



# Raven, Dog, Human: Inhuman Colonialism and Unsettling Cosmologies

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**ABSTRACT** As capitalism's unintended, and often unacknowledged, fallout, humans have developed sophisticated technologies to squirrel away our discards: waste is buried, burned, gasified, thrown into the ocean, and otherwise kept out-of-sight and out-of-mind. Some inhuman animals seek out and uncover our wastes. These 'trash animals' choke on, eat, defecate, are contaminated with, play games with, have sex on, and otherwise live out their lives on and in our formal and informal dumpsites. In southern Canada's sanitary landfills, waste management typically adopts a 'zero tolerance' approach to trash animals. These culturally sanctioned (and publicly funded) facilities practice diverse methods of 'vermin control.' By contrast, within Inuit communities of the Eastern Canadian Arctic, ravens eat, play, and rest on open dumps by the thousands. In this article, we explore the ways in which western and Inuit cosmologies differentially inform particular relationships with the inhuman, and 'trash animals' in particular. We argue that waste and wasting exist within a complex set of historically embedded and contemporaneously contested neo-colonial structures and processes. Canada's North, we argue, is a site where differing cosmologies variously collide, intertwine, operate in parallel, or speak past each other in ways that often marginalize Inuit and other indigenous ways of knowing and being. Inheriting waste is more than just a relay of potentially indestructible waste materials from past to present to future: through waste, we bequeath a set of politically, historically, and materially constituted relations, structures, norms, and practices with which future generations must engage.

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## Introduction

As capitalism's unintended, and often unacknowledged, fallout, humans have developed sophisticated technologies to squirrel away our discards: waste is buried, burned, gasified, thrown into the ocean, or otherwise kept out-of-sight and out-of-mind.<sup>1</sup> Despite efforts to

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<sup>1</sup> Waste studies scholars distinguish between terms such as waste, trash, discards, garbage and so on, and use them differently in different contexts. See, for example, Gay Hawkins, *The Ethics of Waste: How We Relate to Rubbish* (London: Rowman and Littlefield, 2006) and Zsuzsa Gille, *From the Cult of Waste to the Trash Heap of History: The Politics of Waste in Socialist and Postsocialist Hungary*. (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2007). Here we use the terms synonymously. For further

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disgorge ourselves of waste, millions of people live with, and on, consumption's cast-offs.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, an undocumented number of 'trash animals'—gulls, ravens, pigeons, raccoons, rats, mice, dogs, polar bears and so on—eat, defecate, play games with, have sex on, and otherwise live out their lives in our dumpsites.<sup>3</sup> Culturally sanctioned and publicly funded modern facilities in southern parts of Canada practice diverse methods of 'vermin control,' legitimated within discourses of public hygiene and safety.<sup>4</sup>

In the Eastern Canadian Arctic, waste and wasting exists within a complex set of historically embedded and contemporaneously contested neo-colonial regulations, policies, and formal and informal practices. Within Inuit communities of Canada's North, ravens rest on open dumps by the thousands, and sick polar bears may be killed out of respect. In this article, we reflect upon why animals are 'managed' at modern landfills sites across southern Canada, and left to scavenge on open dumps sites in northern Canada. It is not, we will argue, simply a matter of modern versus outdated waste disposal technologies and practices—although this is a central way in which waste issues in the North are framed by government officials and the media. We will explore the ways in which historically and culturally embedded practices inform particular relationships with the inhuman.<sup>5</sup> Canada's North, we argue, is a site where differing cosmologies variously collide, intertwine, operate in parallel, or speak past each other in ways that often marginalize Inuit ways of knowing and being with animals and landscape.<sup>6</sup> In this article, we examine how encounters with the inhuman have been, and continue to be,

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discussion see Myra J. Hird, "Knowing Waste: Toward an Inhuman Epistemology," *Social Epistemology* 26, no.3-4 (2012): 453-469; and Myra J. Hird "Is Waste Indeterminacy Useful? A response to Zsuzsa Gille's," *Social Epistemology* 2, no.6 (2013): 28-33.

<sup>2</sup> Mike Davis, *Planet of Slums* (New York: Verso, 2006), 124.

<sup>3</sup> Kelsi Nagy and Phillip David Johnston III, eds., *Trash Animals: How We Live with Nature's Filthy, Feral, Invasive, and Unwanted Species* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013). This collection of essays written by scholars, artists, and journalists examines what it means to live with those inhuman urban companions that are often associated with 'trash.' Animals written about in this collection include magpies, pigeons, starlings, prairie dogs, coyotes, and more.

<sup>4</sup> Kelsi Nagy and Phillip David Johnston III, "Introduction" in *Trash Animals*, ed. Nagy and Johnston III, 3-8.

<sup>5</sup> We use the term 'inhuman' to refer to living and nonliving entities that are not included in the species *Homo sapiens*, and to emphasize that the classification itself is an evolutionary creation of an unfathomable diversity and population of microorganisms that literally make up 'the human.' Furthermore, doing so is more in line with Inuit and other Indigenous cosmologies, which readily challenge the human/nonhuman binary. For detailed discussion see Myra J. Hird, "In/Human Waste Environments," *GLQ* 21, nos.2-3 (2005): 213-215; Myra J. Hird "Meeting with the Microcosmos," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 28 (2010): 36-39; and Myra J. Hird *The Origins of Sociable Life: Evolution After Science Studies* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Press, 2009).

<sup>6</sup> This paper is primarily based on archival analysis involving government documents, media, and academic literature. Our research is also informed by participant observation and semi-structured interviews that were conducted in Iqaluit over a three month period in 2014. This research was generously funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada Insight Grant program. Details concerning the theoretical framework and methodological practices are beyond the scope of this article but are included in Alexander R. D. Zahara, "The Governance of Waste in Iqaluit, Nunavut" (MES Thesis, Queen's University, 2015).

integral facets of the northern Canadian colonial project. We begin with a short history of Inuit culture prior to colonial contact, and the profound changes that took place as Canada, the United States, and other nations claimed increasing trade, resource, military, and sovereign interests. We argue that the pursuant historical and contemporary record of managing Inuit peoples, animals, and the northern landscape, is a direct outcome of the anthropocentric neoliberal capitalist venture that forefronts Canadian state sovereignty.<sup>7</sup> This mapping of capitalist venture and neocolonial governance is followed by a discussion of the burgeoning interest in those inhuman creatures who survive through relations with human debris. This literature points to the complex and often contradictory Western understandings of animals as ‘companion species,’<sup>8</sup> whose lives are variously cherished, pampered, used as labor, abused, discarded, and killed.

Our attention then turns to two particular animals—ravens and sled dogs—whose iconic presence in the North of Canada exemplifies the complex and often contradictory understandings of the inhuman within this particular neo-colonial landscape. Ravens and sled dogs feature in Inuit cosmology, hunting, and culture, and both have endured—however tentatively—a rapidly and profoundly changing status in Canada’s North. This change has occurred, in part, because waste and its inhuman associates are ‘othered’ within neo-colonial governance practices. Across Nunavut,<sup>9</sup> this has contributed to the displacement of ravens as Creator to nuisance pests scavenging from open dumpsites, and the killing of thousands of Inuit sled dogs, whose deaths have forever changed the way Inuit experience human/nature relations. Using the Canadian North as a case study, we explore the ways in which waste and associations with waste inform the neo-colonial present. We argue that inheriting waste is more than just a relay of potentially indestructible waste materials from past to present to future: through waste, we bequeath a set of politically, historically, and materially constituted relations, structures, norms, and practices with which future generations must engage.

### **‘Trash Animals’ and the North**

As Donna Haraway’s path-breaking work argues, capitalism’s technoculture structures particular relationships with the inhuman. From agility training, medical and hygiene practices, to the selection of financially lucrative genes, we encounter our inhuman companions as “lively capital.”<sup>10</sup> Even shepherding and livestock dogs, whose companionship—both as laborers and as family members—has historically been requisite for the survival of many

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<sup>7</sup> Throughout the article, we refer to ‘southern’ and ‘northern’ as political designations. Southern refers to regulations, policies and practices associated with so-called modern waste management that developed within the context of a neo-colonial capitalist framework. The differentiation roughly corresponds to a dichotomy between landfills and other waste management practices found in southern Canadian urban centres, and so-called pre-modern open dumping consistently found in Canada’s Nunavut territory. This designation does not obviate the fact that Indigenous peoples live in southern communities, nor is it meant to deny the fact that colonial legacies exist in southern Canadian communities.

<sup>8</sup> Donna Haraway, *When Species Meet* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 16.

<sup>9</sup> Nunavut, meaning ‘our land’ in Inuktitut, was created in 1999 through the Nunavut Act and the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement, and is Canada’s youngest, most northern, and least populated territory.

<sup>10</sup> Haraway, *When Species Meet*, 45.

humans, developed over centuries of capitalism within the context of both nomadic and sedentary human livelihoods.

Some of our urban companion species have adapted to our capitalist lifestyles not at the point of production and consumption, but at the point of disposal. And somewhere between consumption and disposal, there is a normative shift in our encounters with animals. Combining waste and animal studies, a number of scholars examine the treatment of human and inhuman urban ‘scavengers.’ Kelsey Nagy and Phillip David Johnson observe that “trash is not just the material stuff we throw away, but a classification that defines for us the ways we understand and act toward certain inanimate and animate objects.”<sup>11</sup> ‘Trash animals’, as Nagy and Johnson argue, are despised, feared and mocked—they have become a “disgusting ‘other’ in our anthropocentric fantasies of existence.”<sup>12</sup>

Postcolonial studies, waste studies, and critical animal studies have begun to explore the ways in which humans and animals are depicted through their associations with garbage. Postcolonial theorists, for instance, have examined how waste contributes to the ‘othering’ of marginalized groups. Colonialism in Canada and elsewhere has long associated Indigeneity with waste, not least as a way of justifying colonial structures and practices of subjugation. This often occurred under the pretense of safety or civility—or what Marie Lathers refers to as “management of the abject.”<sup>13</sup> Warwick Anderson’s discussion of fecal waste in the Philippines, for example, notes that American colonizers assumed responsibility for ending Philippine people’s “promiscuous defecation.”<sup>14</sup> The practice of teaching the colonial subject Western notions of hygiene, is rooted, as Kay Anderson argues, in the Judeo-Christian idea of humans transcending “the so-called ‘bestial’ *within*.”<sup>15</sup> Unlike animals—who, within an anthropocentric epistemology, are confined to their biology—humans, with their capacity for reason should ‘overcome nature’ by suppressing their bodily functions and otherwise hiding their wastes. More than anything, the problem with ‘dirty’ Filipino bodies was that they prevented American colonizers from eschewing the nature of their own bodies; the settlers were forced to recognize that they themselves were privy to the human/animal corporeal abject. In the colonial tradition that considers Indigenous wastes as ‘uncivilized’ and “a problem to be solved,”<sup>16</sup> the association of Inuit with waste both prompted and justified many assimilative government policies and practices.<sup>17</sup> In the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, teaching Inuit how to properly interact with waste—to excrete indoors, to avoid dirt, to eat using dishes and utensils—was a priority for the

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<sup>11</sup> Nagy and Johnson, *Trash Animals*, 5.

<sup>12</sup> Randy Malamud, “Foreword,” in *Trash Animals*, ix.

<sup>13</sup> Marie Lathers, “Towards an Excremental Posthumanism: Primatology, Women, and Waste,” *Society & Animals* 14, no. 4 (2006): 419.

<sup>14</sup> Warwick Anderson, “Excremental Colonialism,” *Critical Inquiry* 21, no.3, Spring (1995): 642.

Anderson is citing Dr. Thomas R. Marshall, “Asiatic Cholera in the Philippine Islands” (1904).

<sup>15</sup> Kay Anderson, “‘The Beast Within’: Race, Humanity, and Animality,” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 18 (2000): 4. Original emphasis.

<sup>16</sup> Lathers, “Toward an Excremental Posthumanism,” 419.

<sup>17</sup> See also Myra J. Hird and Alexander R.D. Zahara, “The Arctic Wastes,” in *Anthropocene Feminism*, ed. Richard Grusin (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, forthcoming).

Canadian federal government.<sup>18</sup> In the late 1950s, for instance, when the Distant Early Warning Line (DEW Line) radar stations were being constructed by the Canadian military, nomadic Inuit families camped near DEW Line dumps to scavenge discarded food and other reusable materials. Inuit caught scavenging at the dump were described by Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) as “bums and useless.”<sup>19</sup> RCMP and DEW Line operators, who considered the Inuit practice of scavenging offensive, responded by burning their food waste rather than allowing Inuit to feed their families.

Indigenous studies scholars in the field of critical animal studies have examined how Western understandings of nature mix uneasily with Indigenous cosmologies. Within Inuit cosmology, the environment has *anirniq*—‘breath’ or ‘spirits.’<sup>20</sup> According to this cosmology, Inuit hunters must follow a series of rules and modes of conduct made known to them through shamen, and passed vertically through generations of practice and storytelling.<sup>21</sup> If these rules are followed, eventually an animal will allow itself to be killed, its *anirniq* will pass on to another animal, and nature will be respected.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, Inuit cosmology recognizes that, while Inuit lives are entirely dependent on the land (*nuna*) for survival, that *nuna*—along with the life and breath that it supports—continues to exist with or without Inuit.<sup>23</sup> Inuit cosmology also implicitly recognizes that one can never fully know nature. For Inuit, being confident in one’s relationship with the landscape is considered hubristic, dangerous, and counter to the understanding of *Nalunaktuq*—nature’s unpredictability.<sup>24</sup> As Emilie Cameron and others point out, “uncertainty, unpredictability, and change”<sup>25</sup> are foundational to Inuit understandings of, and relationships with, nature.

What was for Inuit simply “a default to universal order” was for settlers, unadulterated “chaos.”<sup>26</sup> When Christian missionaries and explorers arrived in the North, they brought with them an entirely different understanding of nature. The reciprocity between Inuit and the nonhuman embedded within Inuit traditions was all but entirely superseded by southern Canadians whose religion, culture, and identity were maintained through an anthropocentric

<sup>18</sup> See numerous examples in Phyllis Harrison. *Q-Book: Qaujivaallirutissat* (Ottawa, ON, Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources, 1964), 64.

<sup>19</sup> QTC, *Community Histories 1950-1975* (Iqaluit, NU: Qikiqtani Inuit Association, 2013), 165.

<sup>20</sup> Rachel A. Qitsualik, “Innummarik: Self- Sovereignty in Classic Inuit Thought,” in *Nilliajut: Inuit Perspectives on Security, Patriotism and Sovereignty*, ed. Scot Nickels, Karen Kelley, Carrie Grable, Martin Loughheed, and James Kuptana (Ottawa: Inuit Tapiriit kanatami, 2013), 29.

<sup>21</sup> Dominique Henri, “Managing Nature, Producing Cultures: Inuit Participation, Science and Policy in Wildlife Governance in the Nunavut Territory, Canada” (D.Phil Thesis, Oxford University, 2012) 169-170.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 169-170.

<sup>23</sup> This is not to say that Inuit believed they did not impact nature; indeed, even talking about polar bears is considered to impact polar bear migration patterns (see Henri, “Managing Nature,” 190-199.). What we mean is that nature was always understood as having the ability to act outside of Inuit control. If Inuit were gone, nature would simply act differently.

<sup>24</sup> Qitsualik, “Innummarik,” 27.

<sup>25</sup> Emilie Cameron, Rebecca Mearns, and Janet Tamalik McGrath, “Translating Climate Change: Adaptation, Resilience and Climate Politics in Nunavut, Canada,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 105, no.1 (2015): 5.

<sup>26</sup> Qitsualik, “Innummarik,” 28.

pretense of independence from nature.<sup>27</sup> In the first instance, missionaries taught Inuit that only humans have souls, and that God decreed humans' preeminence: "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth."<sup>28</sup> Colonial settlers considered it their right and responsibility to dominate the environment; it was to be made 'disciplined,' 'tidy' and 'orderly.'<sup>29</sup>

In Nunavut today, enduring colonial practices mix uneasily with Inuit cosmology and traditions. That is, disparate ideas of the relationship between humans, animals, and environment come to a head, often in controversies over hunting.<sup>30</sup> These controversies are predicated on fundamentally different understandings of relations between humans and animals. For example, in 2007, Matt Rice, the anti-sealing campaign coordinator of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) wrote to Iqaluit City Council asking the City to lower its Canadian flag to half mast as a way of mourning the seals killed in the community's annual seal hunt. When City Council rejected the proposal, he told *Nunatsiaq News* that PETA considers the sale of seal pelts "a matter of waste and extreme cruelty."<sup>31</sup> Similarly, the European Union has banned the commercial use and import of all seal skins and seal products, stating concerns about "animal welfare."<sup>32</sup> These events follow the Greenpeace-supported ban on sealing in 1976, which contributed to mass Inuit food insecurity and poverty in the 1980s and 1990s. More recently, comedian and talk show host Ellen DeGeneres urged her fans to sign a petition condemning the seal hunt and to tell Canadians (i.e. Inuit) that "killing innocent animals is wrong."<sup>33</sup> Inuit responded with a 'sealfie' movement, taking pictures of themselves next to dead seals, seal fur, or seal meat and sending these pictures via social media to the Ellen show.<sup>34</sup> When Inuit throat singer and activist, Tanya Tagaq tagged a picture of her baby next to a dead seal using the 'sealfie' hashtag, she received death threats from animal rights

<sup>27</sup> Qitsualik, "Innummarik," 32.

<sup>28</sup> King James Bible, Genesis, 1:26.

<sup>29</sup> Qitsualik, "Innummarik," 27.

<sup>30</sup> While non-Inuit may differentiate between subsistence hunting and trophy hunting, for many Inuit the relationship is more complex. As well as engaging in regulated subsistence hunting, some Inuit engage in southern Canadian—and foreign—initiated trophy hunting because it provides vital employment for Inuit, and the meat is given to the community. Unemployment and food insecurity are profound issues in the North. Inuit people repeatedly point out that they rely on country food in order to feed their families because the cost of southern Canadian food is both prohibitive and of little nutritional value.

<sup>31</sup> Chris Windeyer, "Councillors have Good Laugh over PETA Request," *Nunatsiaq News*, 27 April 2007, accessed 10 February 2015, [http://www.nunatsiaqonline.ca/archives/2007/704/70427/news/iqaluit/70427\\_78.html](http://www.nunatsiaqonline.ca/archives/2007/704/70427/news/iqaluit/70427_78.html).

<sup>32</sup> European Commission, "Trade in Seal Products," accessed 10 February 2015, [http://ec.europa.eu/environment/biodiversity/animal\\_welfare/seals/seal\\_hunting.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/biodiversity/animal_welfare/seals/seal_hunting.htm).

<sup>33</sup> Ellen TV, "Stop Seal Hunting in Canada Now," accessed 10 February 2015, <http://www.ellentv.com/2011/04/06/stop-seal-hunting-in-canada-now/>.

<sup>34</sup> John Bowman, "#Sealfie: Northerners Respond to Ellen's Seal Hunt Views with Fur Photos," *CBC News*, 28 March 2014, accessed 10 February 2015 <http://www.cbc.ca/newsblogs/yourcommunity/2014/03/sealfie-northerners-respond-to-ellens-seal-hunt-views-with-fur-photos.html>.

activists. For Tagaq, the photo was meant to convey an acknowledgement of the relationship between Inuit and seal. As she explained, "One of the traditions is to melt snow in your mouth and then put it into the seal's mouth so their spirit isn't thirsty in the afterlife ... I put my baby there to show how peaceful it can be and how much you can respect the animal."<sup>35</sup> According to Tagaq and other Inuit, attempts to prevent Inuit hunting are "a mini version of colonialism" faced by Inuit today.<sup>36</sup> The Eurocentric blind spots embedded in anti-hunting campaigns exemplifies a paradox of modern Arctic sovereignty that is bequeathed through particular colonial traditions.<sup>37</sup> As Tagaq succinctly describes Inuit cosmology that does not separate animals, humans, and nature, "We're the same. We're flesh, we're meat, we're so stupid to think that we're not ... A wolf is not evil when it hunts a caribou."<sup>38</sup>

In the following section, we discuss two familiar 'trash animals'—ravens and gulls—that are differently 'managed' in northern dumps and southern landfill sites. We suggest that their management is informed by very different understandings of humans, trash, animals and

<sup>35</sup> John Freeman, "Breath Of The Inuit: Tanya Tagaq Interviewed," *The Quietus*, 28 January 2015, accessed 10 February 2015, <http://thequietus.com/articles/17065-tanya-tagaq-animism-interview>.

<sup>36</sup> Tanya Tagaq, "Eating Seal Meat is A Vital Part of Life in My Community," *Vice Munchies*, 23 October 2014, accessed 12 February 2015 <http://munchies.vice.com/articles/eating-seal-meat-is-a-vital-part-of-life-in-my-community>. Contrast Tagaq's explanation of Inuit becoming-with seals through the practice of hunting with non-Inuit anthropologist Rick De Vos's description of an interaction with Greenlandic Inuit people: "My comments to locals [Inuit] regarding my desire to see narwhal, beluga and walrus, generally led to exclamations and responses praising the deliciousness of these animals as food, with little understanding of my wanting to spend time with these animals without hunting and eating them." See De Vos, R. "Huskies and Hunters: Living and Dying in Arctic Greenland," in *Animal Death*, ed. E. Probyn-Rapsey and J. Johnston (Sydney University Press, 2013), 286. For an opposing view, in which Inuit comment on Qallunaat rudeness and colonial assumptions in encountering country food, see Warren Bernauer, *Uranium Mining, Primitive Accumulation and Resistance in Baker Lake, Nunavut: Recent Changes in Community Perspectives* (MA Thesis, University of Winnipeg, 2011). He writes, "While Inuit often offered me different types of country food like quak (frozen-raw meat) and nipko (dried caribou meat) they often reacted with surprise when I both agreed to try some and happily ate with them until my fill ... On one occasion, after seeing me eat a piece of quak, an Elder asked me, in a tone of voice that conveyed bitter sarcasm, "Now, are you going to go and vomit like all the other Qallunaat?" Later ... his wife commented to me that ... most Qallunaat would never try Inuit food and 'act like it's dirty meat' ... during my visit I had the opportunity to observe some Qallunaat sampling Inuit food. The event was marked with a great deal of fanfare (for example, giddily dancing around and giggling at the thought that they had just tried raw whale meat). Furthermore, rather than treating Inuit food as food that could be eaten as a meal, they limited themselves to just a small taste. It is not difficult to understand how this sort of reaction to something as natural to Inuit as eating would come across as hurtful and judgemental. ... there still seems to be a perception that Qallunaat in general view country food, as consumed by Inuit, as a bizarre and perhaps savage activity" (133-134). Within Inuit cosmology, hunting and respecting animals are not mutually exclusive, and meat garnered from hunting is neither dirty nor wasteful. See also Hugh Brody's detailed examination of the differences between hunter-gatherer and agricultural ways of living, the ascendancy of the latter, and its negative consequences for the survival of hunter-gatherer societies. Hugh Brody, *The Other Side of Eden* (Faber and Faber, 2001).

<sup>37</sup> Qitsualik, "Innummarik," 32.

<sup>38</sup> CBC Radio Q, "Tanya Tagaq Brings 'Animism' to Studio Q," accessed 10 February 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZuTlySph2w>.

nature. We discuss traditional Inuit relationships with animals, not as legends or myths (and therefore as points of erasure<sup>39</sup>), but as a way to more accurately represent how colonization was (and remains) experienced in Nunavut communities. From this analysis, we move to a discussion of sled dogs, and a particularly traumatic event in the history of colonial settlement in northern Canada made possible by the reconfiguration of these dogs as hazardous threat to be resolved through confinement, and extermination/wasting.

### **Gull, Tulugaq/Raven**

From late April through to the end of May, Yellowknife increases its living critter population substantially, as migratory birds including gulls, ravens, raptors, Sandhill cranes, and magpies flock to the Great Slave Lake region to construct nests, lay and incubate eggs, care for their offspring, and then help their young to leave the nest in a process ornithologists and bird enthusiasts know as ‘fledging.’ Yellowknife is the capital and largest community in Canada’s Northwest Territories and as small as it is (the population hovers under 20,000 people) relative to southern Canadian urban centres, Yellowknife shares with its urban southern neighbors a particular approach to the 256 or so species of birds in the region, and the 30,000 tons of human waste the city produces.<sup>40</sup> Yellowknife and southern Canadian communities, like those in North America generally, relate to the birds frequenting their landfills as largely a ‘wildlife hazard’ and ‘vermin’ that requires industrial management.<sup>41</sup>

Move to the east some two thousand miles from Yellowknife to Iqaluit, and the scene is quite different. Hundreds, if not thousands, of ravens casually circle the town’s open dump, swooping leisurely to land on fresh piles of discarded food that the steady flow of trucks deposit on the colossal dump. The ravens are not in any hurry to grab the wasted food and fly off; they take their time. This is, in some ways, their dump, and no one attempts to scare them off.

Southern Canadian solid waste facilities typically adopt a ‘zero tolerance’ approach to ‘trash animals.’ Gulls are most certainly the lowly, senseless and reckless underclass of the modern landfill, or ‘bird buffets’ as they are colloquially called. Landfills are a primary food source for the gull: in under 15 minutes at a landfill, gulls are able to satisfy their daily nutritional requirements.<sup>42</sup> According to a Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection report, the goal of any landfill is not only to completely prevent gulls from feeding but also to “eliminate or reduce the suitability and attractiveness of the facility for other gull activities, such as resting, roosting, or loafing.”<sup>43</sup> Gulls and other birds like to ‘loaf’—

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<sup>39</sup> Vanessa Watts, “Indigenous Place-Thought and Agency Amongst Humans and Nonhumans (First Woman and Sky Woman Go on a European World Tour!),” *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 2, no. 1 (2013).

<sup>40</sup> Beacon Environmental, *Wildlife Hazard Assessment and Integrated Wildlife Management Plan for the City of Yellowknife Solid Waste Facility* (Markham, ON: City of Yellowknife, 2008), 1.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>42</sup> Department of Environmental Protection, *Gull Control at Landfills and Other Solid Waste Management Facilities* (Boston, MA: Commonwealth of Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs, 1998), 4.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*



communally rest, bathe, drink, or preen—on landfills because the expansive and relatively flat space provides good visibility for spotting predators.<sup>44</sup>

It is difficult to witness much bird ‘loafing’ on landfills in southern Canadian communities. Responding to community complaints about the noise birds make and the excrement they leave on the roofs of houses, as well as the risks birds pose to nearby aviation—where birds increase the risk of damaging aircraft and potentially injuring passengers—landfill operators focus on what they euphemistically call ‘wildlife management.’ Landfill operators do not like the attention scavenging birds bring to landfill sites: they prefer trash to disappear from people’s minds once it leaves their curbside. Thus operators have introduced a cacophony of management techniques that include canons, air-operated human effigies, scarecrows, chemical repellents that poison the land, distress calls, pyrotechnics (including bangers, screamers, and flaming whistles), tape ribbons and other shiny objects, helium-filled ‘evil eye’ balloons, decoys, collecting and oiling eggs (which kills the developing birds through suffocation) and even displayed bird carcasses (both real and facsimiles).<sup>45</sup> But problems abound: gulls turn out to be smart, and quickly figure out that the management tactics are distractions. Moreover, as landfill operators note, pyrotechnics and other strategies “will alarm and surprise some landfill customers, sometimes with very emotional effects.”<sup>46</sup> Faced, then, with smart adaptive birds and skittish people, operators have recently introduced falcons and hawks to patrol the landfill landscape. These birds of prey have become part of waste management’s big business. They, according to hawk handlers, are allowed to eat any gull they catch, although this is not particularly good for the hawks because the gulls may carry contaminants through their contact with leachate.<sup>47</sup> Female falcons are typically used because they are bigger than their male counterparts, and more aggressive.

In disconcertingly earnest statements, El Sobrante landfill spokesperson Miriam Cardenas exclaimed “We are using nature to control nature. It’s the most effective method,”<sup>48</sup> and falconer Jorge Herrera described his work as “nature taking care of itself” as the falcons he uses sit on perches on the back of his truck with tracking devices attached to their ankles.<sup>49</sup> Here, then, are birds of prey captured and implicated into a complex assemblage of bird-waste-human-landscape to live out their lives terrorizing other birds so that people are not disturbed by bird calls, roof-tops remain unsoiled, and airport runways can be expanded. Enlisting hawks to distress and kill gulls makes good entrepreneurial sense: the hawks have silenced community complaints. The hawks, then, become part of the geoengineering

<sup>44</sup> Beacon Environmental, *Wildlife Hazard Assessment*, 5.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 29-30. Aonghais Cook, Steven Rushton, John Allan, and Andrew Baxter, “An Evaluation of Techniques to Control Problem Bird Species on Landfill Sites,” *Environmental Management* 41, (2008): 837-841. Robert Johnson, “Wind, Wings, and Waste,” *Waste 360*, 1 June 2009, accessed 15 June 2014, [http://waste360.com/Landfill\\_Management/managing-birds-blown-landfill-litter-200906](http://waste360.com/Landfill_Management/managing-birds-blown-landfill-litter-200906). Leslie Parrilla, “Falcons Protect Landfill from Trash-Stealing Gulls,” *Press Enterprise*, 18 November 2012, accessed 15 June 2014. <http://www.pe.com/articles/herrera-664575-birds-falconers.html>

<sup>46</sup> Johnson, “Wind, Wings, and Waste.”

<sup>47</sup> Leachate is putrescible and organic landfill material transported by water. See Myra J. Hird “Waste, Landfills, and an Environmental Ethics of Vulnerability,” *Ethics and the Environment* 18, no.1 (2013c): 105-124.

<sup>48</sup> Parrilla, “Falcons Protect Landfill.”

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

architecture—not dissimilar to the covering over of landfills and their transformation into suburban sprawl—that encourages people to forget about waste beyond their curbside.<sup>50</sup> Landfills in southern Canada tend to be sited away from communities and cordoned off behind high fences to be managed out-of-sight. Waste is something we do not want to remember, or be remembered for, and waste management corporations profitably remove our waste from consciousness.<sup>51</sup>

Waste in many of Canada's northern communities is left there, on the land, in highly visible dumps; raw, uncompromising, and unapologetic. These northern landscapes are not covered over, and they are not out-of-mind. Unlike the gulls of southern landfills, *Tulugaq*, ravens, are the most common birds in northern communities, and remain in the far North throughout the winter. According to Inuit creation narratives, *Tulugaq* made the world and the waters with the beat of his wings.<sup>52</sup> *Tulugaq* the Trickster is respected for his resilience, intelligence, and sociability. *Tulugaq* teaches children how to live in community, and newborn Inuit boys are clothed in raven skin to help them become successful hunters.<sup>53</sup> *Tulugaq* follow polar bears and scavenge leftover carcasses, and Inuit mimic the raven's 'caw' to attract polar bears in hunting. *Tulugaq* also call wolves to dead animals so they will make the carcasses more accessible to the birds. Perhaps they now call humans to dumpsites to leave fresh trash.

In these narratives, ravens possess the ability to transmute; presently, it seems, into garbage pickers. *Tulugaq* have followed the transition of Inuit peoples from a nomadic lifestyle in which *tulugaq* assisted hunters in their search for food to sedentary community living whereby food is found conveniently left on the landscape at the community dump for ready picking. As McCluskey observes, "instead of dipping their wings to point to a polar bear, ravens are now more likely to steal your dog's food and dive-bomb your truck windows."<sup>54</sup> We bring birds to our waste sites, where they feed off all the stuff of our lives that we want to forget: "their success is due to our presence" as Gavan Watson puts it.<sup>55</sup>

The gulls, *tulugaq* and other species of birds that live on the trash heaps of human consumption may serve as a window into our consumption patterns, lifestyles, how we understand ourselves in relation to other people, objects, the environment, and so on. In a remark that points equally to nonhuman and human alike, Greg Kennedy notes, "'trash' means

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<sup>50</sup> Geoengineering typically refers to the 'big science and technology' harnessed to mitigate climate change. We use the term here to call attention to the vast and complex infrastructure that is both geological and engineered that attempts to deal with ever-increasing amounts and toxicity of waste.

<sup>51</sup> Peter van Wyck, "Northern War Stories: The Dene, the Archive, and Canada's Atomic Modernity," in *Bearing Witness: Representations of War and Peace in the Arts and Humanities*, ed. Sherrill Grace, Patrick Imbert, and Tiffany Johnstone (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2012), 174-186.

<sup>52</sup> Dale Blake, *Inuit Life Writings and Oral Traditions Inuit Myths* (St. John's: Educational Resource Development Co-operative, 2001).

<sup>53</sup> Polarlife, "Tulugaq- Raven," accessed 6 October 2013, <http://www.polarlife.ca/Traditional/traditional/animals/raven.htm>.

<sup>54</sup> Kerry McCluskey, *Tulugaq: An Oral History of Ravens* (Iqaluit: Inhabit Media Inc. 2013), 7.

<sup>55</sup> Gregory Watson, "See Gull: Cultural Blind Spots and the Disappearance of the Ring-Billed Gull in Toronto," in *Trash Animals*, 36.

a manner of physically relating to other beings ... We exist, for the most part, in a way that violently negates beings rather than takes care of them."<sup>56</sup>

Indeed, news reports have documented Inuit Elders having to eat expired foods directly from local garbage dumps. This is perhaps unsurprising as food prices in Nunavut are the highest in the country; all foods come highly packaged and must be flown in or shipped from the South. While some suggest that retailers are benefiting from government food subsidies at the expense of people living in the community, this situation points to larger issues of Canadian northern development. As Madeleine Redfern, an Inuk woman and former mayor of Iqaluit stated, "clearly people don't have enough money to be able to feed themselves."<sup>57</sup>

While the City of Iqaluit grows (the community has doubled in population over the last two decades), *tulugaq's* relation to waste has come to represent a larger sustainability issue. A long-term Inuk resident of Iqaluit linked *tulugaq* to larger issues of community living in the Arctic:

The amount of ravens there are in Iqaluit—it's disturbing ... The amount of bird droppings there are on the buildings all over Iqaluit is disturbing ... [My ancestors] they wouldn't stay in one area. They would migrate with the animals so that they would sustain their own life. They wouldn't be in one area for very long because that food would be gone ... At the rate it's going [Iqaluit is not sustainable]. There's too many cars. There's too much garbage. There's too much [sic] people to sustain itself.<sup>58</sup>

For this resident, the congregation of *tulugaq* (and humans) *en masse* is in itself disturbing. Perhaps, then, as Marie Lathers puts it, in the postcolonial era, native shit (or in this case, *tulugaq* shit) "reveals the failures of the new nationalism,"<sup>59</sup> exposing changing relationships with the inhuman and the tenuousness of community living. Importantly—and as these examples of northern trash animals make clear—waste itself readily informs how and where humans engage in multi-species relationships. In Canada's North, these inhuman-waste relations are developing in a context of competing stakeholder interests and rapidly changing Nunavut communities. Like others living in Nunavut Territory, *Tulugaq* the Trickster is adapting to its colonial inheritance.

### Qimmiiq/Sled Dog

Inuit consider the killing of thousands of Inuit sled dogs (*qimmiit*) during the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century by southern Canadians (government workers, RCMP officers, and teachers) a "flash point" of colonial trauma.<sup>60</sup> In this section, we examine how these deaths occurred as part of a governance strategy aimed at changing Inuit relationships with the environment, which in the

<sup>56</sup> Greg Kennedy, *An Ontology of Trash* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2007), xvi.

<sup>57</sup> Steve Rennie, "Nutrition North Food Subsidy Program: What Went Wrong," *Canadian Press*, 21 December 2014, accessed 8 February 2015 <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/nutrition-north-food-subsidy-program-what-went-wrong-1.2880756>.

<sup>58</sup> Interview with Inuit resident of Iqaluit, conducted 25 June 2014.

<sup>59</sup> Lathers, "Towards an Excremental Posthumanism," 419.

<sup>60</sup> Susan McHugh, "'A Flash Point in Inuit Memories': Endangered Knowledges in the Mountie Sled Dog Massacre," *ESC: English Studies in Canada* 39, no. 1 (2013): 149; QTC, *Thematic Report and Special Stories: 1950-1975* (Iqaluit, NU: Qikiqtani Inuit Association, 2013), 448.

process identified sled dogs as a kind of dangerous waste. The decision was enabled, at least in part, through an understanding of nature (sled dogs) as commodity—as a hunting tool easily replaced by new technologies.<sup>61</sup> The killings re-configured sled dogs as ‘trash animals,’ and profoundly influenced the Inuit’s shift from nomadic to sedentary labor-based lifestyles.

For millennia, the bond between *qimmiit* and Inuit was integral to Inuit survival: when out on the land, *qimmiit* pulled sleds for hunting and moving families, and weakened polar bears and muskox for hunting; when navigating sea ice, *qimmiit* detected potentially fatal soft patches on the ice; while out harpooning seal, *qimmiit* knew to keep quiet; and while Inuit families slept, *qimmiit* warded off predators.<sup>62</sup> During prolonged periods of starvation, Inuit ate *qimmiit* (the final step before eating leather clothing, tents, and dog sled lines) and used their pelts for clothing.<sup>63</sup> For Inuit hunters, survival required killing enough food to support both their families and their *qimmiit* teams; strong and well fed *qimmiit* teams were a sign of masculinity.<sup>64</sup> While fiercely loyal to their Inuit families, *qimmiit* were aggressive to other humans and often to each other—a characteristic essential to the success of *qimmiit* as hunters.<sup>65</sup> The training of *qimmiit*, who were considered neither wholly domesticated nor feral, was an ongoing task that required long-term *Qaujimajatuqangit* (Inuit knowledge).<sup>66</sup> As children, Inuit boys were given *qimmiit* puppies to raise: training them socialized young Inuit as much as the dogs:

... in our customs there were a lot of regulations, though it seems typical that the Inuit don’t have regulations, but in spite of that assumption, we did have a lot of regulations. For example, in raising dog team, while they’re still puppies we had to stretch the legs, and rub their underarms, tickle them in order for them to get used to the harnesses, we did that during summer. While they’re becoming adolescent dogs, we would have to take them for walks with their harnesses on ... We would make them run with their harnesses on, in

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<sup>61</sup> For detailed discussions, see Frank Tester, “Can the Sled Dog Sleep? Postcolonialism, Cultural Transformation and the Consumption of Inuit Culture,” *New Proposals: Journal of Marxism and Interdisciplinary Inquiry* 3, no. 3 (2010): 7-19 and Frank Tester, “Mad Dogs and (Mostly) Englishmen: Colonial Relations, Commodities, and the Fate of the Inuit Sled Dogs,” *Études/Inuit/Studies* 34, no. 2 (2010): 129-147. In using the term commodity, we recognize that the value given to sled dogs by colonial government officials was largely economic. From this frame, sled dogs had economic value: they allowed Inuit to go out on the land to obtain food, clothes, or pelts for trading. Yet, for Inuit, as Tester explains, “[D]ogs were a social entitlement with limited exchange and no market value ... [T]heir loss and replacement by snowmobiles has complex implications for Inuit culture,” Tester, “Mad Dogs,” 130.

<sup>62</sup> QTC, *Thematic Report*, 324-328.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 327.

<sup>64</sup> McHugh, “A Flash Point in Inuit Memories,” 157.

<sup>65</sup> Pauloosie Veevee in QTC, *Thematic Report*, 323.

<sup>66</sup> See McHugh, “A Flash Point in Inuit Memories,” 157. It is important to note that a view of dogs as either wholly ‘domestic’ or ‘feral’ invokes a natural/cultural distinction that is not recognized through Inuit cosmology.

order to keep them fit. If the *Qimmiit* are not tamed that way they cannot be part of a dog team, they would not know how to run appropriately, they would be stubborn.<sup>67</sup>

Thus, raising *qimmiit* as part of a hunting team was a process of mutual human-animal-community development. Indeed, the Inuktitut word *qimutsiit* defines the point at which Inuit and *qimmiit* hunting teams become “irreducible.”<sup>68</sup> Trained as *qimutsiit*, Inuit boys were considered men only when they were able to successfully support a full *qimmiit* team.<sup>69</sup> Perhaps as a result of this close and unique connection, *qimmiit* were the only animals other than humans to be given the names of the deceased. The Inuit naming practice (which persists today<sup>70</sup>) ascribes the deceased’s attributes to newborn Inuit or *qimmiit*. Through this custom, Inuit and *qimmiit* shared complex kinship systems: *qimmiit* were aunts, uncles, cousins, siblings, grandparents, and former *qimmiit*. For some Inuit, *qimmiit* were “everything.”<sup>71</sup>

Until this point, *qimmiit* were not recognized as animals in the Western sense of the term—as pets, companions, labor, commodity, property, or waste—though they were now encountered as such by the southern Canadians and RCMP officers who governed these new Arctic communities. On 20 January, 1949, under the premise of public health and safety,<sup>72</sup> the Government of the Northwest Territories (which had no Inuit representation<sup>73</sup>) legally enacted the *Ordinance Respecting Sled Dogs*. The law prohibited *qimmiit* from running freely in communities. Any dogs caught roaming could be seized or destroyed at the discretion of an RCMP officer.<sup>74</sup> As a result, Inuit living in communities were forced to tie up *qimmiit*—a type of confinement that disrupted traditional rearing practices,<sup>75</sup> and often proved impossible because chains and collars were often unavailable in community stores.<sup>76</sup> Sedentary living also precluded Inuit from following migratory animals, which made feeding *qimmiit* with country food practically impossible. When not tied up, hungry *qimmiit* could wander into community dumpsites and feed from waste, and these *qimmiit* were often much healthier than those who were chained.<sup>77</sup> A report from arctic anthropologist Toshio Yatsushiro in 1959 describes the difficult decisions Inuit were forced to make:

<sup>67</sup> Papikattuq Sakiagaq in Makivik Corporation, “Regarding the Slaughtering of Nunavik ‘Qimmiit’ (Inuit Dogs) from the Mid-1950s to the Late 1960s,” for Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs for the Government of Canada, (2009), 11.

<sup>68</sup> McHugh, “A Flash Point in Inuit Memories,” 157.

<sup>69</sup> Pauloosie Veevee in QTC, *Thematic Report*, 323.

<sup>70</sup> Lisa Stevenson, “The Psychic Life of Biopolitics: Survival, Cooperation, and Inuit Community,” *American Ethnologist* 39, no.3 (2012): 604-605.

<sup>71</sup> QTC, *Thematic Report*, 329.

<sup>72</sup> Croteau, *Final Report*, 133; QTC, *Thematic Report*, 367; Royal Canadian Mounted Police, *Final Report: RCMP Review of Allegations Concerning Inuit Sled Dogs* (Ottawa, ON: Community, Contract and Aboriginal Policing Services, 2006): 7; Tester, “Mad Dogs,” 134.

<sup>73</sup> Tester, “Mad Dogs,” 134.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 135.

<sup>75</sup> Allowing *qimmiit* to roam free was essential for establishing pack positions and the development of hunting skills. McHugh, “A Flashpoint in Inuit Memories,” 164-165.

<sup>76</sup> Makivik Corporation, “Regarding the Slaughtering of Qimmiit,” 12.

<sup>77</sup> McHugh, “A Flashpoint in Inuit Memories,” 167.

The Eskimos [sic] understand, if they [*qimmiit*] are free they will be shot, but if they are tied they cannot get food, so maybe they will die anyhow. Eskimos bring food and water to the dogs when they have it, but often they don't have it. So when the dogs go free they eat garbage—when the RCMP saw it they shot them ... it is not good.<sup>78</sup>

The *qimmiit* killings began in the late 1950s after the Canadian Government required all Inuit children be educated within a southern Canadian educational system,<sup>79</sup> and parents settled in communities in order to remain close to their children, bringing hundreds of *qimmiit* with them.<sup>80</sup> Government and industry alike sought Inuit for low-paying labor, and finding a means to prevent Inuit from hunting and otherwise being on the land for extended periods of time suited southern Canadian capitalist economies. When a hunter's *qimmiit* team was killed, hunting became impossible, and many Inuit were literally trapped in government communities.<sup>81</sup>

The conviction that the *qimmiit* killings were a government 'conspiracy' to, at best, assimilate Inuit into southern Canadian modes of living, or at worst eliminate Inuit entirely, is commonly expressed throughout Inuit territories today.<sup>82</sup> As Issacie Padlayat explains, "[t]he governments tried to eliminate us by eliminating the dogs we depended on for survival but fortunately the Inuit are able to withstand hardships."<sup>83</sup> For many Inuit, whose lives until this point had been so thoroughly integrated with the lives of dogs, the *qimmiit* killings opened up the very real possibility that the police would also murder Inuit.<sup>84</sup> Witnessing the killing of their kin relations became a source of anxiety and depression for many Inuit. But perhaps most importantly, these killings threatened what it meant to *be* Inuit; to raise *qimmiit*, to hunt, to experience oneself as the land. With RCMP officers enforcing laws predicated on colonial regimes to civilize and commodify nature, there was, as the Qikiqtani Inuit Association points out, "no need for a conspiracy."<sup>85</sup>

In a particularly revealing letter dated 8 October, 1958, Sergeant J.H. Wilson—an RCMP officer stationed in Quebec's Nunavik region—reveals some of the misunderstandings held by southern Canadian officials that contributed to the *qimmiit* killings. In the letter, Wilson disagrees with Inuit claims about no longer being able to hunt, writing that "this is in fact not correct as there has always been many more dogs here than are needed."<sup>86</sup> In this view, dog teams were easily replaceable—simply go to the dump and grab any number of stray dogs. For

<sup>78</sup> QTC, *Thematic Report*, 34.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 345-346.

<sup>80</sup> Jean-Jacques Croteau, *Final Report of the Honorable Jean-Jacques Croteau Retired Judge of the Superior Regarding the Allegations Concerning the Slaughter of Inuit Sled Dogs in Nunavik (1950-1970)* (Quebec City, QC: Makivik Corporation and Government of Quebec, 2010), 138.

<sup>81</sup> Qikiqtani Truth Commission (QTC), *Final Report: Achieving Saimaqatigiingniq* (Iqaluit, NU: Qikiqtani Inuit Association, 2013), 16.

<sup>82</sup> QTC, *Thematic Report*, 32-33.

<sup>83</sup> Makivik Corporation, *Regarding the Slaughtering of Qimmiit*, 11.

<sup>84</sup> See, for example, the conversation between anthropologist Toshio Yatsushiro and Jamesie, an Inuk man from Nunavut, in Lisa Stevenson, "The Psychic Life of Biopolitics," 604-605.

<sup>85</sup> QTC, *Thematic Report*, 33.

<sup>86</sup> Croteau, *Final Report*, 13.

Wilson, like other RCMP officers, sled dogs were strongly associated with waste: "... most of the Eskimos [sic] cannot resist the temptation to let their dogs run loose with the hope that they will survive on the garbage from the RCAF Stn."<sup>87</sup> For Wilson, caring for *qimmiit* properly was entangled with southern Canadian understandings of civility that required the display of ownership and control over animals that did not survive on waste.

In 2006, the RCMP launched an internal enquiry to determine whether the RCMP had engaged in a federally mandated slaughter of *qimmiit* in the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>88</sup> The report denied that any mass culling had occurred, and among its key findings were that "The Inuit sled dog is a large and aggressive animal that can pose a danger to public safety."<sup>89</sup> Moreover, the report concludes that Inuit sled dogs had primarily been killed due to a combination of "epidemics and socio-economic factors," the latter including the "social benefits to which the Inuit people had access for the first time, including government education, healthcare, government housing, and government family allowances within settlements... [and] the introduction of the snowmobile."<sup>90</sup> The overarching point—that the killing of *qimmiit* by settlers ensured the year-round availability of an Inuit workforce—is obscured by the RCMP report's focus on education, health care benefits, and so on.

By contrast, in their in-depth investigation into the *qimmiit* killings, which involved interviewing hundreds of Inuit and Qallunaat<sup>91</sup> Nunavut residents, the Qikiqtani Truth Commission (QTC) concluded that the *qimmiit* killings occurred "because Qallunaat were scared of dogs."<sup>92</sup> The fear of *qimmiit* was a loaded one, entrenched in southern Canadian understandings of cleanliness, civilization, and safety. As with diseases spread by landfill gulls in the South, the killing of *qimmiit* was, according to the QTC "more about what they *might* do in the future."<sup>93</sup> The colonial rhetoric of safety and security, which scholars have argued is commonly used to justify both neoliberal governance regimes and state violence,<sup>94</sup> was, and continues to be, employed by Canadian Government officials to legitimize expansion throughout Canada's North.<sup>95</sup> As with efforts to rid 'trash animals' in Canada's South, managing

<sup>87</sup> Croteau, *Final Report*, 13.

<sup>88</sup> RCMP, *Final Report*.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 15. Our emphasis.

<sup>91</sup> Qallunaat is an Inuktitut word for people who are not Inuit; typically white people. See *Qallunaat! Why White People are Funny*, National Film Board of Canada, 2015.

<sup>92</sup> *Qimmiit* were most often found "foraging around a dump or breaking into storage areas" and were actually more of a danger to public property than to people (despite their sometimes aggressive behaviour). QTC, "Inuit Sled Dogs in Baffin Region," accessed 1 February, 2015. <http://www.qtcommission.com/actions/GetPage.php?pageId=39>.

<sup>93</sup> QTC, *Thematic Reports*, 367. Our emphasis.

<sup>94</sup> See Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception*, trans. T Kevin Attell (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2002), Chapter 1; Achille Mbembe, "Necropolitics," trans. Libby Meintjes, *Public Culture* 15, no.1 (2003): 11-40.

<sup>95</sup> Indeed, Arctic sovereignty has been used by the federal government to justify economic expansion throughout the North. In his Speech from the Throne, Prime Minister Stephen Harper stated "the eyes of the world increasingly look enviously to our North. Our Government will not rest." This was followed by promises of increased offshore patrol ships, the construction of a new highway through the Northwest Territories, and the construction of a northern scientific research station. Stephen Harper,

(perceived) forms of disorder remains a central tenet of neoliberal governing and management practices throughout Nunavut territory.

### Inhuman Colonialism

Iqaluit today is the largest and richest community in Canada's Nunavut Territory.<sup>96</sup> Whereas other communities practice open burning as a primary waste management practice (one that has led to environmental and human health concerns),<sup>97</sup> Iqaluit is preparing to launch a newly minted Solid Waste Management plan<sup>98</sup> and its community-wide beautification project is underway—signs of the City's increasingly modern direction.

While *qimmiit* are now the official animal symbol of Nunavut, only about 300 remain in Canada—a far cry from the some 20,000 that existed prior to colonization.<sup>99</sup> In Iqaluit today, *qimmiit* are protected by law, albeit primarily for the purposes of conservation (“the Canadian Inuit Dog is the last indigenous dog to North America”<sup>100</sup>) and commodification (“Canadian Inuit Dog and Dog Teams ... are an integral part of the City of Iqaluit's unique character and its economic and tourism development”<sup>101</sup>). Within city limits, *qimmiit* are restricted to “Designated Dog Team Areas,”<sup>102</sup> where all *qimmiit* must be tied up, tagged, and registered with the local authorities. In stark contrast to the *tulugaq* at the dump, Iqaluit's *qimmiit* are ‘disciplined,’ ‘tidy,’ and ‘orderly.’<sup>103</sup> These materially reworked relationships with the inhuman make up Iqaluit's colonial inheritance. *Qimmiit* have been, as Belcourt puts it, re-configured as “neoliberal subjects.”<sup>104</sup>

Yet despite their utility within capitalist modes of production, sled dogs are once again being threatened.<sup>105</sup> As part of the Iqaluit airport's \$300M dollar expansion, one of the

“Speech from the Throne to Open the Second Session Forty First Parliament of Canada,” accessed 5 February 2014.

<sup>96</sup> Government employment (federal, territorial, and municipal) is a major source of employment in Iqaluit; however many of those filling government jobs are Southerners working in Nunavut temporarily. This accounts, at least in part, for the disparities between Inuit and Qallunaat household incomes.

<sup>97</sup> Jane Geroge, “It Smelled like a Dump, like Chemicals,” 27 July 2007, *Nunatsiaq News Online*, accessed 25 October 2014, [http://www.nunatsiaqonline.ca/archives/2007/707/70727/news/nunavut/70727\\_342.html](http://www.nunatsiaqonline.ca/archives/2007/707/70727/news/nunavut/70727_342.html).

<sup>98</sup> Exp Services Inc, *City of Iqaluit Solid Waste Management Plan* (Iqaluit, NU: City of Iqaluit, 2013).

<sup>99</sup> McHugh, “A Flash Point in Inuit Memories,” 158.

<sup>100</sup> The Corporation of the Town of Iqaluit, “By-Law # 537: Canadian Inuit Dog and Dog Team By-Law,” (Iqaluit, NU: City of Iqaluit, 2001), 1.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>103</sup> Rick De Vos provides a similar description of husky dog team areas in Greenlandic Inuit communities. De Vos, “Huskies and Hunters,” 286.

<sup>104</sup> Billy-Ray Belcourt, “Animal Bodies, Colonial Subjects: (Re)Locating Animality in Decolonial Thought,” *Societies* 5 (2015): 6.

<sup>105</sup> Martin Partriquin, “Move Over, Musers: A Battle Brews Over Sled Dog Parking in Iqaluit,” 20 January 2015, *Maclean's*, accessed 20 January 2015, <http://www.macleans.ca/news/canada/sled-dogs-will-be-towed-a-plan-to-take-away-iqaluits-only-prime-sled-dog-lot-has-musers-up-in-arms-and-fearing-for-their-future/>.



community's three remaining *qimmiit* lots is being placed off limits to be replaced by an asphalt plant. The airport project will inevitably increase southern Canadian and international activity in the region,<sup>106</sup> and Iqaluit residents are concerned about where to put their dog teams. As a local dog musher explains, "If it becomes too much harder to have dog teams, people are just going to give up, and it'll die off."<sup>107</sup> The dog lot in question is located along a 330m stretch of road on a former airport landing strip. And despite being located centrally between at least five dumpsites (including the old and current community dump site, and three military dumps), the lot is considered by many to be the safest place to keep their *qimmiit*. One of the other *qimmiit* lots is on the banks of Iqaluit's airport creek, a site known for its high concentrations of carcinogenic chlorinated paraffins,<sup>108</sup> likely leaching into the water from an up-creek military waste site.<sup>109</sup> A *Qallunaat* dog owner, explains why she recently moved her dogs from airport creek:

I just started realizing that I've had a few dogs, um, die before the age of ten. And one of them, they had—I mean, I don't know exactly what was wrong with them, but she had her—her liver was totally not the right colour, not the right texture. All of that stuff. So—and then I had another dog die of prostate cancer, which is not really that normal for an unneutered male. And then I had another dog die—also around that same age—of sort of unknown causes but [presented symptoms that were] sort of similar to the one that I *did* know had a screwed up liver ... And so all the dogs that I had that didn't grow up on that creek lived to be like 14/15. And suddenly [there's] this whole generation of dogs that I had [that] seemed to be dying younger than I would have thought. And like, you can't really draw that link, but it makes you think.<sup>110</sup>

Waste, both symbolically and materially, has become part of Nunavut's neo-colonial present. Like other social and environmental issues developed out of a history of colonial and neo-colonial governance, waste histories haunt present and future generations. As we have discussed in this article, the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century saw the establishment of military bases, mining ventures, and residential schools throughout the Arctic, leading to Inuit settlement, voluntarily or otherwise. This profound shift in lifestyle resulted in deep social and cultural changes that impacted the relationship between Inuit, land, family and community practices, food, waste, and the environment more generally. Despite Territorial efforts to incorporate traditional Inuit knowledge into territorial and municipal government decision-making processes, both the act of wasting and the management of waste are governed through southern Canadian structures, processes, and practices. Waste is, in many ways, itself neo-colonial. Nunavut communities,

<sup>106</sup> Peter Varga, "Iqaluit Sled Dog Owners Lose Winter Lot to Asphalt Plant," 9 January 2015, *Nunatsiaq News*, accessed 26 January 2015, [http://www.nunatsiaqonline.ca/stories/article/65674iqaluit\\_sled\\_dog\\_owners\\_lose\\_winter\\_lot\\_to\\_asphalt\\_plant/](http://www.nunatsiaqonline.ca/stories/article/65674iqaluit_sled_dog_owners_lose_winter_lot_to_asphalt_plant/).

<sup>107</sup> Partriquin, "Move Over, Musers."

<sup>108</sup> Terry Dick, Colin Gallagher, and Gregg Tomy, "Short-and Medium-Chain Chlorinated Paraffins in Fish, Water and Soils from the Iqaluit, Nunavut (Canada), Area," *World Review of Science, Technology and Sustainable Development* 7, no. 4 (2010): 387-401.

<sup>109</sup> For a detailed discussion of the different kinds of waste found in Iqaluit, see Hird and Zahara, "The Arctic Wastes," (forthcoming).

<sup>110</sup> Interview with long-term Qallunaat resident of Iqaluit, conducted 10 July 2014.

who produced little material waste prior to European contact, are now the largest producers of waste in Canada's territories.<sup>111</sup>

Our examination of Nunavut's 'trash animals' demonstrates how ravens and dogs, like Inuit peoples, have been incorporated into, and managed by, historically, culturally, and materially constituted cosmologies. Within current neoliberal governance, waste is inherited as both material and symbolic forms of disorder, unruliness, and disgust. Referring to David Gilmartin's analysis of British irrigation engineers in the Indus Basin, Baviskar notes:

Controlling waste was, in differing ways, crucial to both an agenda of increasing 'scientific' control over the environment, and to the state's political manipulation of indigenous communities. Understanding the place of waste in colonial discourse is thus a way of understanding some of the most basic contradictions underlying this resource regime.<sup>112</sup>

Disorderly relationships with Inuit, animals, and landscape have been variously embraced, compromised, co-opted, commodified, destroyed, rebuilt, and abandoned. In Nunavut, as elsewhere, we are tasked with the challenge of inheriting an increasingly messy, uncertain, and colonized lifeworld—one shaped by climate change, toxic and indestructible wastes, and unknown human and environmental impacts. Concern with naming our current 'Anthropocene' epoch is, among other things, a bid to formally acknowledge the association between neoliberal governance, Western scientific modes of knowing, and our ecological and colonial inheritance. In this context, it is important to critically examine, question, and challenge the political, historical, and cultural structures through which our inhuman relations are variously practised and embedded. Learning how to inherit, then, becomes a matter of reimagining and thus materially re-working relationships with the inhuman in ways that accept rather than dominate other lives and livelihoods, and to go further to challenge waste strategies that promote neoliberal governance at the cost of community health and environmental wellbeing. Trash animals continue to remind us—however briefly, and to whatever end—of that which we can never truly abandon or forget. Though we may choose to ignore these animals or even legislate their disappearance, they will inevitably show up in our imagined sanitary lifeworlds.

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<sup>111</sup> Jamie Van Gulck, "Solid Waste Survey in the Territories," *Journal of the Northern Territories Water and Waste Association* September (2012): 24.

<sup>112</sup> Amita Baviskar, "For a Cultural Politics of Natural Resources," *Economic and Political Weekly* 38, no.48 (2003): 5053.

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