



Matriculture Among Circumpolar Peoples:

Introduction

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In recent years, the circumpolar regions have reemerged as a focus of global attention and framed as lands vulnerable to threats of climate change,¹ security,² sovereignty,³ and resource extraction.⁴ While Arctic sovereignty discussions ramped up due to the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022,⁵ they were further compounded in 2025 by remarks made by U.S. President Donald Trump's stated desire to acquire Greenland for strategic security

1 Ishfaq Hussain Malik and James D. Ford, 'Understanding the Impacts of Arctic Climate Change Through the Lens of Political Ecology,' *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change* 16, no. 1 (2025): e927, 1-2.

2 Fei Gao and Peiqing Guo, 'Unique risks and evolving trends in Arctic governance: a forward-looking analysis based on policies and practices,' *European Journal of Futures Research*, (2025) 13:5, 4-5.

3 Gabriella Gricius, 'A decolonial approach to Arctic security and sovereignty,' in *Handbook of the Politics of the Arctic*, Edward Elgar Publishing, 2026, 431-432.

4 Lukasz Kozera and Robert Kłaczyński, 'The role and importance of the arctic and its sea route in international economic relations,' *Grassroots Journal of Natural Resources* 8, no. 1 (2025), 712.

5 Justin Barnes, Nicholas Glesby, and Heather N. Nicol, 'Canada, the USA, and the Evolving North American Arctic Security Context: Balancing Traditional and Non-traditional Security,' in *The Palgrave Handbook of Arctic Policy and Politics*, Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland, 2026, 494.



purposes and resources.⁶ These events rekindled political discourse on Arctic sovereignty, and Arctic nation states and their allies responded with public military demonstrations to show their renewed interest in the Arctic, vowing to protect the region.⁷ In turn, circumpolar citizens rallied in their streets, in protest against the U.S. threat to Greenland.⁸

Although the Canadian Arctic has not been directly threatened, its strategic position across from Greenland has led Canadian political leaders to travel to northern territories where they have made announcements to major projects and expanded militarization.⁹

If we can learn anything from history to make sense of this current era of perceived threat to Arctic territory, it has repeatedly shown how Arctic lands are valued insofar as they contain resources and provide trade and travel routes, rather than as lived cultural worlds. But for circumpolar Inuit living in northern homelands, *Inuit Nunaat*, for example, the Arctic is their home and an invaluable cultural source that shapes their unique way of life.¹⁰

Although not new, the perception of the North only as a vast expanse that is rich in resources awaiting extraction is exacerbated in our current era by the phenomena known as 'Arctic Amplification,' in which the effects of climate change occur faster in the polar regions.¹¹ The Arctic sea-ice is melting faster and ice-free seasons are extending for longer duration, factors that have the potential to open up extraction and trade routes once barred by sea-ice.¹² As a result, Arctic nation states perceive both the climatic and

6 Jaroslav Lukiv, 'Denmark planned to blow up Greenland runways if US invaded, reports say,' *The BBC*, March 19, 2026. Accessed online May 2, 2026: <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c33ln4mp1p2o>.

7 Paul Kirby, 'European military personnel arrive in Greenland as Trump says US needs island,' *The BBC*, January 15, 2026. Accessed online May 2, 2026: <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cd0ydjvxpejo>.

8 Mah Noor Mubarik, '“This is all our family”: Nunavummiut rally to support Greenland, as Inuit leaders also speak up,' *CBC North*, January 19, 2026. Accessed online on May 2, 2026: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/inuit-greenland-9.7052083>.

9 The Office of the Prime Minister of Canada, *Prime Minister Carney announces ambitious new plan to defend, build, and transform the North*, Government of Canada, March 12, 2026. Accessed online on May 2, 2026: <https://www.pm.gc.ca/en/news/news-releases/2026/03/12/prime-minister-carney-announces-ambitious-new-plan-defend-build-and>.

10 Patricia A.L. Cochran, ICC Chair On behalf of Inuit in Greenland, Canada, Alaska, and Chukotka, *A Circumpolar Inuit Declaration on Sovereignty in the Arctic*, the Inuit Circumpolar Council, April 2009. Accessed online on May 2, 2026: <https://iccalaska.org/wp-icc/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Signed-Inuit-Sovereignty-Declaration-11x17.pdf>.

11 Masakazu Yoshimori, Takao Kawasaki, Ayako Abe-Ouchi, and Hiroyasu Hasumi, 'Arctic Amplification in the Past, Present, and Future: A Review for the Challenge to the Integrative Understanding of its Mechanism,' *Journal of the Meteorological Society of Japan*, Ser. II 103, no. 5 (2025), 523.

12 Gao and Guo, 5-6.

geopolitical threats as urgent, and in response have renewed military attention and intervention across the region as demonstrable measures of their Arctic sovereignty.¹³

I studied both the concept and evolution of Canadian Arctic sovereignty as it relates to Inuit culture in my recent PhD thesis (2024), wherein I examined two landmark criminal court cases that implicated Inuit: *R v Uluksak and Sinnisiak* (1917), and the Belcher Island murder trials (1941). These trials were significant in Inuit history because they were the first trials to be conducted and interpreted between Inuit and colonial languages. The historical files pertaining to these trials contain some early twentieth century examples of communication between Inuit and non-Inuit that provide a window to view this period's cultural exchange, examined through the judicial and religious messages relayed between them found within the archives.¹⁴

All the records pertaining to both cases were written by non-Inuit men in English or French. Where files recorded speech acts of Inuit, they were recorded by non-Inuit men through the medium of interpreters – some who were Inuit and others non-Inuit, all of whom were men. Only Inuit men served as police 'special constables,' guides, and interpreters.¹⁵ Yet despite their starring role in these cases, Inuit silence in the archives marked a significant absence. To 'hear' what Inuit may have said in these events, my thesis applied Inuit-specific frameworks – Inuit language, laws, and philosophy – to the records as a lens to interpret what these events might have meant to Inuit who experienced them, thereby reconstructing an Inuit perspective.¹⁶ This work aimed to restore historical Inuit agency and humanity.¹⁷

If Inuit men's voices were markedly absent from the historical record, the silence of Inuit women was even more so. Such absences were not simply the result of record-keeping practices but were embedded within the wider processes of colonial administration that structured whose voices counted and could be heard. This issue of *Matrix* seeks out circumpolar women's voices from the northern hemisphere to find and draw out where they exist, reconstruct where absent, and, in particular, highlight resiliency as an enduring feature of matriculture found within the circumpolar regions, despite changes ushered in by colonial contact in the North.

In the North American colonial timeline, colonists were late to arrive and penetrate the North due to the colonists' lack of knowledge and technology to traverse through the

13 Gao and Guo, 7-8.

14 Sharon Angnakak, *Inuit Perspectives in and on "Arctic Show Trials,"* PhD diss., Université d'Ottawa/University of Ottawa, 2024, 9.

15 Angnakak, 24-25.

16 Angnakak, 17-22.

17 Angnakak, 176.

rugged and harsh environment of the Arctic regions.¹⁸ When European colonists began to settle in the North, the technological advancements of the Industrial Revolution had already taken hold in the southern regions of North America.¹⁹ Although colonist exploration and expansion northward occurred from the eighteenth century onwards, largely sustained by the search for the Northwest Passage, the whaling industry, and then the fur trade,²⁰ newer technology in the early twentieth century – such as railways and electricity – brought on more permanent colonist settlements as these new technologies required new resources.²¹

The First World War altered geopolitics globally but also placed considerable pressure on Arctic nation states to demonstrate authoritatively their administration over lands in the circumpolar region. Driven by emerging economies built on new technologies and in response to global conflict, colonists in the early twentieth century discarded the fur trade and begun to explore Indigenous lands in northern regions to stake out potential mineral and metal deposits,²² and at the outset of the Second World War, quite rapidly setup military bases across the Arctic.²³ Thus, in pursuit of state sovereignty, the colonization of the Arctic *felt* much more rapid, and was often brought on by coercive structures that sought to reorganize social, cultural, and spiritual life for northern Indigenous Peoples.

To frame Indigenous histories primarily through rupture and loss, however, risks resurrecting the old colonial belief that the Arctic was an empty wasteland; this concept was extended to circumpolar Indigenous Peoples' themselves, as colonists characterized them under deficiency and absence.²⁴ Colonists compared Indigenous cultures and societies to their own, and in so doing they could not recognize Indigenous religion, law, and culture. Instead, colonists believed that Indigenous Peoples in the circumpolar regions lacked any sort of law, hierarchy, or culture.²⁵ If Indigenous cultures were recognized at all, they were described as fleeting and vulnerable to erasure due to European acculturation and adulteration.²⁶ This deficit view of Indigenous culture obscures the longer histories of

18 Angnakak, 25-26.

19 Gregory Clark, Kevin H. O'Rourke and Alan M. Taylor, *Made in America? The New World, the Old, and the Industrial Revolution*, National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper Series, Working Paper #14077, Cambridge, MA, June 2008, 1-4.

20 Lenore A. Grenoble, 'Contact and shift: Colonization and urbanization in the Arctic,' *The Cambridge Handbook of Language Contact* 2 (2022), 484-488; Peter Usher, Peter, 'The Canadian Western Arctic: a century of change,' *Anthropologica* (1971), 171-180.

21 Morris Zaslow, *The Northward Expansion of Canada 1914-1967*, Vol. 17, McClelland & Stewart, 2016, 8-9.

22 Zaslow, 9-16.

23 Angnakak, 113-126.

24 John Amagoalik, 'Wasteland of nobodies,' In *Nunavut: Inuit regain control of their lands and lives* (2000), 138-139.

25 Angnakak, 73-89.

26 Pamela R. Stern, and Lisa Stevenson, *Critical Inuit Studies: an Anthology of Contemporary Arctic Ethnography*, Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska Press, 2006, 261; Jacob Gruber, 'Ethnographic

change and adaptation, as well as the ongoing agency of Indigenous Peoples, who, like any other human society found around the world and throughout time, have navigated the arrival of newcomers toward both cultural continuity and transformation.

While narratives of rupture and loss remain central to many accounts of Indigenous histories in the circumpolar regions, this issue presents reflections that can better our understanding of the human experience of change itself. Human societies have never been static; they have always been shaped by shifting environmental conditions, evolving technologies, and changing social relations. Indigenous communities were – and continue to be – deeply engaged in processes of cultural change. As one submission in this issue (Racah) describes about the Indigenous People known as the Nenets, they continuously express their traditional cultures albeit interwoven with new forms of knowledge. In this context, *matriculture* can be understood as a dynamic force through which culture is re-interpreted with new expressions of traditional knowledge and practices that are continued through intergenerational transmission.

In this issue of *Matrix*, we are provided an opportunity to hear voices from the North that speak about women who are central to negotiating cultural change and who remain for their communities a source of cultural continuity. In drawing out these voices from circumpolar matricultures, this issue's submissions examine women's land-based economies on the tundra and taiga and women's artistic practices, as well as presenting a collection of interviews from circumpolar women recently recorded by the Editorial Collective of *Matrix*. These interviews, available through both the audio links or in transcript, provide additional context to the themes explored in this circumpolar issue; its collection contributes to a broader body of women's knowledge that complements the archival record.

Throughout the issue, themes of cultural change and continuity are explored, showcasing how circumpolar communities and cultures are sustained through women's labour, their participation in local economies, and through their community leadership essential in navigating and negotiating the cultural change brought on by intercultural contact, changing geopolitical tensions, and the evolving technological realities that move and shape globalism. In 'Reweaving the Tundra: Women, Fire, and Fractured Traditions in Anna Nerlagi's Prose,' Maria Gatti Racah explores Nenets matricultural change and continuity through the symbolism of the hearth presented in three selected prose written by Nenets author Anna Nerlagi. Racah's analysis draws on the symbolism of the hearth related to Nenets female subjectivity and experience presented in Nerlagi's stories that depict women and the hearth: either at the fire, displaced from it, or beyond it.

Salvage and the Shaping of Anthropology,' *American Anthropologist*, Vol 72, No 6, 1970, 1290.

The *chum* – a tent-like structure and traditional home of the Nenets – is a microcosm of the cosmos in which gendered roles are inscribed. Nenets women have the responsibility to maintain the hearth, the heart of domestic space that is connected to cosmological and ecological relations, where fire is treated as a living presence. Here, Racah categorizes Nergaki's female characters according to their proximity to – or rupture from – the hearth, demonstrating that fragility and resilience are not opposite characteristics, but intertwined. Nenets culture, founded upon a reindeer-herding semi-nomadic society, has not disappeared despite Russian colonial policies that sought to Russify the Nenets, but continues as a lifestyle on the tundra chosen by women in which the *chum* and its hearth (i.e. women's work) is central to tundra life. Racah notes that Nergaki herself founded and ran an ecological-based school on the tundra devoted to passing on traditional knowledge to Nenets youth. As Racah states, the transmission of Nenets culture is inseparable from the work of women.

When she was a child, Nergaki herself experienced the Russian colonial policy of forceful removal from her home on the tundra and Nenets culture to be placed in a boarding school. This storyline, written in her semi-autobiographical prose, details how such a process marked internal fractures caused by the externally imposed suppression of Nenets language and embodied forms of land-based knowledge associated with the tundra. The boarding school system removed children from their parents, and this separation – especially from their mother – eroded traditional forms of knowledge, particularly concerning the skilled labour required for living on the tundra. Yet amidst this rupture emerged Indigenous adaptation and agency, especially shown in Nergaki's real-life school on the tundra where she reoriented her colonial education back to her community. Despite colonial pressures towards Russification, Nenets women are returning to the tundra to re-weave new forms of education with their traditional knowledge, a matricultural adaptation in which women are central.

In Laurel Thorne's article titled 'Rematriating the Archipelago: A Gendered Environmental History of Kodiak,' Indigenous women's labour was also central to the continuity of Alutiiq culture, whose homelands are on Kodiak Island off the coast of Alaska in the United States. Thorne's analysis of Alutiiq matriculture demonstrates the significance of the land in shaping Indigenous culture, as she surveys the historical and current relationship between Alutiiq women and their Arctic environment.

Situated within ecofeminism and inspired by current Alutiiq female scholars, Thorne's work shows that despite successive colonial pressures from Russia and the United States, women's knowledge of the environment, along with their subsistence and in-ground steam bathing practices, provided the avenue for community and cultural survival. Traditionally, Alutiiq women had a reciprocal relationship with their environment in which they refrained from entering or crossing certain outdoor places during times of

menstruation and childbirth, as women's biological functions were believed to be powerful forces that could influence their surrounding environment. As women took care in how they interacted with the environment with practices of respect and restraint, the environment in turn provided women with their food for survival and materials for livelihood, while simultaneously serving as places where women could go during times of menstruation and childbirth to heal and rejuvenate in steam baths. Thus, the environment was intrinsically linked to women's bodies as they protected the environment while gaining healing, survival, and livelihood. This analysis provides an example of how matriculture can be shaped both by women's biological child-bearing functions and their surrounding environment.

The Russian and American colonial regimes disrupted Alutiiq women's relationship with the environment by removing them from the land and placing them into the wage economy based on extracting resources from the land. Thorne's theory on women's bodies as connected to land is analyzed through this disruption – colonial regimes that removed women from the land simultaneously extracted from the land. Despite this doubled disruption, as Thorne demonstrates, Alutiiq cultural continuity was made possible because of Alutiiq women who – despite the pressures of colonial-imposed changes – have maintained the subsistence practices embodying environmental values; their practices that focus on environmental protection continue today.

In describing the practices of steam-baths – a special healing technique facilitated by women for women who are menstruating or have just given birth – Thorne demonstrates the ways in which women share knowledge with each other through the care and labour they provide to each other during times of need. Like Racah, Thorne also sees rupture and resilience not as complete opposite experiences or expressions of matriculture, but as a field of intersection where women experience and navigate both coercion and choice.

Where matriculture for Racah and Thorne presents a site of rupture and resilience, Tammy Wolfe's submission entitled 'Matriarchal Beads: The Resistance, Resurgence and Reclamation of Traditional Indigenous Beadwork' presents matriculture as a site for creative practices which manifest Indigenous knowledge and identity; she writes from her perspective as a First Nation *Ininiw Iskwew* (Swampy Cree woman), scholar, and beader. Indigenous women's beading practices are presented as a form of material culture through which cultural knowledge, identity, and continuity are sustained and transformed by women across generations; they demonstrate that Indigenous cultural persistence operates through adaptation, innovation, and women's agency rather than static preservation.

Wolfe argues that beading is a form of Indigenous women's and, specifically, matriarchal cultural practice that exemplifies Indigenous matriculture. In Wolfe's analysis, Indigenous

matriculture is a system of knowledge transmission and identity formation, with relational aspects that encompass both cosmological and earthly relationships through which cultural continuity is sustained across generations. Rather than representing an unchanging tradition, beading demonstrates how Indigenous women across North America have actively adapted, reinterpreted, and renewed cultural practices in response to shifting historical conditions brought on by various external forces throughout colonial history.

Beading, then, is a site of Indigenous matricultural transformation: from the incorporation of glass beads through settler trade through the use of beadwork in expressions of political identity and resistance to its contemporary resurgence through powwows and digital platforms, beading emerges as a dynamic site of cultural continuity. The practice of beading is not solely preserved; it is continuously remade with new expressions. In this sense of renewal and reinterpretation, Wolfe challenges deficit-based narratives of cultural loss, despite successive ruptures throughout colonial history, by foregrounding Indigenous women's roles as agents of continuity, innovation, and resurgence; she shows how cultural knowledge transmission persists through externally imposed changes.

Wolfe's discussion about the positive roles of modern social media in sharing traditional knowledge of beading is an additional example of the ways in which cultural transformation is guided by an individual's agency in negotiation with their environment, exemplifying a new type of environment that is shaping culture. Where Racah and Thorne's analysis focused on Indigenous knowledge and matriculture in relation to a traditional and physical environment – the tundra – Wolfe's analysis introduces an entirely new environment shaping matriculture: virtual environments. These new platforms used by Indigenous Peoples to share culture have led to what Wolfe describes as an 'Indigenous renaissance,' highlighting the positive force of going viral in today's virtual world. Wolfe credits this adaptation of cultural practices through the use of technology to current Indigenous movements of decolonization in which the Indigenous matriarchy is experiencing a cultural resurgence and revival.

Tia Tidwell discusses matriarchal practices related to kinship in her lyrical reflection titled 'From the Earth' that focuses on Nunamiut matriculture. Hailing from the Anaktuvuk Pass of Alaska, Tidwell presents a deeply personal reflection of her name that she acquired through the traditional naming practices of the Nunamiut: in her Inupiaq Indigenous language, her name is Puya, meaning 'from the earth.' This reflection strikes right to the core of the themes common in all of the submissions: change, resilience, continuity and transference of cultural knowledge from generation to generation.

In 'From the Earth,' we are invited to glimpse into inner Nunamiut belief systems that transcend time and place. Tidwell offers a reflection on a personal name that is oriented

towards this world and these relationships, but which also extends connections to those who once bore the same name, connecting ancestors with current day people. In Nunamiut belief, one's personal name speaks to what Tidwell describes as 'intergenerational survival,' a direct counter-description to the term 'intergenerational trauma' conventionally used in discussions about the colonial history of many Indigenous Peoples. This highlights the author's preference for positive self-descriptions that accentuate the triumph of survival.

Tidwell reflects on a most intimate moment that one can experience in life: the death of her grandmother, who, by virtue of Tidwell's Nunamiut name, has extended their kinship to sisterhood. She discusses the responsibilities that come with a traditional name (or a name acquired from traditional practices), where the personal relationships and kinships that belonged to the one whose name is passed on to another person when they die is transferred to the person who inherited the name. One of the powerful and most intimate scenes of Tidwell's contribution is when she relates staying by her grandmother's side as she passes away and describes the moment from the first person: "I welcomed her and said goodbye." This foregrounds her dual relationship with her grandmother, created through both her biological and naming ties. Tidwell describes names as containing and having the ability to release memory, presence, and kinship; she carries on that tradition in naming her daughter Kivaaluk after her own grandmother passed away. Being reunited with her grandmother through her daughter's inheritance of her grandmother's name thereby continues the matrilineal kinship and traditional practices of her community.

While this issue presents three different analyses of circumpolar matriculture and a lyrical personal reflection, it also highlights other scholarship through several book reviews. Two are situated in the circumpolar region and one outside, with common elements of cultural continuity and matricultural leadership presented throughout. In Elizabeth Ann Bartlett's review of Kaarina Kailo's book *Sauna, Culture, Sweat and Spirituality: On the Architectonics and Cosmology of Sacred Space*, we find an analysis of how the traditional sweat and sauna practices of Indigenous Peoples have deep roots in matristic culture. According to Kailo, the sweat lodge is the first temple, the earliest form of spirituality in which the temple is like a womb. In this sense, both Thorne and Kailo analyze matriculture as being shaped both by women's bodies and their environment, both observing an intrinsic link between the two.

In Linnéa Rowlett's review of *The Hidden Lives of Viking Women: Archaeological and Historical Perspectives*, a co-edited volume by Michèle Hayeur Smith and Alexandra Sanmark, Viking matriculture is broadly defined as the system of symbols pertaining to Viking women – the maternal and the feminine – which shaped social expectations of women and the opportunities available to them. Rowlett highlights how much of what we know of historical women – in this case Viking women – is through the interpretive

frameworks of male historiographers and archaeologists, resulting in recycled androcentric understandings of Viking culture.

In response, this book strives to discern Viking women in the historical and archaeological record by uncovering and reconstructing Viking matriculture. This scholarship draws out female agency and leadership that is connected to a Viking woman's social status – and not her sex – illuminating the sub-classes of femininities that existed within. More broadly, this study speaks to the importance of women's scholarship on women, which requires an interpretative approach that is attuned to gendered experiences and embodied knowledge.

A dynamic of female embodiment observed beyond the circumpolar context is found in Angela Sumegi's review of *Divine Messengers - the untold story of Bhutan's female shamans*, by Stephanie Guyer-Stevens & Françoise Pommaret. They present accounts of the Bhutanese women known as *delom*, or those who 'return from the dead,' who serve as intermediaries between earthly and cosmological realms. As described in the work reviewed, these women occupy roles as healers, diviners, and spiritual authorities by drawing on embodied experiences that legitimize their knowledge and authority within their communities.

The *delom*, Sumegi highlights in her review, operate at the fringes of religious hierarchies; as such their practices are socially inscribed and sustained by community recognition instead of deriving legitimacy from Buddhist authority. This is yet another example of the broader matricultural patterns evident in other works presented in this issue which situate women primarily in everyday communal activities as opposed to formal structures of social power. Though culturally and geographically distinct from the North, Sumegi's review of Bhutanese *delom* adds to the common theme in women's roles as community leaders through which women's labour preserves cultural knowledge.

Cultural continuity can be understood not only through analysis, as presented in the works introduced so far, but also through lived experience. The first-person account that concludes this Introduction reflects on a visit to Atsua Ku (Grandma's Camp) in 1998 is entitled 'A Meeting at Grandma's Camp (Selections).' Written by the late Lucie Dufresne, it consists of selections from her 1998 essay. This excerpt captures the land-based practices through which knowledge is shared, embodied, and sustained across generations of First Nations in the Yukon.

Dufresne provides a richly detailed description of her visit to Atsua Ku, a salmon camp located forty-five minutes from Whitehorse in which she spent one August day in 1998. The vivid details transport the reader to Atsua Ku, where we witness the female leadership whose labour sustains the camp and provides both a livelihood for their family and the

preservation of traditional knowledge. Dufresne introduces us to sisters Lin [Linda Waugh] and Dorothy, who led the operations of the camp. The sisters and their brother, Carl, reclaimed their family's camp from its previously deteriorated state, when squatters used it as a wood camp and polluted the area, and revived its natural pristine beauty, transforming it to a traditional salmon camp where the family carried on the traditional practices of their grandparents. Dufresne's narrative details how her hosts Dorothy and Lin [Linda] provided her an opportunity to participate in local First Nation culture by sampling modern versions of traditional foods, by learning about the history of the camp and the family business, and by giving her an opportunity to learn how to make a dreamcatcher.

Though Grandmother Waugh featured in the narrative has since passed, Atsua Ku has been reinterpreted today through descendants of Linda Waugh. Her legacy speaks to the enduring strength of Waugh's matriculture while echoing similar patterns of adaptation and resilience as featured in Wolfe's analysis in beading traditions as a matricultural site for Indigenous women's knowledge transmission. A decade ago, salmon numbers in the Yukon decreased considerably, prompting Linda Waugh's granddaughter, Carissa, to activism and building awareness of the salmon through beadwork she creates under her Northern Tutchone name Ékè Éwe, in which she beads salmon pins. Carissa describes her beadwork in her recent short film titled *Beading Atsua Ku* that honors her grandmother, Linda Waugh, and her salmon camp, Atsua Ku.²⁷ Faced with environmental change and the loss of a key food source, Carissa created a beaded salmon pin titled *Atsua Ku* as visual art to raise awareness, express grief, and advocate for protection of salmon and the ecosystems they depend on.²⁸ Carissa's 'artivism',²⁹ as she calls it, was on display recently at the Kwanlin Dün Cultural Centre during talks between the Council of Yukon First Nations, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Government, and the Indigenous-led project *To Swim and Speak with Salmon*; they met to discuss efforts to grant the Yukon River legal personhood as a form of environmental protection.³⁰

Carissa's artivism is an example of the resistance work that Indigenous matriarchs are employing, similar to that found in Wolfe's article 'Matriarchal Beads,' and highlights how these artistic responses are deeply tied to both cultural continuity and matriarchal leadership. It also speaks to Thorne's discussion on Indigenous matriculture as expression and practice of environmental protection. In the contexts of Carissa and her late Grandma Linda Waugh, the latter presented in Dufresne's excerpt, salmon is not only a resource, but

27 CBC Communications, 'Community film screening celebrates Yukon First Nations' connection to salmon,' *CBC News*, April 29, 2026. Accessed online May 2, 2026: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/community/community-film-screening-celebrates-salmon-9.7180703>.

28 CBC, 'Community film screening,' April 29, 2026.

29 CBC, 'Community film screening,' April 29, 2026.

30 Aiden McRae, 'This Yukon artist's beadwork and 'artivism' puts focus on salmon and cultural loss,' *CBC North*, April 15, 2026. Accessed online May 2, 2026: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/salmon-loss-into-artivism-9.7158697>.

a central part of community life, identity, and intergenerational knowledge. Dufresne highlights how respect is a central concept to Grandma Lin's overall understanding of her relationship with the land. The people occupying the camp prior to Atsua Ku destroyed the land through extraction of timber as a wood camp, and thus disrespected the land in Waugh's perspective. To restore relational balance of the land, Waugh and her family restored it to a traditional salmon camp where they revived traditional practices.

Carissa's honouring of her Grandmother Linda Waugh, shown through her beaded activism and her inspiration derived from spending time at her grandmother's camp, speaks to the relationship between Alutiiq women and their environment as discussed by Thorne, who argues that matricultural knowledge as embodied knowledge is relied on by communities in current day advocacy for environmental protection. This relationship between women and the environment, as Thorne describes it, sustains cultural practices that ensure the preservation and transmission of traditional knowledge and upholds relationships to the land where the collective responsibility of the community continues to be a traditional value that passes on, even in the face of ecological uncertainty.

From Dufresne's first-person narrative, with its rich description of First Nation matriculture recorded in 1998, to Carissa's current activism, matriculture is understood not only as something that can be reconstructed from the past, but as a living *matrix*: a site where women's labour and activities shape cultural landscapes. Whether through beadwork, narrative, or land-based practices, Indigenous and circumpolar women continue to sustain and transform their cultural knowledge across generations, ensuring its continuity not through strict adherence to a preserved archetype, but through ongoing practices – women's labour – that constantly renew culture into new expressions while ensuring their community's survival.

About the Author

Sharon Angnakak is an Inuk scholar born and raised in Iqaluit, Nunavut, specializing in Inuit history, law, and cultural continuity. Her work foregrounds Inuit agency in colonial records and explores transformation, resilience, and the enduring strength of Inuit knowledge systems.

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