



**HAL**  
open science

# Tangled Lines: What might it mean to take Indigenous languages seriously?

Valerie Henitiuk, Marc-Antoine Mahieu

► **To cite this version:**

Valerie Henitiuk, Marc-Antoine Mahieu. Tangled Lines: What might it mean to take Indigenous languages seriously?. 2023. hal-04271103

**HAL Id: hal-04271103**

**<https://hal.science/hal-04271103v1>**

Preprint submitted on 5 Nov 2023

**HAL** is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.



Distributed under a Creative Commons Attribution - NonCommercial 4.0 International License

# **Tangled Lines: What might it mean to take Indigenous languages seriously?**

Valerie Henitiuk<sup>a</sup> and Marc-Antoine Mahieu<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Concordia University of Edmonton, Edmonton, Canada

<sup>b</sup>Inalco & Lacito, Sorbonne Paris Cité, Paris, France

## **Introduction**

Translation is political, especially when Indigenous languages and cultures are at stake, given long-standing complications around identity, voice, and historical oppression. Global Indigeneity is generally understood to include those who were present at first contact, who remain distinct from the dominant population, and who may be disadvantaged owing to a history of colonialism. From the Pygmy, the San, and the Xhosa in central and southern Africa, to the Aboriginals and the Maōri in Australasia, to a variety of Siberian tribes in Russia, it comprises a great diversity of cultures. In the Canadian context, the three broad groupings are First Nations (a vast number of unique peoples), Inuit, and Métis.

Indigenous languages tend to be characterized by orality, little standardization, and a range of dialects. Although certain languages (e.g. Inuktitut, Cree, Innu, Dene and Ojibway languages in Canada) function as not only mother tongue but also the language of daily use for many, widespread language loss has typically resulted in a decreasing number of native speakers.

The challenges for translating from or into Indigenous languages are manifold. Besides their intrinsic complexity<sup>1</sup>, structural inequities such as a lack of resources (of even such basic language-learning/linguistic research tools as dictionaries), a lower rate of scolarization than that found in mainstream populations, along with historically stark hierarchical relationships between European-trained academics and “native informants” result in various tensions. Unequal access to

funding, poorly conceived interpretive approaches, and the decontextualization of cultural materials all raise significant and valid concerns; further, the history, methods, and issues related to Indigenous translation have been described as involving spiritual as well as physical risks (Swann 2011). The majority of language-based research to date remains anthropological/ethnographic in approach, to the detriment of those texts with literary features or functions, and evangelist missions have often negatively impacted vulnerable linguistic populations. Translation from Indigenous languages is a double-edged sword: it can serve to preserve and protect invaluable cultural heritage as well as a way of life, but can also threaten their very survival.<sup>2</sup> By eliding the original, translational activity risks undermining a language's autonomy, rendering it paradoxically more invisible and lessening the incentive to learn it (or, for more or less fluent speakers, to continue to use it). Current best practice underscores the importance of research design that explicitly involves knowledge keepers as well as ensuring that Indigenous goals and benefit are enshrined in any given project.

Between European and other hegemonic languages, even the most challenging translation project proceeds in a relatively straightforward fashion: equivalencies can to a greater or lesser extent be found in dictionaries or shared daily habits and interactions. Difficulties common to work in Indigenous languages include the need to transcribe the text, determine its exact meaning, decide how best to render an oral storytelling performance, or negotiate knowledge rights. Basic hurdles such as geographic distance and limited access to technology complicate matters more.

Happily, long-established practices in Indigenous translation and interpreting are being dismantled, with new approaches being developed by various communities, who rightly focus on their own needs and priorities. Social justice activism is fighting back against the conquest model that for centuries has dominated in the Western world, where various forms of intercultural

communication have too often functioned as acts of violence serving political agendas (Rafael 2015, Shamma 2020). Rather than increasing mutual comprehension and opportunity, the result may be simply a perpetuation of the colonizers' supposed superiority. Anti-colonial movements within activist translation circles have greatly expanded our understanding of paradigms and practices (Boéri and Maier 2010) and argued convincingly for the importance of linguistic diversity. Translation studies as a discipline can and must play its part in this timely critical dialogue, as well as find ways to recognize and support Indigenous practitioners<sup>3</sup> and theorists.

### **The case of Inuktitut**

Our own collaborative work has centred on Inuktitut, especially literary texts (whether already translated, in whole or in part, or never before translated), and in particular those from Nunavik (northern Quebec). We have also had sustained research interests in the current status of reflections on such translation, which to be frank has to date been virtually nil. What we mean by this is that even the most basic rudiments of translation studies have made scarcely any inroads into work on Inuit language and culture.<sup>4</sup> This discipline has for many years recognized translation regarding languages of greater diffusion, or those that are more closely related, as heavily influenced by power relations, gender, differential access to decision-making, entrenched gatekeepers, challenges to agency, etc. With Inuktitut, despite a still more pressing need to address such concerns, the tendency is still to operate from the belief that translation is a transparent operation<sup>5</sup>: there is an objective meaning (almost self-evident and pre-verbal); that meaning is manifested in the words of a language X; the translation of a text consists simply of replacing one word by another in order to arrive at the same objective meaning.

According<sup>6</sup> to the 2021 census, approximately 70,000 Inuit live in Canada, three-quarters of whom are based in 53 communities spread across Inuit Nunangat (“homeland”), and two-thirds of whom can speak Inuktut.<sup>7</sup> Inuktut is the central part of what is known as “the Inuit language,” a dialect chain stretching from northern Alaska to East Greenland. Developing on its own over centuries, Inuktut has in terms of the linguistic evolutionary scale only very recently come into contact with other languages, and thus fallen into the orbit of Western ways of communicating. In the novel<sup>8</sup> *Sanaaq*, Mitiarjuk Nappaaluk (Nappaaluk 1984, 26) describes her people as astounded that the first Qallunaat (the Inuit term for non-Inuit) they met in the 1930s neither spoke nor understood the Inuit tongue:

Itirtaulirqut qallunaanut. Itirsimalirmata Aqiarulaaq imaililirquq qallunaanut: "Ai!" Sunauvva tukisirqajannngimata nillingittuluunniit. Uqarviruutilirmataguug taikkua, inutuinnait ajugailliu-tu-vialuuqattalirtut.

[They find themselves intruded by the Qallunaat. Once the Qallunaat have entered, Aqiarulaaq says hello to them. But astoundingly, they do not respond at all, because they cannot understand. When they start talking among themselves, it is said that the Inuit are very amazed. (translation ours)]<sup>9</sup>

The 20<sup>th</sup> century history of Inuit in Canada is punctuated by a series of traumatizing events, namely the imposition of a market economy, forced settlement and relocations, disc numbers (AKA “Eskimo identification numbers”), imposed changes to traditional naming, the tuberculosis epidemic, residential schools, the killing of sled dogs, and an appallingly high suicide rate. Increasing numbers of Inuit are now in positions of influence concerning Indigenous policy and thus well equipped to work towards better conditions; nonetheless, the scale of the challenges remains immense. It is also important to bear in mind the relatively recent introduction of literacy:

although Moravian missionaries taught a Romanized script in the region known today as Nunatsiavut as of the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, most of Canada's Arctic was not introduced to a writing system until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (Inuktitut syllabics having been adapted from the original orthography created for Ojibway and Cree in the 19<sup>th</sup> century). The implications for developing any sort of translation praxis, especially as most communities were until the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century semi-nomadic and quite isolated from contact with the south, or professional codes are obvious.

Translations into Inuktitut are not infrequently done rather haphazardly, without benefit of any revision, to fulfil bureaucratic/ideological mandates, and (importantly) with no expectation they will actually serve any functional purpose. The situation is not much better in other regions of the Inuit Arctic, especially with regard to language in the media. Arnaq Grove (of Ilisimatusarfik – University of Greenland, Nuuk) has spoken eloquently on this subject in relation to Kalaallisut (2004, 2015). In Alaska, a recent news story concerning the rendering of disaster relief information into Yup'ik and Inupiaq would be shocking were it not so shockingly banal. Some of the “translations” produced by a Californian agency were instead done partly into Inuktitut syllabics (a different language, whose speakers live thousands of kilometres away in the Eastern Arctic; the intended target readers use Romanized script) and partly simply random phrases lifted wholesale from “Yupik Eskimo Texts from the 1940s” (sometimes scrambled so they are entirely nonsensical; Thiessen 2023).<sup>10</sup> My hovercraft is full of eels, indeed.<sup>11</sup>

### **Taking Inuktitut seriously**

What we mean by this is actually studying the language (common practice is to multiply incantatory statements about the value of indigenous languages, while working solely with English) and taking into consideration the power relations within which this language and its



Inuktitut manuscript; National Archives Reference R11775-0-9-E), brand-new translations into English and French that seek to be as rigorous as possible while reflecting “la beauté rugueuse, la couleur et le génie [the rugged beauty, colour and genius]” (Rio 2021) of Markoosie’s use of Inuktitut, as well as an extensive scholarly apparatus. That review provides an opportunity to shine a light on the sorry state of understanding about Inuit language and literature, as well as on the fraught circumstances of present-day translation practices. According to Mélissa Major<sup>12</sup>, we argue that working from an Inuktitut text is inherently “more ethical or worthier” than working from one in a colonial language (Patsauq 1970), which if true would certainly be inane. What the detailed discussion in our book demonstrates is that the published English rendition is a reworked text, by hands other than Markoosie’s, thus underscoring the intrinsic value of going back to the original. Contrary to her claims, our criticism in this volume is directed at neither Markoosie nor his grasp of English, but rather at publishing practices of the 1970s, the undeniable power inequities of that time, as well as more current scholarship that has ignored the existence of a compelling Indigenous-language source text.<sup>13</sup> Major’s main points appear to be inspired by an uncited blog post (Ego 2021) by a prize-winning Montreal-based French-English translator who specializes in Indigenous texts, both fiction and non-fiction.

Various disciplines have self-proclaimed gatekeepers jealously guarding their authority, a characteristic arguably even more pronounced in tiny subfields, e.g. those related to Indigenous literary studies. Sometimes an individual who is not Indigenous and who has not done the hard work of language learning, is invested in the dominant national languages (i.e. the ones they know) as having sole validity, and in defending against perceived threats to their unique ability to speak for an Indigenous group. In highly politicized post-TRC<sup>14</sup> Canada, the coupling of settler ambition and vulnerability has even led some to invent affiliations (high-profile cases of “pretendians”



include novelist Joseph Boyden or recently disgraced academic Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond). Even among those who did make the effort to learn Inuktitut, such as some missionaries or anthropologists, gatekeeping has played an important role in how Inuit stories and songs have been made available, as well as how they have been received. This sort of one-sided activity continued on through the work of the federal government division responsible for the publishing of various Indigenous texts.<sup>15</sup>

Markoosie's story, with its complex genesis and five-decades' long journey, functions as an exemplary case study of the myriad challenges Indigenous translation may pose. It was groundbreaking in terms of Indigenous literature in Canada, and its metamorphosis from handwritten Inuktitut manuscript to versions circulating so widely usefully illustrates central concepts such as translation, self-translation, adaptation, retranslation, and relay translation; its foundational positioning as both source and target text within Canadian literary translation history is also unique. (Despite Catherine Ego's claim that her 2011 version allowed Markoosie a worldwide reach, we clearly document his text's global circulation beginning with an initial and itself groundbreaking French translation by Claire Martin in 1971 and including renditions in, e.g., German, Danish, Ukrainian, and Japanese that all long predate hers.) *Uumajursiutik unaatuinnamut* is among a handful of long texts of literary value spontaneously written in Nunavimmiutitut dialect, only two of which have ever been translated.<sup>16</sup> Finally, the Inuktitut original is powerfully written, featuring innovations that reveal Markoosie to be an important literary voice in that language. It is anything but a random choice to be foregrounded, analyzed based on sound linguistic knowledge, and rigorously translated.

This sort of work, especially when undertaken by settler scholars, not infrequently meets with push back from both non-Inuit and Inuit. Any non-Indigenous individual working on

Indigenous languages and literature is aware of how delicate this research can be, and the high stakes involved. A few years ago, historian France Rivet published a scholarly volume detailing the Abraham Ulrikab story (Abraham and a handful of other Inuit were taken from Nunatsiavut to Europe in 1880 to be displayed; all but one of the party died shortly after arrival). On that volume's Facebook page, one finds comments such as the following from language-keeper Zipporah Nochasak: "Who started this page? Are you Inuk? This story belongs to Inuit. And only Inuit tells our story".<sup>17</sup> It is incumbent on non-Indigenous scholars to act respectfully toward their sources, to work in collaboration with potentially affected Indigenous peoples, listening carefully to any and all concerns, but also to develop a thick skin.

Both Ego and Major claim that our desire to work directly from the story as written by Markoosie in Inuktitut evidences a lack of respect towards him as an English-language author. This is manifestly not the case—we join with them (and a long list of other readers/critics; see Appendix D) in celebrating *Harpoon of the Hunter* (as the 1970 English adaptation is titled). As our research demonstrates, *Harpoon of the Hunter* was widely received and in fact remains the all-time bestseller for McGill-Queen's University Press; Markoosie had every reason to be proud of its success. There is also much to admire in Ego's translation from English into French (Chartier 2011), and we find it regrettable that the edition in which it appears was withdrawn from publication a year ago. Let us be clear: there is nothing whatsoever wrong with working from that English version: indirect translations are commonplace with languages of lesser diffusion; it is moreover a fascinating document in and of itself. However, the relationship of any translation or adaptation to its source text must be made explicit and treated with critical awareness of how much may separate it from the original; proper consideration of the specific brief and context behind production of any version is essential. And aside from stipulating that one character's name should

read Putukti rather than Liisi (a change that had been made in the 1970 adaptation), Markoosie was happy for us to work from his original Inuktitut manuscript as it stands.

Our book aims in part to clear up some badly muddied waters. That 2011 edition is to be commended for having wanted to ensure readers had Markoosie’s Inuktitut text in hand, but the fact that it is presented as a “bilingual Inuktitut-French” edition when the source text was instead the very different English version is simply incomprehensible. As we have proven decisively (Patsauq 2021, 234–246, 250–254), there is no direct link between the Inuktitut text and the French translation packaged with it. This comprises a hugely problematic (even deceptive) choice on the part of its editor, Daniel Chartier. Who has actually done what in terms of translation throughout that edition is never made at all clear—the invention of a brand-new title for the Inuktitut, back-translated from the English, passes without comment, for example.

There were, clearly, compelling reasons to critically analyse that Inuktitut original, explore credible reasons for translation choices made therefrom, and take it seriously as a literary work in its own right, rather than (as has hitherto been the case) to rely solely on the more accessible version produced in the dominant language. When speaking in Inuktitut about how his famous story came to be in English, Markoosie systematically uses the verbal base *aarqik-*, literally meaning to put in order or straighten out (as in dogsled lines), rather than any more typical formulation. In a recording made on 9 April 2017, Markoosie comments “apirsulilaurmata: qallunaatitut aarqigunnapigit?”, namely: “they started asking: [your Inuktitut writings,] can you arrange them in the way of the Whites [i.e. in English]?” (Patsauq 2021, 222, 271–272). As demonstrated in our comparative analysis of the source with the English target text (Patsauq 2021, 227–246), the result is more accurately described as an adaptation—both content and form have been significantly altered, a new scene has been added, the overall tone is quite different. Evidence

to support our hypothesis regarding the interventions of a range of stakeholders (especially editor James H. McNeil, himself a prize-winning children's author as well as the bureaucrat tasked with developing a body of Inuit literature—many syntactical echoes of his own writing appear in the adaptation), along with the political and cultural institutions involved, is provided there and elsewhere (Henitiuk and Mahieu 2022). Admittedly, “[a]n editorial relationship is a private one, and nobody can see it fully and completely” (Gary Fisketjon, cited in Armitage 2007), but our reading has been deemed “highly plausible” by a leading Inuit Studies expert (Dorais 2022, 573). We detail how, and why, the self-translation was significantly rewritten to appeal to a mainstream, English-speaking readership, regretting that to date this had entirely elided Markoosie's original conception of his story (very much written for his fellow Inuit), to the detriment of a fuller understanding of his story and authorship. Canada's first Indigenous Governor General, fluently bilingual in Inuktitut and English, graciously provided a foreword to the trade editions, lauding the attention finally being paid to Markoosie's original conception of his story. The Right Honourable Mary Simon, appointed in 2021, had met Markoosie in 1993 when chairing the royal commission into the High Arctic Relocations, where he appeared as a key witness in his capacity as community leader (she was also the featured speaker at our book launch hosted by the Sentinelle Nord research chair on relations with Inuit societies, Université Laval).

In an email dated 5 September 2015, Ego notes that Markoosie “était très difficile à joindre à ce moment-là [was very difficult to reach at that time]” and that she made certain translation choices in consultation with Chartier alone, “surtout, parce qu'il [Markoosie] ne parl[ait] pas le français [especially as Markoosie did not speak French]” (cited in Henitiuk 2017, 59; note that Chartier, although a specialist in the “Inuit imaginary”, does not speak or read Inuktitut either). While there are undeniably very real obstacles to clear and sustained communication with those

who live in northern communities—like almost all scholars working with Inuit we have documented similar difficulties—, our work could not have been accomplished without Markoosie’s generous welcoming of Mahieu in Inukjuak, nor his willingness to work together with Mahieu on the Inuktitut manuscript.

In a lengthy introduction to that 2011 edition, Chartier comments several times on it being the first time Markoosie’s original text had ever been published in book form. (Note that the Inuktitut as published contains many errors.) Broad and often erroneous claims are made about Markoosie as an author, all based (without being so acknowledged) solely on the English adaptation. Its much-vaunted new introduction by the author comprises a total of 134 words in French—we say “in French”, because Markoosie’s own manuscript text, written in English, is not included, except in the form of a photographed excerpt only half that length (alongside an Inuktitut translation likely by Eva Aloupa-Pilurtoot); further, he is not cited elsewhere in Chartier’s introduction. The best that can be said about that bizarre edition is that it is naïve.

The overarching goal of our work with and on Markoosie Patsauq was from the start to celebrate his œuvre and create conditions under which more readers, both Inuit and non-Inuit, would gain access to his most famous story *as written for Inuit*. Relying solely on what is available in English or French necessarily leads to a very skewed idea of Inuit narratives and culture, doing a disservice to Inuit writers as a whole while impoverishing the scholarly record, and denies access to unique and valuable worldviews. It also has a detrimental effect on the development of Inuktitut as a literary language.

Greg Younging (2018) established a useful set of principles governing scholarly work on Indigenous texts, and Daniel Heath Justice has underscored the importance of an ethical relationship based on “respect, attentiveness, intellectual rigor, and no small amount of moral

courage” (2004, 9). Inspired by these and other Indigenous sources, our work has sought to counter a half-century of misleading representations, to expose readers and researchers to Markoosie Patsauq’s remarkably innovative text, and to avoid simply reproducing the colonizer–colonized relationship. It is high time to take seriously the first language of Inuit Canadians, and more broadly all Indigenous Canadians, paying both such languages and those who write in them the deep respect that they deserve.

### **New orientations**

Not every translator is going to master an Indigenous language, granted, and so it is worth highlighting two recent examples of how mediated translational approaches might be done successfully, both coincidentally dealing with texts authored by Innu, respectively in Quebec and Labrador. In 2020 Sarah Henzi published what is astoundingly the first English translation (Kapesh 2020) of An Antane Kapesh’s seminal protest text, originally published in 1976 in a bilingual Innu-aimun/French edition. Henzi worked in consultation with the original translator (Innu linguist José Mailhot). Her English rendition is published alongside Kapesh’s Innu-language originals (a language Henzi neither speaks nor reads), but with paratextual material that provides conscientious explanations about the process and the strategies employed; she also takes steps to ensure the Indigenous perspective takes precedence over the “White voice”. Elizabeth Yeoman likewise does not speak the language of her source text, by land-protector Tshaukuesh Elizabeth Penashue. Over a period of several years Yeoman nonetheless worked intimately with the author and her decades worth of notes, as well as from excerpts previously translated directly from Innu-aimun, to craft an English version (Penashue 2019). Extensive information on how author and translator constructively collaborated is provided in a full separate volume (Yeoman 2022).

It is also worthwhile to point to some strategies being employed by contemporary Inuit authors themselves, including those who write predominantly in English. While stories and poems have for decades been read almost exclusively through mediators, from Knud Rasmussen to Farley Mowat, a new generation of Inuit are gaining direct access to a wide audience. For example, Norma Dunning (see, e.g., Dunning 2017), winner of the 2022 Governor-General’s Award for Literature, makes deliberate use of a range of Inuktitut vocabulary in her hard-hitting poetry and prose. Throat singer and author Tanya Tagaq included an Inuktitut passage in *Split Tooth* (2018), without providing any translation to appease unilingual readers. Taqralik Partridge, who also writes in English, has chosen to commission translations into Inuktitut of two poems in her recent, partly trilingual collection, *curved against the hull of a peterhead* (Partridge 2021), and to highlight these in very particular ways (for details, see Henitiuk and Mahieu 2023). Throat singer, seamstress, and educator Evie Mark has published a book (2017) underscoring the value of not only what Inuit elders have to teach re: traditional practices, but also the language in which they can teach it; Mark gives no quarter to a potential settler readership—her book, being entirely in Inuktitut syllabics, is explicitly intended for Inuit.

This Forum provocation derives in part from one that asked “who may translate whom?” (Susam-Saraeva 2021), and we appreciate the opportunity to expand on our initial response to Şebnem Susam-Saraeva’s thought-provoking prompt (Henitiuk and Mahieu 2021). We have here sought more fully to describe the current state of research into Inuktitut literary production and translation while detailing the main issues and challenges of Indigenous translation more broadly. We welcome responses from scholars working in and with any Indigenous language who, by adding their critical perspectives, will help further problematize and bring clarity to this vital topic.

## References

- Armitage, Simon. 2007. "Rough Crossings. The Cutting of Raymond Carver." *New Yorker*. 17 December.
- <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2007/12/24/rough-crossings>
- Boéri, Julie and Carol C. Maier, ed. 2010. *Compromiso social y traducción/interpretación— Translation/Interpreting and Social Activism*. Granada: ECOS.
- Chartier, Daniel, ed. 2011. *Le harpon du chasseur*. By Markoosie. Translated from the English by Catherine Ego. Québec: Presses universitaires du Québec.
- Dorais, Louis-Jacques. 2015. "Tusaaji Tusilaartuq: When the Translator Must be Hard of Hearing." *Tusaaji* 4 (4): 30–42.
- Dorais, Louis-Jacques. 2022. Review of *Uumajursiutik unaatuinnamut. Hunter with Harpoon. Chasseur au harpon*. By Markoosie Patsauq. Edited and translated by Valerie Henitiuk and Marc-Antoine Mahieu. *International Journal of American Linguistics* 88 (4): 573–575.
- Dunning, Norma. 2017. *Annie Muktuk and Other Stories*. Edmonton: University of Alberta Press.
- Ego, Catherine. 2021. "Réplique: les traductions françaises de Markoosie." *Trahir*, 2 February 2021.
- <https://trahir.wordpress.com/2021/02/22/ego-markoosie/>
- Grove, Arnaq. 2004. "Media Language in Modern Greenland." Presentation delivered at INALCO, Paris, France (9 December 2004).
- Grove, Arnaq. 2015. "Language changes in Greenlandic." Presentation delivered at INALCO, Paris, France (9 January 2015).
- Henitiuk, Valerie. 2017. "Of Breathing Holes and Contact Zones: Inuit-Canadian Writer Markoosie in and through Translation." *Target* 29 (1): 39–63.



- Henitiuk, Valerie and Marc-Antoine Mahieu. 2021. "Response by Henitiuk and Mahieu to 'Representing experiential knowledge'." *Translation Studies* 14 (1): 99–104.
- Henitiuk, Valerie and Marc-Antoine Mahieu. 2022. "Who Will Write for the Inuit? Cultural Policy, Inuktitut Translation, and the First Indigenous Novel Ever Published in Canada." *Tusaaji: A Translation Review* 8 (1): 20–41.
- Henitiuk, Valerie and Marc-Antoine Mahieu. 2023. "A Healing Curve: The Poetry of Taqralik Partridge in Inuktitut Translation." *Meta* 67 (2): 321–336.
- Justice, Daniel Heath. 2004. "Conjuring Marks: Furthering Indigenous Empowerment through Literature." *The American Indian Quarterly* 28 (1/2): 3–11.
- Kapesh, An Antane. 2020. *Eukuan nin matshi-manitu innushkueu = I am a damn savage; Tanite nene etutamin nitassi? = What have you done to my country?* Translation and Afterword by Sarah Henzi. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press.
- Krause, Corinna. 2013. "'Why Bother with the Original?': Self-translation and Scottish Gaelic Poetry." In *Self-Translation: Brokering Originality in Hybrid Culture*, edited by Anthony Cordingley, 127–140. London: Bloomsbury.
- Langgård, Karen, and Kirsten Thisted. 2011. *From Oral Tradition to Rap, Literatures of the Polar North*. Nuuk: Ilisimatusarfik/Forlaget Atuagkat.
- Londoño, Vanessa. 2016. "Why a Quechua Novelist Doesn't Want His Work Translated." *Americas Quarterly* (October 5).  
<https://americasquarterly.org/fulltextarticle/why-a-quechua-novelist-doesnt-want-his-work-translated/>

- Major, Mélissa. 2023. Review of *Uumajursiutik unaatuinnamut. Hunter with Harpoon. Chasseur au harpon*. By Markoosie Patsauq. Edited and translated by Valerie Henitiuk and Marc-Antoine Mahieu. *Translation Studies* 16 (1): 162–165.
- Mark, Evie. 2017. ᐃᓴᓐᓇᓴᓴᓴᓴᓴᓴᓴ. Kuujjuaq: Kativik School Board.
- Nappaaluk, Mitiarjuk. 1984. *Sanaaq. Sanaakut Piusiviningita Unikkausinnguangat. Mitiarjuup Allatangit*, edited by Bernard Saladin d'Anglure. Quebec City: Association Inuksiutiit Katimajit.
- Nappaaluk, Mitiarjuk. 2014. *Sanaaq: An Inuit Novel*, translated from Inuktitut to French by Bernard Saladin d'Anglure and from French by Peter Frost. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press.
- Partridge, Taqralik. 2020. *curved against the hull of a peterhead*. Guelph: PS Guelph.
- Patrick, Donna, Kumiko Murasugi and Jeela Palluq-Cloutier. 2018. "Standardization of Inuit Languages in Canada." In *Standardizing Minority Languages: Competing Ideologies of Authority and Authenticity in the Global Periphery*, edited by Pia Lane, James Costa and Haley De Korne, 135–153. New York: Routledge.
- Patsauq, Markoosie. 1970. *Harpoon of the Hunter*. Illustrated by Germaine Arnaktauyok, edited by James H. McNeill. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Patsauq, Markoosie. 2021. ᐃᓴᓐᓇᓴᓴᓴᓴᓴᓴᓴ ᐃᓴᓐᓇᓴᓴᓴᓴᓴᓴᓴᓴ, ᐃᓴᓐᓇᓴᓴᓴᓴᓴᓴᓴᓴ ᐃᓴᓐᓇᓴᓴᓴᓴᓴᓴᓴᓴᓴ/Uumajursiutik unaatuinnamut, *Maakusiup unikkaatuangit /Hunter with Harpoon/Chasseur au harpon*. Edited, translated and with a critical framing by Valerie Henitiuk and Marc-Antoine Mahieu. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Penashue, Tshaukuesh Elizabeth. 2019. *Nitinikkiau Innusi. I Keep the Land Alive*. Edited by Elizabeth Yeoman. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press.

- Rafael, Vicente L. 2015. "Betraying Empire: Translation and the Ideology of Conquest." *Translation Studies* 8 (1): 82–93.
- Rivet, France. 2014. *In the Footsteps of Abraham Ulrikab: The Events of 1880–1881*. Gatineau: Horizons polaires.
- Rio, Marie-Noël. 2021. "Une épopée nue." Review of *Kamik*. By Markoosie Patsauq. *Le Monde diplomatique*. May 2021: 24.  
<https://www.monde-diplomatique.fr/2021/05/RIO/63043>
- Shamma, Tarek. 2020. "Conquest." In *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*, third edition, edited by Mona Baker and Gabriela Saldanha, 101–105. London: Routledge.
- Susam-Saraeva, Şebnem. 2021. "Representing Experiential Knowledge: Who May Translate Whom?" *Translation Studies* 14 (1): 84–95.
- Swann, Brian, ed. 2011. *Born in the Blood: On Native American Translation*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Tagaq, Tanya. 2018. *Split Tooth*. Toronto: Viking.
- Thiessen, Mark. 2023. Translator fired after FEMA sends gibberish translations for Alaskan typhoon relief. *Globe and Mail*. 13 January.  
<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/world/article-translator-fired-after-fema-sends-gibberish-translations-for-alaskan>
- Yeoman, Elizabeth. 2022. *Exactly What I Said: Translating Words and Worlds*. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press.
- Younging, Gregory. 2018. *Elements of Indigenous Style: A Guide for Writing by and about Indigenous Peoples*. Edmonton: Brush Education.

## Notes

---

<sup>1</sup> To give an example from a polysynthetic language such as Inuktitut, where words function more like sentences do in Western languages: in Markoosie's *Uumajursiutik unaatuinnamut*, a full 88% of the words appear only once.

<sup>2</sup> This holds true with many minority languages; see, e.g., Krause 2013; Londoño 2016.

<sup>3</sup> Ida Saunders, a Kuujjuaq-based translator and interpreter, for example, employs thoughtful, creative strategies in her translation of a poem by Taqralik Partridge. For a detailed examination, see Henitiuk and Mahieu 2023.

<sup>4</sup> A 1993 issue of *Meta* dedicated to translating and interpreting in Canada's north contains a few articles dealing with Inuit languages, mostly in the medical and legal fields. A 2016 MA thesis by Noelle Palmer explores translation's role in linguistic standardization of Inuit languages. Louis-Jacques Dorais has also published articles such as "Tusaaji tusilaartuq: When the translator must be hard of hearing" (2015). Not specifically informed by translation studies, but a useful introduction to the corpus is Noel McDermott's "Canadian Literature in Inuktitut" (in Langgård and Thisted 2011, 223–244).

<sup>5</sup> In 2010, the Presses de l'Université du Québec (collection Jardin de Givre) republished a translation of the autobiography of Taamusi Qumaq, originally appearing in the magazine *Tumivut*, without any problematizing of the fact that the name(s) of the translator(s) are not mentioned and probably not even known. The website Inuit Literature, under the responsibility of the director of Jardin de Givre, nonetheless claims that this text is "considered the most important literary text of Nunavik".

<sup>6</sup> This paragraph is drawn from Henitiuk and Mahieu 2022.

<sup>7</sup> First introduced at the Nunavut Legislative Assembly in 2007 to designate the language of the Inuit as spoken in Nunavut (including the main language groups of Inuktitut and Inuinnaqtun), the term "Inuktitut" is increasingly used to encompass all Inuit dialects found within Canada (including each different variety of Inuktitut, Inuinnaqtun and Inuvialuktun). Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami passed a resolution adopting this term in April 2016 (Patrick, Murasugi and Palluq-Cloutier 2018, 150).

<sup>8</sup> Western literary genres do not of course map easily onto Inuit stories and song, which have their own generic categories.

<sup>9</sup> *Sanaaq* was written in the 1950s/60s but published in Inuktitut only in 1984, with a French translation by anthropologist Bernard Saladin d'Anglure appearing in 2002. In the published English translation (based on the French; Nappaaluk 2014, 26), this passage reads: "The Qallunaat had come to visit. Once they were ashore, Aqiarulaaq shouted to the Big Eyebrows, "Ai!" They failed to understand, not making the slightest response. They began to talk among themselves. The Inuit were astonished to hear them speak [...]"

<sup>10</sup> <https://apnews.com/article/fema-alaskan-native-wrong-translations-707ab611f0d171ae2e34fc3f284454a7?fbclid=IwAR048KzwHs2mDagi2wt-kzAgAyY2p8EL88HApJsidW-5Bu-Og4tfMG9eKy4>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=grA5XmBRC6g>

<sup>12</sup> Major herself reads no Indigenous languages – fair enough, the doctoral dissertation on which she is working concerns the translation into French of exclusively English-language Indigenous texts. For a different evaluation of our book by someone familiar with Inuit languages and communities, see Dorais 2022.

<sup>13</sup> The aim here is not to provide a detailed rebuttal of Major's review, including alleged discrepancies between our French and English translations. Suffice it to say that her claim regarding unidiomatic French would surprise Zola, Gide, Aragon, and Derrida, to name just a few canonical authors who have used the construction cited as erroneous.

<sup>14</sup> A Truth and Reconciliation Commission was active 2008–2015, addressing the trauma of residential schools for Indigenous children.

<sup>15</sup> A SSHRC-funded project led by Keavy Martin and Julie Rak (co-editors of a 2015 edition of Mini Aodla Freeman's autobiography that reinserts material excised, against the author's wishes, from the first edition published in 1978), "Government Agents, Literary Agents: Inuit Books and Government Intervention, 1968-1985", set out a few years ago to examine how the work of the Social and Cultural Division of the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs

---

"shape[d] the publication and circulation" of Inuit writing particularly in the 1970s and to answer the question: "how does this affect what is known about Inuit writing right now?"

(See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GOgy4EZnPEE> for a brief presentation.)

<sup>16</sup> Despite the limited corpus in Nunavimmiutitut, there is much work here for both translators and translation studies scholars, especially the younger generation, especially Inuit, should they wish to take up the baton.

<sup>17</sup> See Rivet 2014; the Facebook page can be found under the book's title. The Abraham Ulrikab diary (translated into German by Moravian missionary Carl Gottlieb Kretschmer) is an important Inuit text where the original is now considered lost; another example of a missing original is *Moi, Nuligak/I, Nuligak* (translated into both French and English by Father Maurice Métayer).