a modern world this is not easily done.

For this reason, for most of the women interviewed, mining work was not a long-term solution to sustained well-being, but a strategy to get by that allowed them to build relationships and affirm their identities as Inuit at one point in their lives in light of manifold barriers. So although women were able to use mining to contribute to their well-being and that of their families and friends, their ability to find harmony and balance in their lives through mining was often short-lived. Ultimately, few women were able to find long-term economic security in mining as their strategies were unable to fundamentally alter the rigid separation of work from life in fly-in, fly-out employment, the racialized and gendered employment hierarchy in mining, and the uneven power landscape structuring relations between Inuit women workers, mining companies, and Inuit organizations.

CONCLUSION

Women's resourceful approach to mining in spite of constraints they faced disrupts previous understandings of Inuit women as either victims of, or activists resisting, mining. Similar to other studies, we found that fly-in, fly-out regimes and occupational segregation constrained women's abilities to benefit from mining. Importantly, however, we also found that women creatively used mining to improve their material and spiritual well-being, even if for only short periods. The approach adopted by the Inuit women interviewed—neither of victimhood nor of resistor—can be understood as resourceful approaches to maintaining harmony, which are critical elements of Inuit worldviews where "a healthy, balanced response through hardships and stress is highly valued" (Karetak and Tester, 2017:10).

This research extends scholarship about Indigenous women and mining by highlighting the complexity of the colonial experience. Women's hybrid approaches to mining work included both descriptions of how mining allowed them to live and affirm their identities as Inuit drawing on elements of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit, and how mining reified cultural and gender hierarchies endemic to colonial patterns of resource extraction. In so doing, women's descriptions disrupt the portrayal of mining companies as unalterable instruments of colonial dominance. Here the ability of Inuit organizations to influence the culture of the workplace through IBAs is significant. Women's positive descriptions of their cultural and social experiences at the mine site indicate that efforts to include Inuit culture and foster connection and community through the promotion of Inuktitut, country kitchens, and events and social spaces and times were valued. IBAs provisions, however, did not address the limited job opportunities for Inuit women, their assignment to the lowest paid job classifications at the outset, or the structural challenges to motherhood.

These findings lead to a number of implications for mining employment policy and for future research. As described above, IBA related company strategies to provide culturally relevant changes to mining workplaces are important but not sufficient to foster the inclusion of Inuit women. Full inclusion would require that women have job mobility beyond the lowest paid jobs at the site, that job assignments are based on interest rather than gender, and that language no longer poses a barrier to job advancement (a factor that may be particular to the Nunavik context). None of these changes, however, would resolve the challenge of balancing childcare and relationships central to Inuit values in a fly-in, fly-out environment, a challenge that has yet to be meaningfully resolved. While some of

the difficulties raised by Inuit women, such as long work rotations away from home and segmentation into low-skilled jobs likely also affect Inuit men, the social and cultural positions of Inuit women heighten these challenges. Last, Inuit women's decisions to enter mining work in spite of the challenges highlights the limited options that Inuit women have in their lives as a whole. Women's abilities to follow Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit guidelines and exert agency would ultimately be improved through broadening of opportunities for housing, education, and employment, in addition to addressing gendered barriers to mining.

Although this study focused on Inuit women's experiences working at the mines, we unexpectedly learned that understanding these experiences entailed situating mine work in relation to the complex totalities of their socio-economic contexts. The glimpses into their livelihoods and social networks offered by this small sample of ten women point to the need for a more deliberate inquiry to better understand how Inuit women strive for well-being in contemporary cross-cultural circumstances. Further research with Inuit women who have been displaced from their home communities to southern urban centres is critical, since they have arguably been rendered invisible for the purpose of policy development. Undertaken with a strengths-based approach, such research has potential to help address an imbalance in the literature, which most often situates Inuit women as victims of their circumstances and thus can tend to reinforce disempowerment. This small study has also underscored the methodological innovation needed to advance ethical research involving Indigenous women. The cross-cultural research team struggled to work appropriately with the methodology, given that very little documentation exists to unpack the Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit theoretical toolkit and how it might be applied in social science research contexts. More methodological research on the value and role of IQ in cross-cultural research as a means of more fully comprehending Inuit realities is necessary to provide robust theoretical support for future research initiatives by and with Inuit communities.

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